Constructivism

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Constructivism is about how we construct knowledge from our own experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events (Jonassen, D., 1992).  This would mean that reality is therefore in the mind of the individual as he/she constructs a reality based on his/her own experiences.  When Glaserfeld (2008) states “[…] it appears that knowledge is not a transferable commodity and communication not a conveyance” (p. 48), I connect this to a student-centered environment where students build knowledge based on their own prior experiences, as opposed to a teacher-centered environment where knowledge is assumed to be a transferable commodity and communication a conveyance.

An ideal learning environment fosters student inquiry where prior knowledge becomes a stepping-stone to building further knowledge.  Teachers guide students in developing the skills necessary to ask higher level thinking questions, construct new knowledge, reflect on metacognitive skills, and consider new ways of thinking.  It is through this process where students are then able to alter previous understandings and assumptions and/or replace them with their newfound understanding of an idea.  We are in a time where what we know is less important than what we are able to do with knowledge in different situations, and where our capacity for learning far outweighs the importance of our ability to follow rules (Friesen, S., 2009).

An active learning environment is not one where the teacher is in control of student learning and where knowledge is simply transferred to all learners.  It is an environment where learning is relevant, students are engaged in authentic tasks, reflective practice is evident, collaboration with peers is nurtured, and scaffolding is facilitated to help students move further in their own learning.  It is in this environment where we will see student engagement, learning, and empowerment.

References:

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