

Title

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Author

Juliana Álvarez Ramírez

Program

Licenciatura en Inglés

E-mail

Juliana.alvarezra@amigo.edu.co

Course

Practicum IV

I've always been blessed with the fortune to have parents that have always supported and encouraged me in all the decisions I've ever had to make in my life, and that support becomes even bigger when it comes to my education and my studies.

After I graduated from high school, I didn't really know what I should study to be a graduate professional; I went to cooking school and got a technical degree, but I couldn't do much with it. After that I started a Technology in Design and Interior Decoration, but I never finished it. I gave up, and it was such a huge disappointment to my parents, that they gave up on me too.

It is so unbelievable how you start cherishing things, after they're no longer there. My parents said, that even though they love me very much, they were not going to keep on paying for my studies anymore and if I ever wanted to keep on studying, I was the one who had to make it happen.

This hit me so hard, that after a while I started looking for jobs, because I really didn't want to end up being somebody who didn't studied because she didn't want to, when she had all the opportunities and all the smarts to do it, and I knew I had to work very hard for it, and it was hard.

After a few jobs and a lot of interviews, I got a job as an English teacher in an institute where I was under payed and had to run here and there around the city. But after being there with the students, knowing that you're making a difference, and see how they react to you, to your teaching, you realize how rewarding it is. In that case, money is not the most important thing and if you're good at what you do and work hard, you will do just fine.

This job wasn't hard to perform, due to the fact that I have studied English since I was 8 years old, I have always liked it, and somehow teaching came out right for me; shockingly I was very patient with my students, and by the way they reacted to my teaching style and how they improved their English level, it felt like I was actually doing something right. I have been a tutor before, but never got to manage large groups of students. It just felt right, like if this was what it was meant for me to do.

My family was very surprised to see how good I was at it, and they decided to give me one last chance; the only thing I had to do was find a good place to study and dedicate my soul to my studies. When I started studying my bachelors in English education, I discovered a new whole world of concepts and learning manners; in every class, the teachers were talking about teaching methods, learning approaches, class management and many more techniques and learning systems; according to Edward Anthony (1963), learning approaches are a set of assumptions about language teaching, which involve the nature of language, learning, and teaching; and the methods are an overall plan systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach (Anthony, 1963), and It felt so great to realize that, although I didn't know about these theories, I was accurate when I taught them and I was doing it right.

The day I started my practicum at this new private school, I didn't get nervous at all, but I didn't know what to expect, I wasn't sure about what my job was going to be. On induction day they told me I was going to be a teacher's assistant, and I wasn't sure about what was the role I was going to perform.

As a teacher's assistant, I have had the opportunity to observe the way the teachers from other countries develop their classes, its necessary to mention that most of their classes come previously prepared from the curriculum office, but this is merely a useful suggestion in which most of them choose to follow it and use it. This private school works in a pedagogical model that claims to be constructivist, which applies to problem solving inside the classroom, how they use their previous knowledge to build new knowledge.

In terms of the Constructivism theory, according to the psychogenetic approximation, a teacher is a promoter of the development and the autonomy of the students. He/she must know in depth the issues and main characteristics of the operative learning of the students, their stages and the general phases of the cognitive development. The teacher's main role consists in promoting a correlation atmosphere, of respect and self-trust for the kid, giving an opportunity to the self-structural learning of the students, mainly through the "indirect learning" and the problem statement and cognitive issues, (Piaget, 1985).

The Traditional pedagogy conceives the Teacher as a figure of authority, rigid and controlling; also as the one who limits individuality and creativity. The Student's role here is conceived as a passive subject that only reproduces knowledge, is somebody who has a low level of personal interest and it is not taken into account in the learning process, (Modelos Pedagógicos y Teorías del Aprendizaje, 2003).

After realizing my job was going to be the teachers' assistant, I discovered a lot more ways to approach the children and get used to this new and different learning system. I was looking forward to do it because now I get to reinforce not only what my gut has been telling me to do since I was teaching English in other schools, but also now this knowledge is supported by what I have learned from my teachers and classmates. Most of those methodologies are based on the constructivist model but, from within the school, there are some aspects based on

traditional models; this means that the constructivist model is not entirely achieved, meaning that in theory this model works, but in the practice it would not work as a whole.

After months of hard work I have been gaining experience as an assistant, but sometimes I got the opportunity to give a class, following the lesson plan prepared by the homeroom teacher. But it is necessary to mention that neither of these classes have been about teaching English. It has been a meaningful experience, but not the one I was expecting since I started working there.

Within my duties as an assistant I have been able to create a great variety of didactic material, suggested by me to the teacher which they have approved, this is one of the most meaningful input that I have given to the classes. This didactic material is created thinking to be used not only in different contexts but also for a wide variety purposes, it also can be used by me in and out of the school, creating a list of material that can be used in my future as an English teacher.

These classes have helped me reinforce the way I manage a classroom in terms of: learning styles, teaching methods, special needs, didactics and classroom management.

These classrooms teach you that once you are there, surrounded by the students, you start realizing that each and every one of them is a whole universe and it really affects the way you teach, it even helps you to keep your feet on the ground and that at the end of the day it is not about the things you teach, but how you teach them and the connections you get to have with your students and their own worlds.

As an assistant I haven't been able to intervene as a practicing student is supposed to do, but I have the opportunity to observe the classroom management of the other teachers that come from a different educational system, a different cultural background, teachers who have more experience than me and have worked with vast variety of children; that not only have worked in private schools with privileged children but also have worked in their own countries in public schools with several students' contexts. All of these aspects have helped me to understand that I can promote such aspects into my future practices as a teacher.

References

- Learning Methods and Approaches Edward Anthony (Anthony, 1963).
- Learning Methods and Approaches Douglas Brown (Brown, 2007).
- Diferencias entre la concepción tradicionalista y la humanista (Modelos Pedagógicos y Teorías del Aprendizaje, 2003, pág. 55).
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