Educational Philosophy and Technology

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My educational philosophy is grounded in several learning theories. My focus is on creating Student-Centered environments that make the education meaningful for individual learners—I believe in meeting students where they are and tailoring educational experience to their needs. I believe that learning is a process of active construction, and I try to tap into learners' prior experiences to bolster the effectiveness of the instruction. I emphasize the importance of preparing learners with skills and tools they can directly apply in their personal and professional lives. I believe that learners grow in their practice through reflection in which they can examine their growth, accomplishments, and challenges. I believe in accessibility and equity for all learners using Universal Design for Learning.

Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning (SCL) is an instructional approach that prioritizes active participation, self-regulation, and deep cognitive engagement. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning processes. According to Dong et al. (2019), this method significantly enhances the ability to abstract main ideas compared to teacher-directed approaches. The research highlights that SCL promotes deeper cognitive processing, encouraging students to develop a comprehensive understanding of materials through self-questioning and problem-solving. SCL not only improves academic outcomes but also nurtures lifelong learning habits.

Student-centered learning significantly enhances academic achievement and social skills, as demonstrated by Asoodeh et al. (2012). Using cooperative learning strategies that incorporate competitive, collaborative, and individual approaches, SCL applies structured educational principles like Gagne's instructional events. By promoting active participation, problem-solving, and peer interaction, SCL contributes to holistic intellectual and interpersonal development.

Facilitator's Role

In a student-centered learning (SCL) environment, the facilitator plays a pivotal role in creating conditions that empower students to actively engage, self-regulate, and construct knowledge. Rather than delivering content in a traditional, teacher-directed manner, the facilitator designs interactive and authentic learning experiences that encourage deeper cognitive processing and problem-solving. Drawing from Gagné's "nine events of instruction," the facilitator ensures that students are provided with clear objectives, appropriate scaffolding, and opportunities for practice and feedback. Activities such as collaborative group projects, reflective journaling, and guided problem-solving tasks allow students to abstract main ideas and develop critical thinking skills, as highlighted by Dong et al. (2019). Assessments are designed not only to measure knowledge acquisition but also to evaluate skills like self-regulation, communication, and adaptability, as evidenced by Asoodeh et al. (2012). By providing a supportive environment and leveraging tools and strategies aligned with constructivist and cognitivist principles, facilitators guide students toward holistic intellectual and interpersonal development while fostering lifelong learning habits.

Learner's Role

In a student-centered learning (SCL) environment, the student is an active participant and co-creator of their own learning experience. Rather than passively absorbing information, students engage in activities that require them to explore and apply knowledge to authentic, real-world problems. They take ownership of their learning by setting goals, monitoring their progress, and reflecting on their understanding. For instance, students collaborate in groups to solve complex problems, engaging in peer teaching and discussions to deepen their comprehension, as supported by the cooperative learning strategies described by Asoodeh et al. (2012). Additionally, they actively interact with the resources and instructional design provided by the facilitator, using tools such as interactive simulations or project-based tasks to connect new knowledge with prior experiences, aligning with the constructivist emphasis

on internal meaning-making (Driscoll & Burner, 2022). Through these processes, students not only gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter but also develop critical thinking, adaptability, and metacognitive skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

Comparing and Contrasting Learning Theories with my Philosophy

The constructivist theory posits that learning begins as an internal process within the learner, where they actively construct meaning and relevance based on their interactions with their environment (Driscoll & Burner, 2022). It is crucial to create these environments and experiences that provide learners with the resources needed to create the necessary relevant connections for learning to occur. Many of these experiences should be in the context of social interaction via discussions, peer reviews, and collaborative activities, as social interaction is essential for knowledge construction. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further emphasizes the role of social interaction, where learners achieve deeper understanding with the guidance and support of peers or facilitators. Group projects, role-playing scenarios, and collaborative problem-solving tasks provide opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful dialogue, negotiate ideas, and co-construct knowledge.

Cognitivism's emphasis on active engagement and the importance of creating meaningful learning experiences align with my SLC philosophy. Both approaches recognize the learner as an active participant in the process, with a focus on structuring activities that promote deep cognitive processing and problem-solving. However, while I appreciate cognitivism's emphasis on structured sequences of learning, such as Gagné's "nine events of instruction," I place greater emphasis on flexibility, collaboration, and student autonomy in my philosophy. While cognitivism often focuses on mental processes like memory and information retrieval, I prioritize integrating social and emotional development, emphasizing the holistic growth of the learner beyond just cognitive domains

One of the tenets of Behaviorism that aligns with my educational philosophy is prompt feedback to reinforce desired behaviors and guide learners toward mastery. By providing immediate feedback, I

can help students understand their progress, correct mistakes, and build confidence in their abilities. This practice supports a student-centered approach by ensuring learners feel supported and motivated while developing autonomy. However, Behaviorism favors a teacher-centered approach that is antithetical to my philosophy.

The Role of Technology

The technologies I integrate into my educational philosophy are strongly rooted in constructivist and connectivist theories, emphasizing active engagement and collaborative knowledge-building. Canvas serves as the foundational platform for organizing course materials, facilitating peer interaction, and promoting reflection. By offering a structured yet flexible environment, it supports constructivist principles of scaffolding while also enabling connectivist practices by integrating external resources and fostering networked learning. Additionally, Canvas discussion boards create opportunities for asynchronous collaboration, where students can engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange perspectives, and collaboratively construct knowledge. These tools emphasize the social and interactive nature of learning, aligning with both theories.

Google Docs further supports my philosophy by enabling real-time collaboration and co-creation. Students actively contribute to shared documents, refining their work through peer feedback and group engagement, reflecting constructivist values of student-led learning. This collaborative environment also supports connectivist ideals by allowing students to leverage peer networks and shared experiences to deepen their understanding. Similarly, Open Educational Resources (OER) provide students with adaptable, free learning materials that support the construction of knowledge while connecting them to global communities of learners. These tools empower students to take control of their learning process while engaging with broader networks, reflecting the interconnected, student-centered nature of my educational philosophy.

Some of the previously mentioned technologies are constraints on my educational philosophy. Canvas and other LMSs rely on institutional, enterprise style of eLearning delivery and they are quite useful. However, to be flexible in the design of instruction, I feel the need to become a full-stack developer. To do this, I've enrolled in a self-paced course on REACT.js and a refresher course in SQL. Becoming a competent web developer isn't necessarily aligned with any learning theory, but it will allow me to tailor activities and assessments without the constraints of scale. For instance, I could create a bespoke web-based application that could serve to train employees at a family-owned business. The overhead and assumptions related to an LMS like Canvas or Moodle make choosing them in non-institutional settings unlikely.

Reflection

Through this process, I have deepened my understanding of how theories like constructivism and connectivism shape effective, student-centered learning environments. I have gained clarity on the importance of designing experiences that prioritize active engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking while leveraging technologies that empower learners to construct knowledge and connect with diverse networks. This reflection has reinforced my belief in tailoring instruction to meet learners where they are, emphasizing their role as co-creators in the learning process.

As I move forward as an instructional designer, I will carry these principles into creating adaptable, dynamic learning environments that support both individual growth and collaborative learning. I plan to integrate tools like Canvas and Google Docs more strategically to encourage active participation and peer interaction. As a professor, I have already applied these insights by fostering meaningful discussions, encouraging peer reviews, and using technology to scaffold learning. This process has solidified my commitment to blending theory with practice to create learning experiences that are both engaging and transformative.

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