

Ideology Evaluation

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Introduction to Curriculum Theory

IYT2

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Educators around the globe all have different ways of educating, from belief in how the curriculum should be integrated, the purpose of education, and how we learn. The four main ideologies are broken down into categories: Social Reconstruction, Social Efficiency, Scholar Academic, and Learner-Centered. I will share my instructional setting, evaluate how the ideologies are represented in my instructional setting, share my philosophy of education, and share how these ideologies fall within my curriculum.

My instructional setting is unique compared to many teachers. I teach STEM to kindergarten through fifth-grade students, with 850 students, six days of teaching, in a suburban area in Las Vegas, Nevada. Our school is 100% free breakfast and lunch, with 34% of students considered English Language Learners. Ten percent of my students have an Individualized Education Program with a gender breakdown of 51.41% male and 48.59% female. We have one to one technology that includes an iPad for every student, in addition to iMacs in our pod areas, as well as Chromebooks, two iMac labs, and a Macbook Air for each staff member. Lastly, our staff is comprised of 20 support staff members, and 55 licensed staff members educate and aide students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade (Nevada Department of Education, 2018-2019).

The Scholarly Academic Ideology is most often thought of when typically thinking about education. This method is the traditional method of learning that involves students listening to a teacher, i.e., the one with all the knowledge. Teaching is broken up into different subjects, and the curriculum often does not change with this ideology. The Scholarly Academic Ideology is often criticized for its lack of student inclusion; however, the goal of it is meant to provide an equal education for all and to preserve that knowledge (Schiro, 2008).

Within my instructional setting, I feel that this ideology is not the most appropriate one to use as a result of its lack of student involvement. My classroom does not follow a specific curriculum, and while I provide education for all of my students, this ideology does not often differentiate the needs of individual students. Students are often given knowledge via me, the educator, but is not limited to what I know. I do not feel that this ideology is the most appropriate for my classroom.

Social Efficiency is the ideology that most often can be found in a trade or vocational school. With this ideology, there is often a set curriculum that ensures specific skills are being taught. Within the Social Efficiency ideology, the teacher's role is comparable to that of a manager: students follow the curriculum and guidelines while the teacher provides the necessary materials and supervision of tasks. This ideology often uses performance-based assessments instead of regular paper-based summative assessments. The Social Efficiency ideology attempts to fit society's current needs and thinking for the present and possible future (Schiro, 2008).

In my instructional setting, this is appropriate for some of the technology or science lessons that I teach. When I am introducing and teaching coding, I use a particular curriculum and follow the guidelines to ensure that the students understand the specific skills and can apply them to the real world. We will often use Code.org and their lessons for not only the curriculum but for the performance-based assessments as well. In teaching science and coding, I feel that I am mainly using this ideology since I am thinking about how my students can use these skills in society when they finish their schooling. I find that this ideology is one of the more appropriate ideologies depending on which part of STEM I am teaching.

The Learner-Centered ideology is the most relaxed of the ideologies and is often seen in Montessori schools. Students within this ideology are primarily focused on independent

decisions of learning. Educators following this ideology believe that knowledge has personal meaning to the student. Learning through this ideology is in the eye of the learner; they are the ones who are making meaning through their self-expression and are the ones making choices for their learning. Through this lens, students are meant to learn organically; meaning, there is a lot of freedom in what and how they learn. There is no set curriculum for students within this ideology, and evaluations are based on what the students have been learning, not a curriculum that has been used by the teacher (Schiro, 2008).

My classroom has threads of this ideology woven into; however, this is not the primary ideology utilized. I often do mini-lessons with students to introduce the topic at hand, and they are free to go from there. However, while I give my students the freedom to complete a task, I am readily available as a guide as needed. This ideology is best exemplified during the Lego Challenge, an exercise that asks them to be creative and at the same time, express themselves. They are asked to build something like a bridge, castle, car, or rainbow; however, out-of-the-box thinking is encouraged with no constructs to reality. I guide students but try not to disrupt their creativity when working on this project. I feel that this ideology is appropriate when using workshop-style lessons, where students have more control and creativity over their learning.

Social Reconstruction has a strong emphasis on social justice, asking students to take action in their society. This ideology believes that students are the solution to many of society's problems, and asks the question, "What can you do to make this better?" Relevant societal issues can include climate change, conflicts around the globe, and local issues. This means teaching is focused on educating the student on understanding their role in society and what they can do to change/foster positive growth. The focus is not on core academics; the curriculum is determined by the needs of society at the current moment or future. As it relates to assessments,

there is no formative or summative curriculum evaluation; evaluations are based on students' ability to show their value in society (Schiro, 2008).

I feel that this ideology is not always appropriate in my classroom. While I do want my students to understand how they can contribute to society and change it, my STEM curriculum does not offer the flexibility of opinion. In a different setting, such as a homeroom setting, this ideology may offer more discourse; however, in a STEM setting, it is not relevant. While we actively talk about different societal issues during our time together, this is not something that is taught or evaluated.

My personal philosophy of curriculum aligns most with the Learner-Centered and Social Efficiency ideologies. I feel that the goal of education is to prepare students for college, career, being an adult, and beyond, which incorporates both of the ideologies I most closely align. Giving students a choice in their education and preparing them for a future besides college is a great way to differentiate learning. In the role of teacher, I think both ideologies do not only provide essential knowledge, but also a way to guide students and set them up for success because of their strongly independent focus. I believe that students should be prepared to learn but also be ready to explore and discover with the guidance of their teacher. Students under my supervision receive necessary knowledge without criticism while obtaining the needed skills to use in their future careers.

Teaching STEM caters remarkably well to the Learner-Centered and Social Efficiency ideologies while allowing me the flexibility to my students' needs and educational goals. Differentiation is a significant component of my personal philosophy of curriculum; I feel that we need to differentiate for our students in any way that we can, and this is huge when it comes to assessments. Regardless of the type of assessment - performance-based, paper-based, or

research project - the goal of the assessment is to ensure that the student understands the content and can use it when needed. This philosophy seems to be a mix of both the Learner-Centered and Social Efficiency ideology. At the end of the day, they are able to highlight their learned knowledge of the subject while showing mastery of a specific skill. I believe this philosophy of curriculum as a whole is appropriate for my instructional setting, given the limited amount of time I have with students, as well as the depth of content. There is a lot of freedom in how students can show their mastery, but I also want to provide them with the necessary skills.

Strategies I use on a daily basis in my instruction include modeling and cooperative learning. I allotted approximately 30 classes with my students over the course of an entire school year, making our lessons focused on brand-new things at each class. Modeling and cooperative learning are the two instructional strategies that help me make the most of my small amount of time. Based on the age and development ability of my student, modeling is vital in the classroom. My students often haven't been in a STEM class, let alone in a class where they are working on sewing, robots, coding on computers, Legos, or taping items. I feel that in my lessons, it is beneficial to model what I am doing with my students before I let them work on their own. Even when I was working in middle school, I ensured that I always modeled examples to give students guidance and have them understand the task.

I also enjoy using cooperative learning in my classroom as I feel the classes do a better job when they learn to work together. I usually start my class with a mini-lesson, model the skill or task, and let students go back and try on their own. When doing this, I see students working together to solve problems versus competition for my attention. I also push the 4 C's in my class: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Through modeling and

cooperative learning, I am able to instruct students to communicate with one another and collaborate if someone is having a hard time with their task.

Overall, there are many ideologies and ways to manage a classroom successfully. In my practice, I've found the Social Efficiency and Learner-Centered ideologies most effective when working in a STEM classroom. This includes dealing with a highly transient population with less than once-a-week communication. Therefore, I must utilize the most highly-effective, highly-efficient manners of teaching, in order to make an impact on my students. I've found modeling and cooperative learning to be also extremely useful in this setting. I look forward to learning more ways to engage my students as best as possible as time goes on.

References

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