

Learning: a continuous process essay sample



Learning is more than memorizing, more than regurgitating facts and information. It is about the context, the experience, of interpreting these facts and transforming them into knowledge. This, as Jeff Cobb argues, is what constitutes learning and I concur. After reading an excerpt from Charles Dickens' novel, "Book the First Sowing" as well as one from bell hooks' book, "Talking Back", I felt that both authors held a similar definition of learning. For example, bell hooks' view in regards to learning emphasizes the importance of experience and embracing one's own cultural background and gender. She uses the power of speech and writing as examples of learning, but emphasizes that for her, learning means more than listening; it means engaging, having a voice. "It was in that world of woman talk that was born in me the craving to speak, to have a voice, and not just any voice but one that could be identified as belonging to me" (hooks 5). It is important to be a part of the learning process, not a bystander, in order for effective learning to take place.

Contrastingly, Dickens' uses a much different approach to convey this same message. Sarcastically painting a picture of a scenario in which there is teaching without learning, he sheds light on the learning process by drawing on an ineffective method of teaching; spitting out concrete facts, without reason or context. He emphasises the absence of thinking and therefore, the absence of learning. Knowing a massive amount of facts, like Mr. M'Choakumchild, but not being able to relate them to different circumstances or perspectives, renders them rather useless. As the narrator states, "If he had only learnt a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more" (Dickens 53). In my own experience, learning happens

best when I am able to participate and relate information to something that makes sense to me. Much like hooks' learning was stimulated by her defiant participation and ability to make her voice her own. "Talking back", as she puts it, "meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion" (hooks 5). Disagreeing and having an opinion are some of the most fundamental aspects of learning.

I have certainly talked back to many of my teachers in this context and will encourage my future students to do so as well. Even when we are wrong, especially when we are wrong, learning from our mistakes can be a very powerful learning experience. Like Cobb, I feel that learning is not a passive experience; it is something in which one must actively participate in and be conscious of. However, as Cobb explains, learning takes place whether we are conscious of it or not. It is something we are inherently born with; the desire to learn, to know more. As Dickens sardonically illustrates, to stop at known facts alone would be not only contradictory to the learning process but virtually impossible for people to do. It is in our nature as intellectual human beings to question and to feel. I have had my share of fact obsessed teachers throwing massive amounts of information at me all at once with no room for questions until the very end and I must say, I did not learn much. For me, and I think Dickens, hooks and Cobb would agree, asking questions is the key to learning.

Works Cited

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