

Contributing Student Pedagogy: What, Why and How

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What is it about?

Contribution-based pedagogies (Collis & Moonen 2001) are based around the idea that a good way for students to learn is for them to collaboratively create learning resources to share with others. Attractions of this approach include:

- students are all expected to become active participants;
- shallow learning strategies are discouraged;
- each student depends on the contributions of their peers, and is in turn depended on by others;
- students are exposed to, and must select from, a variety of real-world resources;
- course activities have real meaning and purpose;
- elements of a “community of practice” are developed.

I have adopted a contribution-based approach in several courses, and welcome the opportunity to share my experiences and discuss the approach with interested colleagues.

Why is it important?

The aims of higher education are steadily moving away from content provision, toward a greater emphasis on the process of learning. The most important graduate skills involve: knowing where, when, who and how to access what is needed; making informed decisions about options; learning from and with others; learning from experience; adapting from the global to a local context; etc. Sfard (1998) characterises the content-process dichotomy in terms of underlying *Acquisition* and *Participation* metaphors, but cautioned against adopting just one metaphor. The contribution-based approach appears to offer an effective middle ground.

How the session will be run

I'll start with a brief overview of the contribution-based approach, and present some example activities of my own (Hamer 2006) and others (Gehring et al. 2006). What happens next will depend on the makeup of the group. Participants will be invited to share their own experiences, explore connections with other teaching approaches, and to discuss difficulties and issues that arise. I hope for us to come out of the session with a sense of the significance of the approach and some ideas for further refinement.

References

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