



Lambert Fooks
LFooks@idesignlearning.com
951.296.0660
951.634.8080

Thoughts on Theory: Comparing Instructionism and Constructivism

Learning Frameworks

Constructivism and instructivism both provide an interesting view as to how learning should or does occur. The constructivist framework seeks to connect more holistically with learners in that it seeks to explain how learners interact with instruction that is meaningful. The content is not what directs this idea, but as Perkins explains it, the learners for elaborate, and test candidate mental structures until a satisfactory one emerges. We understand that infants as they grow, learn to crawl, grasp, walk and climb are engaged in exploring and learning about their environment. Interestingly enough, hard lessons are sometimes learned during this process, such as touching a hot stove. In other words learning occurs as a conscience self directed experience. Both frameworks hold strong views in early child hood education. On the one hand the constructivist view holds that learning is child initiated, child centered, play based, informal and developmental, the end goal being children constructing there own knowledge whereas the instructivist holds the tradition the learning is teacher initiated, teacher centered formal basic academic skills with little to developmental value but the end goal of core knowledge being retained (Katz 1999).

Constructivism contends that learners are actively seeking meaning and are not dormant empty containers waiting for knowledge to be poured in. Mayer (p.144) differentiates constructivism, which is the view that with two other common views of learning the first asserts that learning occurs based on the strengthening or weakens an association between a stimulus and a response, nor in a passive role where by information is placed in long term memory that identifies the current traditional presentation of information in lectures and text books, the latter being instructivist in nature and form.

Many have a preference towards a constructivist framework in that supports learner autonomy, although a closer blended solution in certain context may lean towards a more instructivist approach such as regulatory policy training, which occurs in the pharmaceutical industry. In this context the goal is to ensure core knowledge is retained in relation to perhaps specific tasks such as drug distribution and quality standards.

References

- Katz, L. G. (1999) Distinctions between Academic and Intellectual Goals in Early Childhood Education. (ERIC Document Reproductive Services ED433146)
- Driscoll, M.P., (2000) Chapter 11: Constructivism, Psychology of Learning for Instruction, 2ed. US: Allyn and Bacon
- Reigeluth, C. M. (1999). Instructional-design theories and models. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, New Jersey