

Approaches to teaching

* * *

The levels of thinking about teaching

Biggs & Tang (2011): Teaching for quality Learning at University, pages 16-29.
Hemminki, Valovirta & Leppänen (2013): Get inspired! A guide for successful teaching, pp. 9-16.

Approaches to learning: background

- Research on learning approaches has been done in universities worldwide since the '70s.
- Approaches to learning were developed when trying to understand and explain **why** students' **learning outcomes** differed so much.
- The approaches were initially considered to be stable and immune to differences. Today they are understood to be **situational**: changeable and influenced by the learning situation (teacher, subject, group, requirements,...).

→ We **approach** a learning situation in certain way (depending on our previous experience, self-image, interest, motivation,...) BUT we also **react** to the situation and **behave** (consciously or unconsciously) in a certain way.

Approaches to learning

<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Consequence</i>
<i>Deep</i>	To understand for oneself	Active processing	Actively interested (gets deeply engrossed)
<i>Surface</i>	To achieve the pass criteria	Simply reproducing content to pass the course	Difficulties in understanding and anxiety
<i>Organised / Strategic</i>	To obtain good grades	Systematic planning of activities	Aware of performance criteria

Note, that the third approach to learning; **organized/ strategic approach**, has been added to this table. In this approach the objective is to get good grades and make progress in one's studies. Students using this approach are very aware of the assessment criteria. He/She focuses on what is required, but instead of merely passing courses the goal is to achieve success.

Level of teaching	Teaching	Learning
<p>Level 1 What the student is</p> 	<p>“Good students learn, poor students don’t”. Differences in learning are explained by differences between students, such as motivation and ability.</p> <p>Good content competence is an important attribute of the teacher and should be clearly stated in the teaching.</p> <p>Teaching is transmitting information from teacher to students.</p>	<p>Learning is the process of receiving knowledge from the teacher and increasing it.</p> <p>Promotes a surface approach to studying.</p>
<p>Level 2 What the teacher does</p> 	<p>Structuring the subject matter into comprehensible entities is essential.</p> <p>The teacher acquires a comprehensive repository of various teaching methods to try to ensure the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the students.</p>	<p>The goal of learning is to achieve the right understanding about the subject being studied.</p> <p>Combining new knowledge with previous knowledge is essential.</p>
<p>Level 3 What the student does</p> 	<p>The purpose of teaching is to enable quality learning for students.</p> <p>The teacher reflects their own activities and is able to streamline operations where appropriate.</p> <p>Teaching is based on constructive alignment.</p>	<p>During the learning process, the student's understanding develops and changes qualitatively.</p> <p>Promotes a deep approach to studying.</p>

Teacher-centred

Student-centred

Surface approach

Deep approach

A

Some references

(for further reading, optional if you have time)

Entwistle, N. & Ramsden, R. (1983) *Understanding Student Learning*. Routledge, London.
E-book version published in 2015.

Felder, R.M. & Brent, R. (2005) Understanding Student Differences. *Journal of Engineering Education*, (94)1, 57-72.

Marton, F., Hounsell, D., & Entwistle, N. (Eds.). (1997). *The experience of learning: Implications for teaching and studying in higher education* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Pang, M.F. & Marton, F. (2005) Learning theory as teaching resource. *Instructional Science*, 33, 159–191.