Learning as Identity Change, Self-Regulated Learning as Identity Exploration: A Complex Dynamic Systems Perspective on the Goals of Education in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The long-held dominant conception of the talented-educated person as a domain expert has served as an abstracted identity that underscored who students should strive to become. _is cultural image has guided curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments that equated learning with developing task mastery, and successful engagement with self-regulated learning: setting task-relevant goals, planning and applying task-relevant strategies, monitoring and adjusting their effective execution towards task success, and reflecting on the learning experience to improve pursuit of task mastery. However, the shifting nature of life and work in the 21st century has challenged the sufficiency of task mastery for personal and collective accomplishments. Traditional domains have been transforming; bodies of knowledge are rapidly shifting; and personal and professional tasks are increasingly ill-defined, require questioning of assumptions and goals, and involve deep value-laden dilemmas. To function constructively in such a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, the conception of the talented-educated person must shift. In this presentation, we use the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity—an integrative complex dynamic systems model of identity, motivation, and action—to propose desirable characteristics of 21st century identities as centered on agency and skills in identity exploration. In this conception, learning goes beyond knowledge to reflect identity change, and self-regulated learning goes beyond pursuit of success in predetermined tasks to reflect proactive identity exploration. In this conception, learning goes beyond knowledge to reflect identity change, and self-regulated learning goes beyond pursuit of success in predetermined tasks to reflect proactive engagement in exploring and forming one's identity to influence contextual change in light of core values. We end by describing design features for environments that promote people's identity exploration orientation, competencies, and skills.

KEYWORDS:
Identity Exploration, Learning Beyond Knowledge, Self-regulated Learning