**Establishing Vision & Goals**



**Handout 5: Educational Philosophy & Continuum Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Modernity <--------------------------------------------------------------> Post Modernity Traditional and Conservative <---------------------------------> Contemporary and Liberal Authoritarian (convergent) <-------------------------------> (divergent) Non-Authoritarian | | | | |
| General or World Philosophies | Idealism:  Ideas are the only true reality, the only thing worth knowing. Focus: *Mind* | Realism:  Reality exists independent of human mind. World of physical objects ultimate reality. Focus: *Body* | Pragmatism:  Universe is dynamic, evolving. Purpose of thought is action. Truth is relative.  Focus: *Experience* | Existentialism:  Reality is subjective, within the individual. Individual rather than external standards.  Focus: *Freedom* |
| Originator(s) | Plato, Socrates | Aristotle | Pierce, Dewey | Sartre, Kierkegaard |
| Curricular Emphasis | Subject matter of mind: lit., history, philosophy, religion | Subject matter of physical world: science, math | Subject matter of social experience. Creation of new social order | Subject matter of personal choice |
| Teaching Method | Teach for handling ideas: lecture, discussion | Teach for mastery of facts and basic skills: demonstration, recitation | Problem solving: Project method | Individual as entity within social context |
| Character Development | Imitating examples, heroes | Training in rules of conduct | Making group decisions in light of consequences | Individual responsibility for decisions and preferences |
| Related Educational Philosophies | Perennialism:  Teach ideas that are everlasting. Seek enduring truths which are constant, not changing, through great lit. art, philosophy, religion. | Essentialism:  Teach the common core, "the basics" of information and skills (cultural heritage) needed for citizenship. (Curriculum can change slowly) | Progressivism:  Ideas should be tested by active experimentation. Learning rooted in questions of learners in interaction with others. Experience and student centered. | Reconstructionism/ Critical Theory Critical pedagogy: Analysis of world events, controversial issues and diversity to provide vision for better world and social change. |
| Key Proponents | R. Hutchins, Jacque Maritain, Mortimer Adler, Allan Bloom | William Bagley; Arthur Bestor, E. D. Hirsch, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, | John Dewey, William Kilpatrick | George Counts, J. Habermas, Ivan Illich, Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire |
| Related Theories of Learning (Psychological Orientations) | Information Processing The mind makes meaning through symbol-processing structures of a fixed body of knowledge. Describes how information is received, processed, stored, and retrieved from the mind. | Behaviorism Behavior shaped by design and determined by forces in environment. Learning occurs as result of reinforcing responses to stimuli. Social Learning: Learning by observing and imitating others. | Cognitivism/ Constructivism Learner actively constructs own understandings of reality through interaction with environment and reflection on actions. Student-centered learning around conflicts to present knowing structures. | Humanism Personal freedom, choice, responsibility. Achievement motivation towards highest levels. Control of own destiny. Child centered. Interaction with others. |
| Key proponents | R. M. Gagne, E. Gagne, Robert Sternberg, J.R. Anderson | Ivan Pavlov, John Watson, B.F. Skinner, E.L. Thorndike, A. Bandura | Jean Piaget, U. Bronfenbrenner, Jerome Bruner, Lev Vygotsky | J.J. Rousseau, A. Maslow, C. Rogers, A. Combs, R. May |

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**Handout 5: Selected Theories of Learning**

Related to both the worldview philosophies and the educational philosophies are theories of learning that focus on how learning occurs, the psychological orientations. They provide structures for the instructional aspects of teaching, suggesting methods that are related to their perspective on learning. These theoretical beliefs about learning are also at the epistemic level of philosophy, as they are concerned with the nature of learning. Each psychological orientation is most directly related to a particular educational philosophy, but may have other influences as well. The first two theoretical approaches can be thought of as transmissive, in that information is given to learners. The second two approaches are constructivist, in that the learner has to make meaning from experiences in the world.

**Information Processing**  
Information Processing theorists focus on the mind and how it works to explain how learning occurs. The focus is on the processing of a relatively fixed body of knowledge and how it is attended to, received in the mind, processed, stored, and retrieved from memory. This model is derived from analogies between how the brain works and computer processing. Information processing theorists focus on the individual rather than the social aspects of thinking and learning. The mind is a symbolic processor that stores information in schemas or hierarchically arranged structures.

Knowledge may be general, applicable to many situations; for example, knowing how to type or spell. Other knowledge is domain specific, applicable to a specific subject or task, such as vowel sounds in Spanish. Knowledge is also declarative (content, or knowing that; for example, schools have students, teachers, and administrators), procedural (knowing how to do things—the steps or strategies; for example, to multiply mixed number, change both sides to improper fractions, then multiply numerators and denominators), or conditional (knowing when and why to apply the other two types of knowledge; for example, when taking a standardized multiple choice test, keep track of time, be strategic, and don't get bogged down on hard problems).

The intake and representation of information is called encoding. It is sent to the short term or working memory, acted upon, and those pieces determined as important are sent to long term memory storage, where they must be retrieved and sent back to the working or short-term memory for use. Short term memory has very limited capacity, so it must be kept active to be retained. Long term memory is organized in structures, called schemas, scripts, or propositional or hierarchical networks. Something learned can be retrieved by relating it to other aspects, procedures, or episodes. There are many strategies that can help in both getting information into long term memory and retrieving it from memory. The teacher's job is to help students to develop strategies for thinking and remembering.

**Behaviorism**Behaviorist theorists believe that behavior is shaped deliberately by forces in the environment and that the type of person and actions desired can be the product of design. In other words, behavior is determined by others, rather than by our own free will. By carefully shaping desirable behavior, morality and information is learned. Learners will acquire and remember responses that lead to satisfying aftereffects. Repetition of a meaningful connection results in learning. If the student is ready for the connection, learning is enhanced; if not, learning is inhibited. Motivation to learn is the satisfying aftereffect, or reinforcement.

Behaviorism is linked with empiricism, which stresses scientific information and observation, rather than subjective or metaphysical realities. Behaviorists search for laws that govern human behavior, like scientists who look for pattern sin empirical events. Change in behavior must be observable; internal thought processes are not considered.

Ivan Pavlov's research on using the reinforcement of a bell sound when food was presented to a dog and finding the sound alone would make a dog salivate after several presentations of the conditioned stimulus, was the beginning of behaviorist approaches. Learning occurs as a result of responses to stimuli in the environment that are reinforced by adults and others, as well as from feedback from actions on objects. The teacher can help students learn by conditioning them through identifying the desired behaviors in measurable, observable terms, recording these behaviors and their frequencies, identifying appropriate reinforcers for each desired behavior, and providing the reinforcer as soon as the student displays the behavior. For example, if children are supposed to raise hands to get called on, we might reinforce a child who raises his hand by using praise, "Thank you for raising your hand." Other influential behaviorists include B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) and James B. Watson (1878-1958).

**Cognitivism/Constructivism**  
Cognitivists or Constructivists believe that the learner actively constructs his or her own understandings of reality through interaction with objects, events, and people in the environment, and reflecting on these interactions. Early perceptual psychologists (Gestalt psychology) focused on the making of wholes from bits and pieces of objects and events in the world, believing that meaning was the construction in the brain of patterns from these pieces.

For learning to occur, an event, object, or experience must conflict with what the learner already knows. Therefore, the learner's previous experiences determine what can be learned. Motivation to learn is experiencing conflict with what one knows, which causes an imbalance, which triggers a quest to restore the equilibrium. Piaget described intelligent behavior as adaptation. The learner organizes his or her understanding in organized structures. At the simplest level, these are called schemes. When something new is presented, the learner must modify these structures in order to deal with the new information. This process, called equilibration, is the balancing between what is assimilated (the new) and accommodation, the change in structure. The child goes through four distinct stages or levels in his or her understandings of the world.

Some constructivists (particularly Vygotsky) emphasize the shared, social construction of knowledge, believing that the particular social and cultural context and the interactions of novices with more expert thinkers (usually adult) facilitate or scaffold the learning process. The teacher mediates between the new material to be learned and the learner's level of readiness, supporting the child's growth through his or her "zone of proximal development."

**Humanism**  
The roots of humanism are found in the thinking of Erasmus (1466-1536), who attacked the religious teaching and thought prevalent in his time to focus on free inquiry and rediscovery of the classical roots from Greece and Rome. Erasmus believed in the essential goodness of children, that humans have free will, moral conscience, the ability to reason, aesthetic sensibility, and religious instinct. He advocated that the young should be treated kindly and that learning should not be forced or rushed, as it proceeds in stages. Humanism was developed as an educational philosophy by Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi, who emphasized nature and the basic goodness of humans, understanding through the senses, and education as a gradual and unhurried process in which the development of human character follows the unfolding of nature. Humanists believe that the learner should be in control of his or her own destiny. Since the learner should become a fully autonomous person, personal freedom, choice, and responsibility are the focus. The learner is self-motivated to achieve towards the highest level possible. Motivation to learn is intrinsic in humanism.

Recent applications of humanist philosophy focus on the social and emotional well-being of the child, as well as the cognitive. Development of a healthy self-concept, awareness of the psychological needs, helping students to strive to be all that they can are important concepts, espoused in theories of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Alfred Adler that are found in classrooms today. Teachers emphasize freedom from threat, emotional well-being, learning processes, and self-fulfillment.

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