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Creating Possibilities  
Education Psychology  
Fall 2017

Jean Piaget once stated, “The goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover, to create men who are capable of doing new things”. A lot like Piaget stated, it is a teacher’s goal to create many learning possibilities for students. There are a lot of different approaches and theories to integrate into a curriculum that can help students learn. According to Professor George Hein, the Constructivism theory constructed by Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, John Bransford, and Glyoo Hatano, is the idea or theory that students create knowledge for themselves. Hein also goes on to explain that the learner develops their own meaning as he/or she learns (Institute for Inquiry, 1991).

*Foundations of American Education: Becoming Effective Teachers in Challenging Time*, by James Johnson, Diann Musial, Gene Hall, and Donna Gollnick, describes Constructivism as an “educational philosophy that emphasizes developing personal meaning through hands-on, activity-based teaching and learning” (Pg. 122). The authors claim that the American Psychological Association explains that students are “active learners” and should be given many opportunities to build their own “frames of thought” (James Johnson, Diann Musial, Gene Hall, and Donna Gollnick, 2018). Different techniques may include a variety of “learning activities” for students that will encourage them to discover their own answers to important questions that the teacher may ask (Pg. 123). To allow for students to engage in their own learning, teachers should spend time creating these “learning activities” rather than talking to or at students. In the text, they state that “Constructivist educators consider true learning to be the active framing of personal meaning (by the learner) rather than the framing of someone else’s meaning” (*Foundations of American Education: Becoming Effective Teachers in Challenging Time*, 2018).

When it comes to recognizing learning from a theoretical perspective, Jeanne Ellis Ormrod's, *Essentials of Educational Psychology: Big Ideas to Guide Effective Teacher*, explains that learning can best be described as a long-term revolution in mental exemplifications based on an experience of an individual (Ormrod, Pg. 18). The key to incorporating the Constructivism theory into a classroom's learning will start with how the information is presented to the student and what tools they are given to understand the material. The Concept to Classroom webpage describes that the constructivist perspective in a classroom can aim towards a few different teaching practices. The main focus is to encourage students to use problem-solving and to use collaboration to share ideas and thoughts (Par 2, 2004). Concept to Classroom then continues to explain that a teacher will constantly "assess" how the interest or activity is assisting in their pupil's learning and understanding (Par. 3).

In, *Foundations of American Education: Becoming Effective Teachers in Challenging Times*, written by James Johnson, Diann Musial, Gene Hall, and Donna Gollnick, they stress that in problem-based constructivism experiences, students should be offered with a "hook" or a grabber. The book describes a hook as a "contemporary dilemma or requests that students take on". The material should be engaging and the teacher should encourage students to find the core of the problem (Pg. 123). The authors also strain that the Constructivism approach should be personalized for the learners. Although, learning will occur through many structures of personalized understandings, teachers can only invite students to transform their understanding, not decree them (Pg. 124).

While using the Constructivism theory for learning in a classroom, Concepts to Classroom provides a case study in which a middle-school language arts teacher allows his students to experiment, ask questions and reflects about their activities. By allowing his students

to understand the content rather than memorizing the grammatical regulations, can create learning his classroom (Concepts to Classroom, 2004). The language arts teacher allows his students to express themselves in their writing and work with peers to edit their drafts, this allows for growth and learning while still promoting the Constructivism theory (Par. 5).

Another example of learning in a classroom comes from a case study found from the text in *Foundations of American Education: Becoming Effective Teachers in Challenging Times*. The authors describe that a biology teacher, Ms. Nishioka, had just finished reading Michael Crichton's novel *Jurassic Park* to her students. After they finished the reading, a letter from the movie producer, Steven Spielberg, was given to each student in the class for them to read. In the letter, it requested that each student help Spielberg and his effort to decide which parts of the novel may or may not have been scientifically correct about dinosaurs. In the text, it states that:

“The letter also asked the students to create a written summary and to send the summary, along with proper documentation, to Spielberg's production company. Because time was limited, Spielberg requested that the summaries be completed within three weeks. Ms. Nishioka provided time for her students to think about the letter and then asked them to determine what they would do next” (*Foundations of American Education: Becoming Effective Teachers in Challenging Time*. Pg. 124).

James Johnson, Diann Musial, Gene Hall, and Donna Gollnick, then went on to describe that in this constructivist class activity, the “nature” of the learner or student is “active”. This is because learners are to not only establish what they need to find out about the subject, by learning how they will gather and understand the material. This project example would be considered “unstructured” for the fact that students are free to research and gather many different concepts based on their interests and curiosities’. The students also must decide how they will

learn the “contact” for this assignment (Pg. 124, Par 2). The authors describe that this lesson incorporates that the “use of the subject matter is authentic to real life”. It would be authentic because the material is rooted in a “contemporary problem or concern”. Finally, you can describe this learning-lesson as “divergent” because there is no correct answer to the problem, only what the students believe and can understand and find in their research (James Johnson, Diann Musial, Gene Hall, and Donna Gollnick, 2018).

In conclusion, the case studies of teachers using the Constructivism theory are just two of many successful trials. By incorporating “choice” into a learning environment, a teacher should engage students and create hands-on lessons and activities that allow students to gain their own understanding, with the teachers guiding questions or techniques to gain understanding. Comparing Jean Piaget’s Constructivist theory to his quote, by allowing students to gain perspective on how they learn and understand through the teacher’s guidance, they too can “create possibilities” for themselves.

### Works Cited

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