

A Narrative Analysis of Context-State-Result (CSR) and History of the Delta Conference

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An alternative conceptual model of teaching, student engagement, and lesson plan design has emerged in School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE) known as Context-State-Result (CSR). Multiple entities in SBAE use CSR, which impacts tens of thousands of students and teachers annually. The National FFA Organization and California FFA Association use CSR to train conference facilitators and national/state officers. Several state education agencies conduct Delta conferences for SBAE teacher professional development, which utilize elements of CSR. Additionally, numerous post-secondary institutions have integrated components of CSR into teacher education coursework. Though CSR is applied in various aspects of SBAE, its history and adoption are not well understood. Further, the origins of the model are not publicly documented. To support “meaningful, engaged learning in all environments” (AAAE national research priority four; Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016), the purpose of this study was to trace the history of CSR to establish a framework for future research. The objectives of this study were to explore (1) the author and history of CSR, (2) theoretical frameworks and literature that contributed to CSR, and (3) the current application and use of CSR and Delta in SBAE and FFA.

Conceptual Framework

There is not a universally accepted theory of teaching or principles of learning in SBAE. Ball and Knobloch (2005) analyzed teaching methods courses in SBAE teacher preparation programs and found, while there was not a methods textbook in SBAE that was unanimously accepted, the now out-of-press *Methods of Teaching Agriculture* (Newcomb, McCracken, Warmbrod, & Whittington, 2004) was used most commonly. Theories taught in SBAE methods often combine several additional resources and range from those specific to, or commonly used in, SBAE (DePorter, Reardon, & Singer-Nourie, 1999; Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008; Talbert, Vaughn, Croom, & Lee, 2013) to general education (Arends, 2000; Hunter, 1982; Kratwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). As an emerging theory, CSR incorporates concepts from Bloom’s (1956) domains of learning and *Quantum Teaching* (DePorter et al., 1999). In an analysis of SBAE principles of learning, Foster and Whittington (2017) recommended teacher educators engage in professional development on theories of teaching, and that additional research on quality and intensity is warranted. With a lack of commonly adopted resources, combined with out-of-press texts, there is a need to explore emerging theories and best practices in teaching.

Methodology

We used a historical narrative analysis to accomplish the objectives of this study. Narratives make use of “stories as data, specifically first-person accounts of experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). In July 2018, we contacted leadership at National FFA and the California Department of Education to determine experts on CSR to interview. We identified the following participants based on a consensus of recommendations: Mark Reardon, CEO of Centrepointe Leadership; Brad Dodson, SBAE professor at CSU-Chico; Hugh Mooney, SBAE state supervisor at CA Dept. of Education; and Seth Derner, CEO of Vivayic. Participants were contacted by email to request participation. First-person experiences were documented through oral interviews conducted between August and September 2018. Additional artifacts, including journal articles, online blogs, and promotional materials for Delta were collected and analyzed to contribute to the credibility of the narrative. We conducted interviews by phone, which were recorded to serve as artifacts and limited to 60 minutes. To create a “beginning, middle, and end” (Merriam, 2009, p. 32) of the historical narrative, we coded interviews for themes and chronologically organized data. Participants reviewed the findings prior to publication to ensure content accuracy.

Findings

Determining the original authors, history, theoretical frameworks, and literature that support CSR were the first two objectives of the study. Interviews confirmed Mark Reardon as the author of CSR. Reardon felt something was missing from education. He developed the model because teachers focused too little on the context of learning. He theorized CSR (i.e., ■+▲=●) in 2000 after writing *Quantum Teaching*. Reardon explained CSR expanded upon and connected theories of anticipatory sets (mastery teaching; Hunter, 1982), accelerated learning (Lozanov, 1978; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; cf. Scovel, 1979), and the domains of learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Dave, 1970; Krathwohl et al., 1964; Simpson, 1972).

Result, the third component of CSR, but beginning of the model, should be considered first. The desired result of education is learning. Represented in the model by a circle (i.e., ●, a bullseye or target), students “hit” specific and clearly measured learning outcomes. Next in the model, is *State*, represented by a triangle (i.e., ▲ or Δ delta; to change in mathematics). In this model, to achieve a *Result*, teachers facilitate the *State* of students. Learning is a permanent change in student behavior (i.e., to think, feel, or act differently than before) as the result of experience (Lachman, 1997). Teachers create a change by using teaching methods to target one or more of the three learning domains (i.e., cognitive, affective, or psychomotor; Bloom, 1956). Finally, CSR emphasizes *Context*. The theory proposed that teaching and learning are moderated by contextual factors. In the model, to facilitate learning students must understand why the content is relevant (i.e., interest approach; connection to prior knowledge), what outcomes are expected (i.e., objectives), and rules for appropriate behavior (i.e., directions, management). Represented by a square (i.e., ■, a canvas or outline), the teacher “frames” the experience to support learning.

The final objective of this study was to examine current application and use of CSR and Delta in SBAE. In 2000, Mark Reardon, Seth Derner, and a team of National FFA staff began to develop an intense, highly rigorous, professional experience for teachers on instructional design pedagogy and leadership development. The result, grounded in CSR, was the Delta conference (2005) and LifeKnowledge curriculum (2007). Delta was eventually discontinued due to cost, lack of immediately measurable results, and leadership changes at FFA. As of 2019, FFA no longer operates Delta, which Centrepointe Leadership now conducts for teachers in at least five states. Several SBAE organizations continue to use CSR, including teacher education programs and National FFA, including California FFA, in officer development programs and conferences.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

This narrative analysis provides important historical clarity about an instructional theory used in SBAE and FFA. First, while the National FFA Organization utilized concepts of CSR in the Delta conference and LifeKnowledge curriculum, and continues to use CSR today, the model was originally created by Mark Reardon. He included similar concepts to CSR in *Quantum Teaching* (DePorter et al., 1999), but first proposed the model in 2000. The Delta conference was launched in 2005 in a partnership between Reardon and FFA. The CSR model is framed by, and expands upon, seminal educational research (Bloom, 1956; Hunter, 1982), and is supported by teaching methods in SBAE (Newcomb et al., 2004; Phipps et al., 2008). We recommend the CSR conceptual model be more fully developed, specifically the concept of context. Additional research should be conducted on context as a moderator of the relationship between teaching (state) and learning (result), specifically in SBAE and FFA.

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