



DEVELOPING THE TEACHING PRACTICE THROUGH LEARNING STUDY

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AGENDA

1. Introduction of Learning Study
2. Developing the teaching practice through Learning Study

FOCUS IN A LEARNING STUDY:

How teaching can enhance students' learning.

LEARNING STUDY: BACKGROUND

Learning Study mainly developed in Sweden and Hong Kong, but is now used in countries, such as Singapore, Norway and South Africa.

Learning Study can be seen as a kind of action research.

It has similarities with Lesson Study and Design Experiment.

LESSON STUDY

Developed mainly in Japan.

A group of teachers choose something they want to develop in their teaching. Together they plan, perform and revise a lesson in an iterative design.

Main aim: To develop teachers' ability to teach.



DESIGN EXPERIMENT

Researchers co-operate with teachers in developing teaching regarding a specific area.

Theories about learning are used in the entire process. The theories are tested and developed.

Example: Reciprocal teaching.



Main aim: To develop theories that can enhance students' learning.

LEARNING STUDY: CHARACTERISTICS

- 3-6 **teachers co-operate** in developing teaching of a specific learning content.
- The process is **iterative** and **one lesson** is planned, conducted and revised.
- A **learning theory**, usually **Variation Theory**, is used as a pedagogical tool.
- The theory as well as **teachers' practice based knowledge** affects the entire process.

Main aim: To develop the teachers' ability to teach, the teaching and/ or theories about teaching.

FOCUS: AN OBJECT OF LEARNING

What is to be learned?

The object of learning is constituted in the classroom, including content and abilities.

Writing: *To be able to write stories with a well developed, exciting and coherent plot.*

Mathematics: *To be able to operate with unit and non-unit fractions of a discrete quantity.*

Social sciences: *To be able to reason about justice.*

PE: *To have a good posture when jogging.*

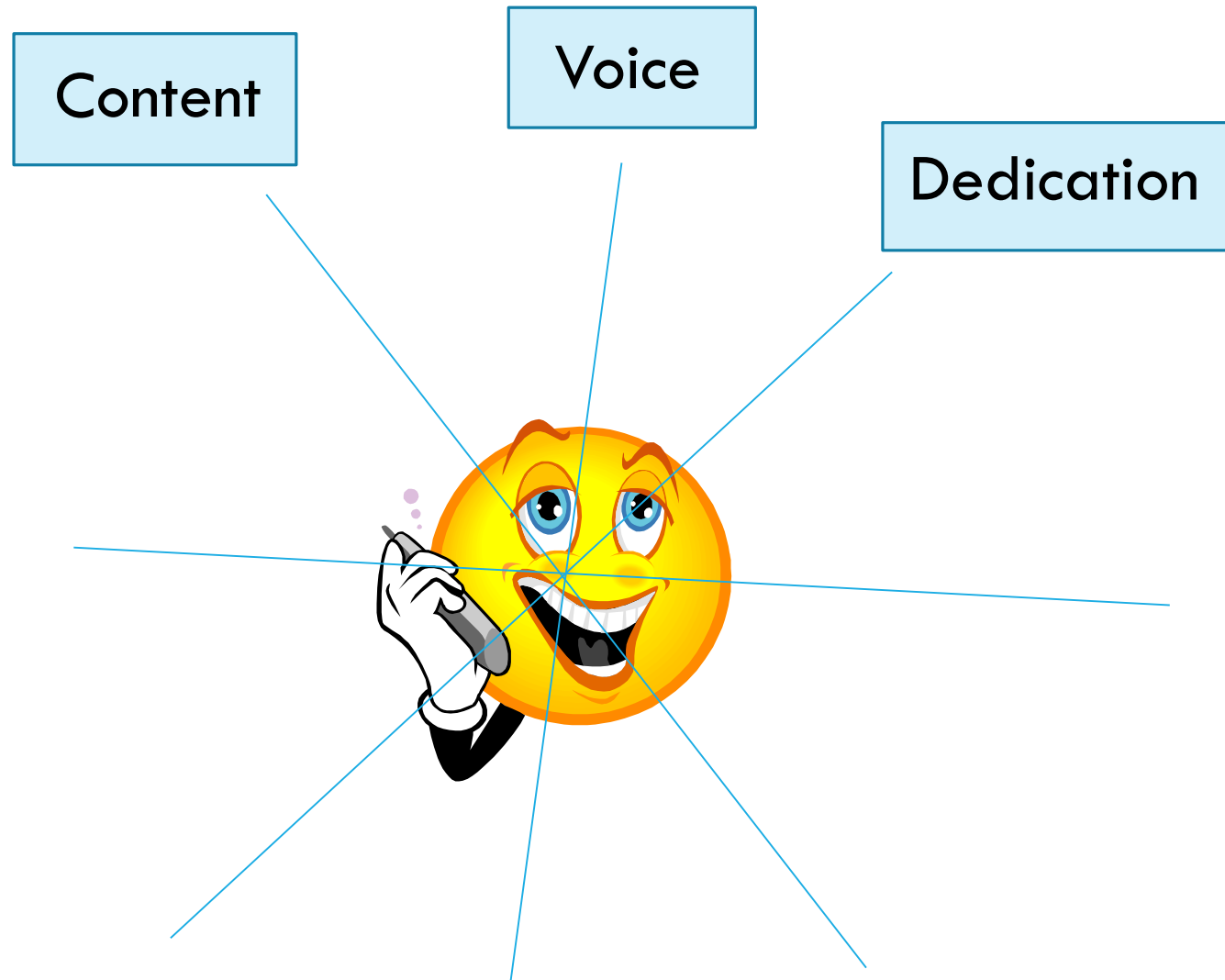
VARIATION THEORY

(a) We perceive a phenomenon or an object of learning in different ways depending on which **aspects** of it we discern.

Critical aspects:

What does a learner need to discern in order to understand/experience a phenomena or an object of learning in a new, more powerful way.

Listening to someone who is talking



HOW CAN WE TEACH: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SPEAK WITH DEDICATION ?

Learning
Study is



Superman
is...



Giving two examples of the same thing:

We talk about different things and have different voices. We are both dedicated when we talk.

Learning
Study is...



Learning
Study is



Giving contrasting examples:

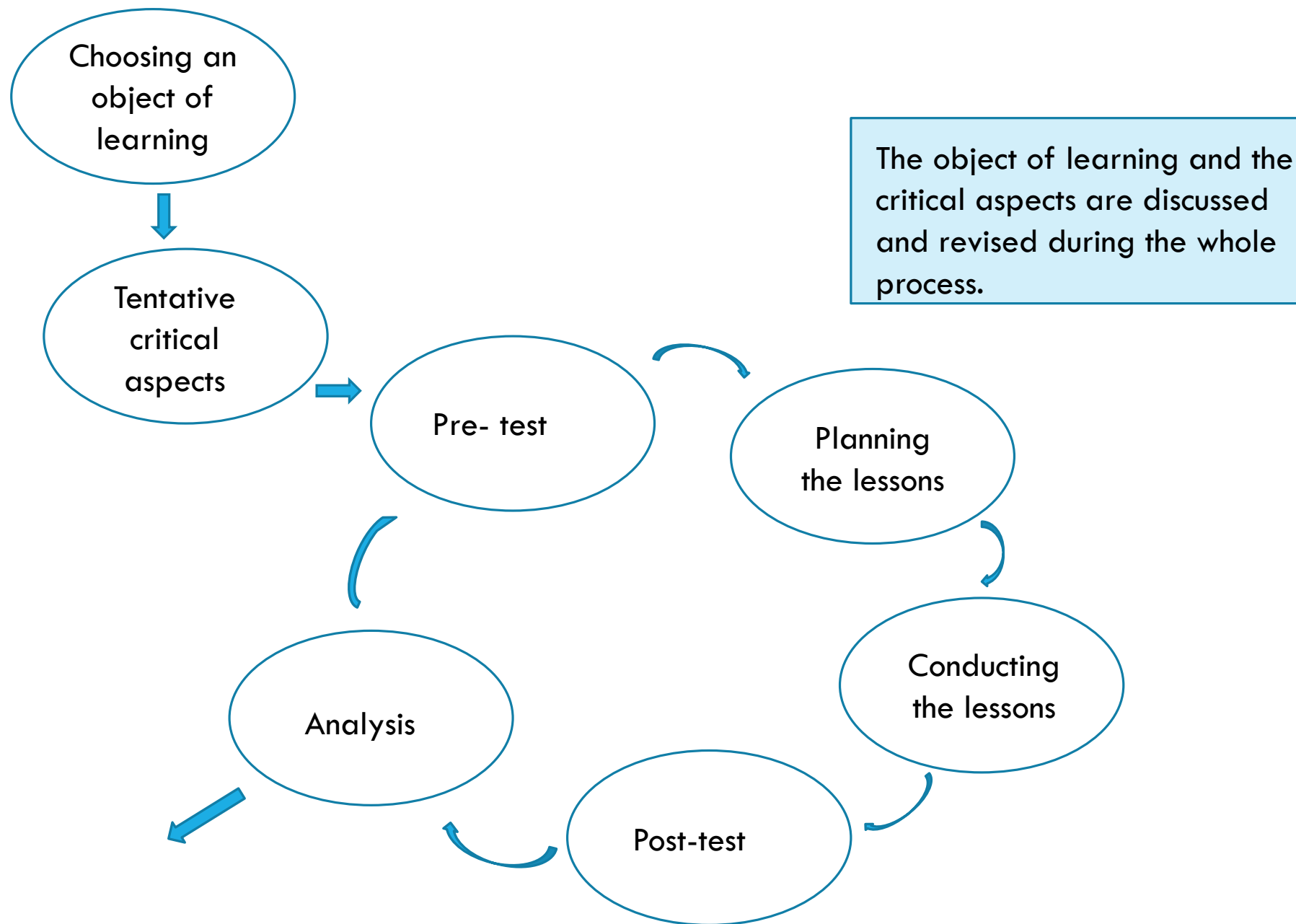
I will talk about the same thing (the content and the voice is the same), but I will vary how dedicated I am when I am talking.

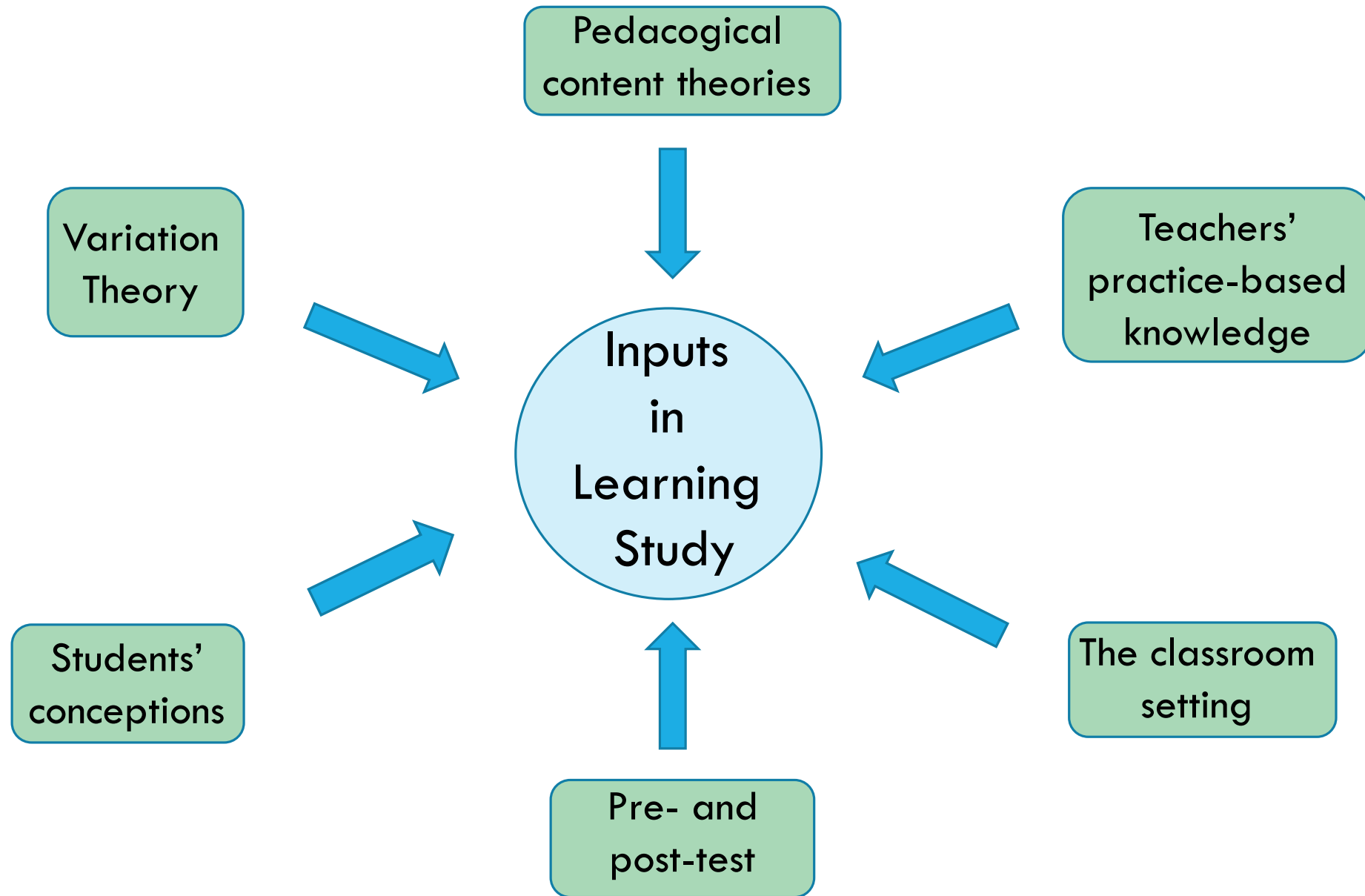


(b) We can only discern that which ***varies***.

Contrast can make aspects discernable.

The Learning Study cycle





DEVELOPING THE TEACHING PRACTICE THROUGH LEARNING STUDY

Which processes are taking place?

What happens when teachers' practice based knowledge meets Variation Theory?

THEMES

1. Focusing on the object of learning
2. Using a common language to talk about teaching and learning
3. Making teachers' assumptions visible.
4. Using theories in practice
5. Analyzing the lesson – not the teacher
6. Focusing on the specific

What do teachers spontaneously focus when they plan their lessons?

Activities!

Focus: *How* should we do this?

Should students work individually or in pairs?

Shall we watch a film or read a text?



The learning content is unproblematic and taken for granted.



Do we learn only by practicing an ability?

Should we just do it many times?

(implicit teaching)

or

Is it important to support students' to discern new aspects of the ability?

(explicit teaching)

1. FOCUSING ON THE OBJECT OF LEARNING

In a Learning Study the first focus is on *what*. *What* is to be learned?

What is our object of learning? What does it mean to know this?

Which aspects are necessary for students to discern in order to develop the ability?

How emerge from what



Activities and materials are chosen based on the content.

2. USING A COMMON LANGUAGE TO TALK ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Compare these two expressions from teachers commenting a lesson:

“The lesson was a bit messy”

“Our contrast was not discernable for the students. We varied too many aspects.”

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS:

Vague concepts, often focusing on activities:

“This seems good”

“I think this would be fun for the children”

“My students liked it when we did this writing exercise”

The lessons are described as

“fun”, “messy”, “good”

The comments are based on practice knowledge, but they are limited by the vocabulary used. The object of learning is addressed on a general level.

IN THE END OF THE PROCESS

The focus is on teaching and learning and the concepts used are more precise:

object of learning

discerning

critical aspect

focal awareness

contrast etc etc

WHY IS A COMMON LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

- Language enhances, addresses and affects the thought
- It makes it possible to communicate the same thing
- It specifies what we mean.

3. MAKING TEACHERS' ASSUMPTIONS VISIBLE

Teachers' practice knowledge is a great resource throughout the entire process.

Sharing prior experiences, ideas and theories.

But their assumptions are also challenged – by colleagues, by theory and by the systematic iterative design.

4. USING AND DEVELOPING THEORIES IN PRACTICE

- Variation Theory gives teachers new pedagogical tools.
- By testing different ways of teaching, and analyzing it, teachers' knowledge about their own practice increases.
- Learning Study is a small scale systematical research in your own classroom – new theories about teaching is developed.
- The knowledge gained is possible to share with others.

5. ANALYZING THE LESSON — NOT THE TEACHER

Instead of assessing the teacher —
we assess the lesson, a lesson that we have created
together.

The lesson is our professional object.

6. FOCUSING ON THE SPECIFIC

Why do we focus on only
one lesson?

- By focusing on the specific, we can address questions in the teaching context that otherwise would not be addressed.
- Knowledge about the particular is the foundation for knowledge about the general.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN IMPLEMENTING LEARNING STUDY?

- Time-consuming
- Can be difficult in low-functioning groups
- Since teachers are co-operating based on their subjects, it can be difficult to involve teachers who are only teaching marginal subjects.

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Summary

Learning Study focuses on the relation between teaching and learning.

It can develop the teaching practice:

- Collaborative learning among teachers
- Using theory in practice
- Systematic, iterative design focusing on students' learning

Thank you for listening!

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FURTHER READING

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