

Constructivism, Humanistic, and 21st Century Learning Theories

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There are many different theories that teachers can implement into their classrooms, however, every teacher has their own theory that works best for them. The different theories are behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, social constructivism, 21st century skills, humanism, and choice theory. Each theory focuses on a different part of the school, curriculum, or the student. In this paper the three theories that will be examined are constructivism, 21st century skills, and humanism. Then I will discuss how I will implement these theories into my classroom.

The first theory to examine is constructivism. The constructivism theory is when people construct their own learning and knowledge by experiencing different events, whether it is applying something that was learned or reflecting on it (Abarbanel, Kol, Scholnik, 2006). For this theory knowledge and understanding of a concept is not something that is transferred from the teacher to the learner, alternately it is a construct to be pieced together through an active process of interaction and involvement within the classroom. The students are using available building blocks to construct their knowledge that is viable and meaningful for them (Abrabanel, et al., 2006). It is important to remember that since each student is constructing their own knowledge each student will be doing it in a different way. Thus, consistency will vary on students work and because of this, a teacher should view each student work from the student's perspective so they can understand the differences of their students. Ways to help promote constructivism in the classroom is by having hands on activities for students in small groups that allow for discussion between the students themselves (Abrabanel, et al., 2006).

The next theory that will be examined is the 21st century skill. This theory is learning traditional school subjects while also including 21st century skills (Pacific Policy, 2010). The 21st

century skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. The important thing with teaching these skills is that they are not taught on their own, but they are imbedded within the curriculum. When thinking about this theory it is good to ask oneself “How do we best prepare our students for a future of work that does not yet exist, careers that have not yet been created, and an economy that prizes creativity and innovation?” (Pacific Policy, 2010). When thinking about this question it is important that teachers consider how the world is evolving outside the classroom walls. Jobs that are currently available might be obsolete by the time students are out of college. That is another reason why it is so important to incorporate the 21st century skills into everyday curriculum. Students can be better prepared for what is to come in the real world.

The final theory to be examined is humanism. This theory focuses on the freedom, dignity, and potential of the student/human (Hamdid, Khatib, Sarem, 2013). A general assumption is that people act with intention and values which makes it important for the teacher to understand their students. When the teacher is “studying” the student, it is important that the focus be on three parts; student’s individual self-worth, feelings are as important as facts, and personal, social, and moral development become at least as important as academic development (Hamdid, et al., 2013). These three things are a big factor of the humanistic approach because it is focusing on the student’s emotional need, and for learning to be significant, feelings must be recognized.

The theories examined in this paper are theories that I will implement and incorporate into my classroom. I will use constructivism because it discusses how students construct their own learning. I believe deeply that students learn best from each other through hands on activities or discussions with each other. I have seen this first hand in the AVID classroom where

I am a tutor. This will be promoted in my math classroom by students working in groups and around the activities. In my unit plan, I will have them work on a Project Based Learning activity where they will work together and use concepts they learned to construct their own finished product to show they have understood what concept being taught.

The next theory that I will implement into my classroom is the 21st century skills. The reason this theory is one I like is because it is one that will help prepare my high school students for everyday life. This is something that I believe is important. Teaching students not just the curriculum they need, but also skills they need for their lives. The 21st century skill that will be easiest for me to imbed into math curriculum is critical thinking. This skill is one I will teach my students to use because critical thinking is a skill my college mathematic professors have made sure we understand because they want us to be able to teach other how to think critically. I will implement these different skills by using technology in my classroom and by incorporating my students' different cultural backgrounds. This can be done by doing different Problem Based Learning activities for my students.

The final theory I will use in my classroom is humanism. This theory is focused around the student being an actual person and not just someone who you need to teach. The reason I like this theory is because it focuses on the human and that is something that I hold close to me because I know that is how some of my teachers worked with me. When I was reading the article *Humanistic Education: Concerns, Implications, and Application* I found two ways to apply the humanistic theory to my classroom. The first is called suggestopedia and that is the understanding that people are able to learn more if their minds are clear and free of anxiety. I find this to be 100 percent true. I will implement this by setting up my classroom in such a way that has different calming factors. This includes having a flexible seating arrangement or using

an essential oil diffuser so the overall atmosphere is calming for the students. The next strategy is community language learning. This is when learners sit in circles as a community. They help each other to find solutions to problem at hand.

Each learning theory has something different to offer to help promote student growth. The three theories examined in this paper were constructivism, 21st century skills, and humanism. Each theory relates to one another by either putting the student at the for front or allowing the student to learn skills and concepts they will need for the real world. Then I discussed why each theory fit into my classroom and how I could implement each theory in a different way. Over all constructivism, 21st century skills, and humanism are the three theories I will use in my classroom because they best fit my teaching philosophy that each student has the ability to learn and that we need create personal relationships in order for our students to learn.

References

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