

SOLVE A PROBLEM AND 'CHANGE' THE WORLD

by Clifford Sykes, Teach with Africa Fellow



This resource is based on a workshop presented at the GTI Axis Summit, which engaged participants to search further and dig deeper into proven practice and future possibility for successful teaching realizing that each learner's future is the teacher's hands. Participants received cards with proven educational theory and philosophy to discuss with their partners, they reported back to the large group and together agree on successful practice.

Proven competencies and associated practices for successful teaching and learning:

1. Pedagogical content knowledge strong evidence of impact on student outcomes

The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning. Effective teachers also have a strong understanding of the material being taught and understand the ways students think about the content and has insight on the learning style of each learner. Effective teachers must be able to evaluate the thinking behind students' own methods and identify students' common misconceptions. Teaching learners to understand their own learning processes is critical to deep learning.

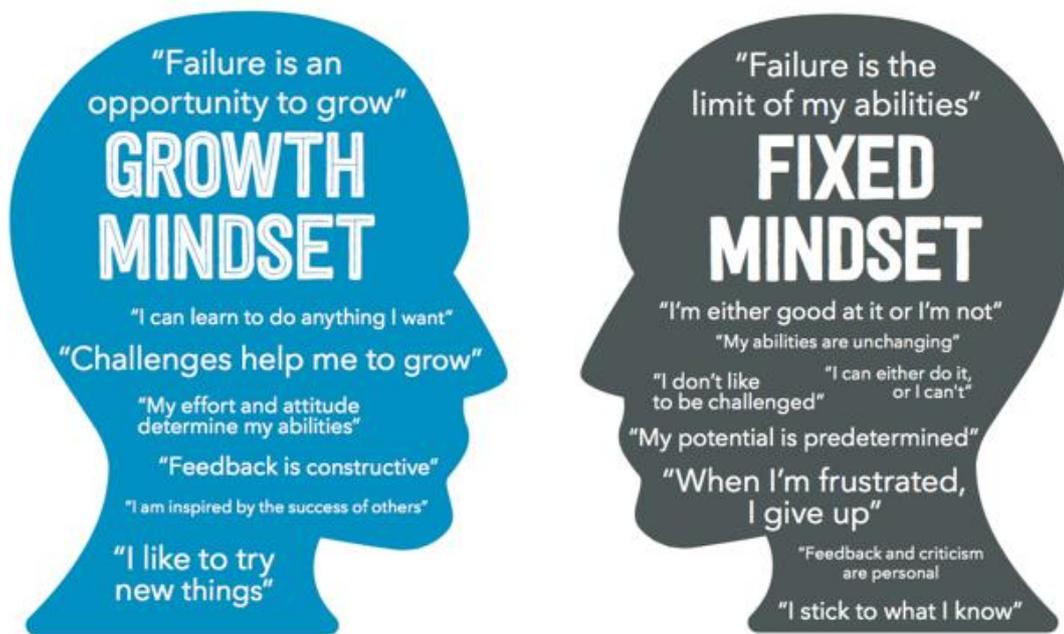
2. Quality of instruction (Strong evidence of impact on student outcomes) – Effective instructional practice includes elements such as effective questioning and use of appropriate assessment by teachers. Specific practices, like reviewing previous learning, providing model responses for students, giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely and progressively introducing new learning (scaffolding) are also elements of high-quality instruction.

3. Classroom climate (Moderate evidence of impact on student outcomes)

Climate covers quality of interactions between teachers and students. Teacher high expectations are critical to the learning process: the teacher needs to create a classroom that is constantly demanding more, but still recognizes and affirms students' self-worth. It also involves attributing student success to effort rather than ability and valuing resilience to failure (grit). The understanding of 'growth mindset' should be reflected in the classroom climate.

4. Classroom management (Moderate evidence of impact on student outcomes)

A teacher's abilities to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, and to manage students' behavior with clear rules that are consistently enforced, are all relevant to maximizing the learning that can take place. These environmental factors are necessary for good learning rather than its direct components.



5. **Teacher beliefs (Some evidence of impact on student outcomes)**

Why teachers adopt particular practices, the purposes they aim to achieve, their theories about what learning is and how it happens and their conceptual models of the nature and role of teaching in the learning process all seem to be important.

6. **Professional behaviors (Some evidence of impact on student outcomes)**

Behaviors exhibited by innovative teachers such as reflecting on and developing professional practice, participation in professional development, supporting colleagues, and liaising and communicating with parents.

Educational Theories and philosophies

An instructor's teaching style is directly related to their philosophy of what it means to know and learn. The rationale for making particular teaching choices becomes more apparent when new school members reflect on what they believe about teaching and learning. Much of what school teachers believe comes from their own experiences as students, the images of teaching they hold, and their experiences as a teacher. There is, however, an accessible shared body of action-based research on teaching and learning that should serve teachers well as they hone their teaching craft.

School instructional practitioners come to better understand their own philosophy through thinking, sharing and engaging about what they believe about teaching and learning. One means of thinking and distilling is writing. School educators benefit from taking the time to craft a teaching philosophy statement and a commitment to placing the child at the center of all practice and approach.

This sort of statement or something like it is often part of an application process for school positions. The clarity that results from crafting such a statement and associated values definition brings to the forefront the way teaching decisions are made, and this self-knowledge and metacognition will be invaluable when undertaking course and lesson planning.

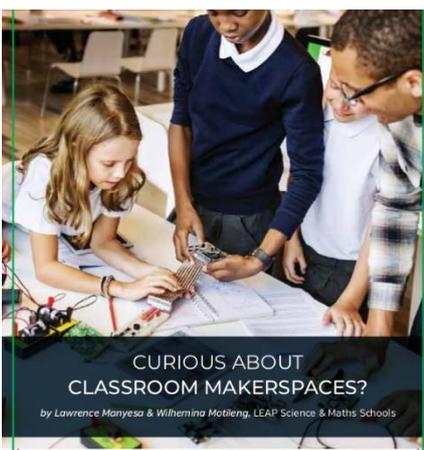
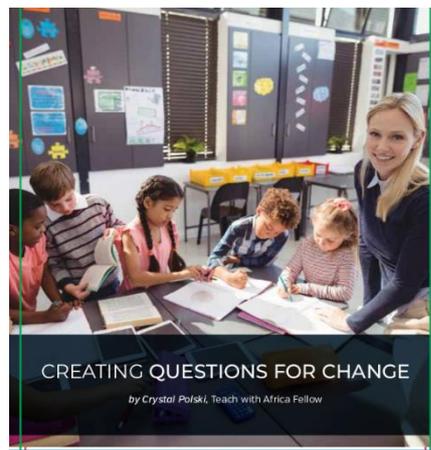
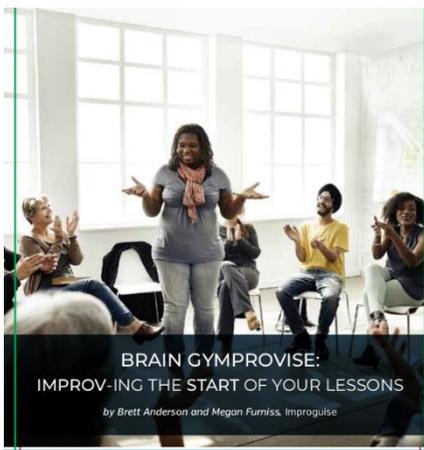
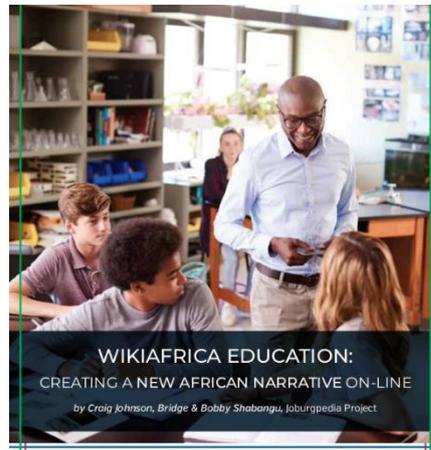
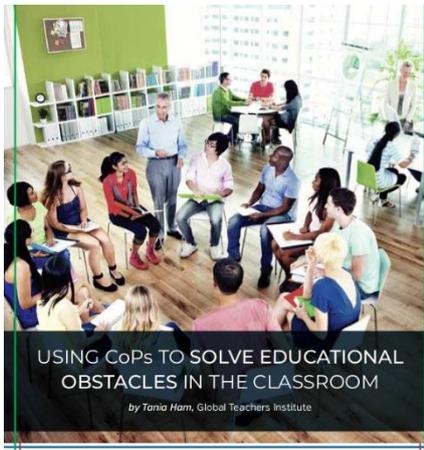
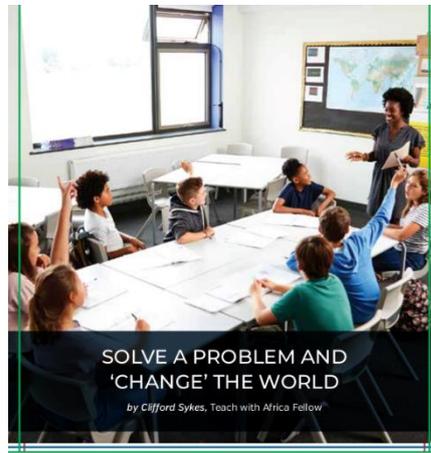
The table below outlines major learning theories and links them to particular disciplines of knowledge.

Learning Theories and Philosophies as Applied to Schooling					
	Representative Philosophers or Learning Theorists (1)	Student Actions	Teacher Actions	Subject Matter Emphasized	Desired Educational Outcomes
Existentialism (2)	Maxine Greene, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Soren Kierkegaard	authenticity, responsibility; conscious engaged activity	encourage discussion of choice in a moral and political context; promote a thorough grounding in all academic and interpersonal areas	history, mathematics, literature, drama, art, crafts, social sciences, sciences (everything)	conscious decision-makers choosing actions that promote freedom and community
Critical Theory (Marxian Analysis)	Karl Marx, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Paulo Freire	analysis of real conditions of everyday life, avoiding/overcoming alienation	from each according to her ability, to each according to her need	history, mathematics, literature, drama, art, crafts, social sciences, sciences (everything)	create a world in which all children are valued equally, who work to transform existing social and material conditions toward more freedom and equality
Behaviorism	B.F. Skinner	respond to stimuli, learn to be self-regulating	present stimuli, manipulate learning environment, create behavioral contracts, offer reinforcement	subject areas that can be directly observed, measured, and evaluated quantitatively	orderly self-regulation
Cognitivism/ Developmentalism	Maria Montessori, A. S. Neill, John Dewey, Waldorf Schools, Reggio Emilia Schools	pursue one's authentic interests in community with others	create learning opportunities, use of manipulatives, joint and individual projects, field trips	real life learning opportunities relevant to the child's interests and needs	life-long self-directed learning, and authentic participation in community life
Social Constructivism	John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Montessori, Reggio Emilia , and Waldorf Schools	select information, construct hypotheses, collaborate with others	Socratic dialogue, facilitate extrapolation, encourage students to discover basic principles, create meaningful contexts for the application of knowledge	history, mathematics, literature, drama, art, crafts, social sciences, sciences	create an educational community that translates into wider democratic participation
Pragmatism	John Dewey, C. S. Peirce, Richard Rorty			history, mathematics, literature, drama, art, crafts, social sciences, sciences	
Social Meliorism/ Social Reconstructionism	John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Pestazzoli, Marx, Sartre, Freire, Waldorf Schools			history, mathematics, literature, drama, art, crafts, social sciences, sciences	work to overcome existing social problems; create a better world
Essentialism/ Idealism	Plato				

It should be noted from the above table that, representative philosophers or learning theorists are subjectively allocated: Some schools of thought making this chart might well have categorized at least some of these philosophers and educational theorists differently. Such disagreement is appropriate and is based on differing readings of the people in question.

For example, in South African context, this table might include African philosophers and philosophies such as Ubuntu. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-016-9545-x>

Moreover, the philosophies and learning theories listed here represent an attempt to characterize complex thinking in broad terms for the purpose of initial comprehension. Teachers should beware of "definitive" characterizations, which this chart does not attempt to produce.



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The Global Teachers Institute [GTI] is a teacher development network of educators, schools and organisations committed to developing high quality teachers through school based initial teacher education programmes, international exchanges and collaborative platforms.

Our mission is to develop reflective, empathetic, socially responsible master teachers for high-need African schools through projects and interventions for replication and scale.

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PRESENTER



Clifford Sykes

Clifford Sykes has over 30 years' successful teaching experience at all levels; including Lead Teacher and Jr. Administrator.

He has a Bachelor of Arts in Music, a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications Master of Music. He is a musician, actor and a photographer. He is 2019's TWA Fellow.

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