

**BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**Changing Perceptions of Students about Different  
Teaching Approaches: Frontal Teaching,  
Constructivist Cooperative Teaching that  
Combines Computer Skills.**

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## Abstract

We have all had at least one great teacher. That special teacher whose every lesson was both an experience and a challenge, whose personality is etched indelibly in our memory and whom we aspire to imitate. What is the secret of such a teacher?

The beginning of the 1970's saw the development of innovative teaching and learning methods based on learning theories incorporating an in-depth understanding of the human learning process. Fundamentally different approaches, based on principles representing a specific paradigm which determines the behavior of the teacher in the class.

This research examines the development of students' knowledge and ability to create an independent learning unit combining multiple teaching approaches. At the center of the research lies the process students undergo during one semester of study and its influence on their personal and professional development.

The research questions were:

1. How does the course advance the knowledge and teaching ability of the students to enable them to create a constructivist and cooperative learning unit that combines computer skills in accordance with the learned characteristics?
2. What process do the students undergo during a semester in the "Teaching-Learning Processes" course regarding learning and applying various teaching approaches, and how this influences their attitudes to the subject?

The participants in the research were five female students in the regular, elementary level education program. The research was carried out as part of the course in the development of teaching processes- a course I was involved in creating and teaching. The research used in depth interviews, observations and reflections.

The study focused on two main issues:

(a) The study of theories of and approaches to teaching through experiential learning as an influence on the process of change. The study deals with four methods and theories:

frontal teaching, constructivist learning, cooperative learning, and teaching through computer skills.

(b) The shaping of the professional and personal identity of a student teacher through modeling.

The two topics were described by the interviewees retrospectively, comparing their performance in the field before and after the course. Thus, the literature review deals with two main areas of content: (a) strategies and approaches to teaching; (b) the development of personal and professional identity during teacher training.

The first part of this paper contains a review of the research on each of the concepts that comprise the subject of the work: definitions and characteristics of learning approaches and teaching strategies and the personal and professional development of student teachers. The second chapter, the methodology section, details the research method and its components. The third chapter presents a biographical overview of the subjects, an analytical summary of the course in which the study was conducted, and the findings of the study. The fourth chapter deals with the insights from the study, recommendations for improving the course and recommendations for further research.

The research findings support the arguments raised in the literature review - presented in Chapter 1 - on the following points: (1) There is a connection between the professional development of student teachers and their level of competence (Bandura, 2012, p. 25). (2) The importance of modeling in imparting a subject and its significance to the internalization of the subject (Bandura, 1986). (3) Another aspect considered was the difficulties experienced by the student teachers in their studies in colleges where they study in classrooms with front facing, row seating and lecturers who teach frontally (Shner, 2010). In addition, learning in academic institutions contributes little to the technological advancement of the new generation (Hativa, 2016). These difficulties impede the student teachers' implementation of the learned material when they commence actual teaching in

the field. (4) Collaborative, quality learning processes that take place in a group of learners influence the learning outcomes (Hertz-Lazarovitz, 1987). (5) The last issue discussed in the review is the unifying theme of all its parts - the development of professional and personal identity in teacher training-a process that gathers together the processes that took place in the course.

The findings of the research indicate that the process undergone by the students during the course resulted in significant changes in some of them. As mentioned above, the research found a connection between making the change and the student's level of ability.

The students' reports pointed to two areas in which the learning process made a clear contribution. The first was learning through modeling. According to the students' reports, modeling was a significant factor in shaping their conception of teaching. This influence was strengthened by the fact that theories learned in the course were put into practice by the lecturer in her teaching. The fact that at each stage of the work the teacher explained the rationale behind her decisions also contributed to this influence. The second area was in the application of what they had learned. The interviews revealed significant changes in the students' perceptions of teaching. The most prominent change was the transition from an exclusively frontal approach to an approach adopting a variety of teaching methods. The most important insight reported by the students was a deeper understanding of the importance of variation and its significance for dealing with differences between students in the classroom. The understanding gave the students more confidence to create lesson plans that were different from those created before the course. According to them, it was now clear that, while frontal teaching is not invalid, the "winning recipe" for a successful lesson is a combination of all the theories they had learned.

The main conclusion of the study points to three leading factors in the student teacher's professional and personal development: The student's level of ability, the development of knowledge acquired by the student during the course and the process that

the student undergoes while applying the theories learned. In the light of the above findings, further studies should examine the process that student teachers undergo upon teaching in the field, as well as the influence of methods of teaching on their work.