



Education as a hope in uncertain times

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Journal Writing as Medium for Thinking and Learning: Instructional Support to Foster Self-Regulated Learning

Writing, just as reading, is basic to academic learning both in school and at the university. With the advent of a scientific writing pedagogy in the early seventies of the last century, the idea was born that writing is a natural tool for thinking and learning. This idea was first suggested by the educational reform movement "writing across the curriculum" in the UK and soon spread over to many high schools and universities in the USA. By drawing on classic theoretical ideas from writing-research, models of self-regulated learning and cognitive load theory, I will propose the self-regulation view in writing-to-learn as a promising theoretical perspective. According to this perspective, writing has the potential to scaffold self-regulated learning due to the cognitive offloading written text offers as an external representation and memory aid, and due to the offloading, that specifically results from the genre-free principle in journal writing.

I will then present the main tenets of a research program on journal writing – "the Freiburg Self-Regulated-Journal-Writing Approach" – which I conducted with colleagues from the University of Freiburg (Germany) during the last 20 years. In this research program, we developed and tested instructional support methods to help students use the journal writing to enact knowledge construction processes that result in deep comprehension and long-term retention of subject matter, as well as effective preparation for future problem-solving. My discussion of these more than 20 experimental and correlative studies will show that, with appropriate instructional support, journal writing indeed is a valuable medium for thinking and learning that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning process, by helping them to recognize their individual learning needs and develop their ideas about complex subject matter issues. Fostering such self-regulated learning competence is both an important goal and hope of education particularly in uncertain times.



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