

Pluralistic learning
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PLURALISTIC LEARNING

I had a great deal of difficulty deciding what to call the learning process that occurs in a democratic school.

I chose the name "pluralistic learning" because it goes to the heart of the concept of democratic education. It is a learning process that recognizes the differences in learning - learning whose point of departure is the equal right of every individual to express his or her uniqueness.

We are all human beings, and consequently we share numerous identical characteristics that set the human race apart - and yet we are all different. We do not resemble one another, physically or otherwise. Most of us have different goals in life and different ways to reach those goals.

Some people love animals, others can't stand them.

Some of us like to work with children, and for others it would be a nightmare.

Some people find it easier to study in the morning, while others are at their best at night.

Some like to study numbers, while others are bored to distraction by the subject.

Some people learn best by listening to lectures, while for others they are a sleeping pill.

I could go on and on, ad infinitum.

Every individual on earth has a unique learning profile

Human diversity is one of the most beautiful things in our world; it is the fuel that runs the world. It should be the basis for all schools and places of learning. Human diversity means that the learning framework must acknowledge the fact that I am different and unique. And if it does not, then it does not acknowledge me:

It may acknowledge people that are similar to me, that resemble me, but it is not interested in getting to know me.

It may acknowledge people my age, or people that live in my neighborhood, or people of... my weight.

I am not a copy or a reflection of the sum of the qualities that resemble me. While it is true that there are a lot of characteristics I share together with many other people (e.g. men, over the age of 40, Israelis, with a college degree, etc.), but these characteristics do draw my unique picture, that unique something that connects all the routine characteristics with the individual nucleus - the whole - that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The answer to the question "Who am I" can be found in the "unique and multifaceted me" that connects all the infinite elements: the I, whose main interest at this time is to write down my ideas on the subject of education; the I, who is currently involved in the question of "how to get myself into a state of writing"; the I, who knows how to write in the early morning hours, but not at night; the I, who knows how to tell stories but less so how to cite others; the I, who has his own unique set of images, the associations that are familiar only to me; the I, who thinks in images and pictures; the I, who has unique loves, personal memories and certain individuals to whom I am attracted... All these and more are the unique me. That is the I whose existence is not represented by an orderly list of data that can be found in government ministries or school files.

The learning framework that acknowledges me sees me a human being with a multi-cellular genetic code that has no human equivalent. This learning framework is founded on the perception that all human beings are unique and that each one makes a unique contribution to the world. It will help each participant acknowledge, accept and express his or her own uniqueness.

That is the meaning of pluralistic learning. But before I describe how this learning occurs, I would like to clarify some relevant terms: