

CONCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM

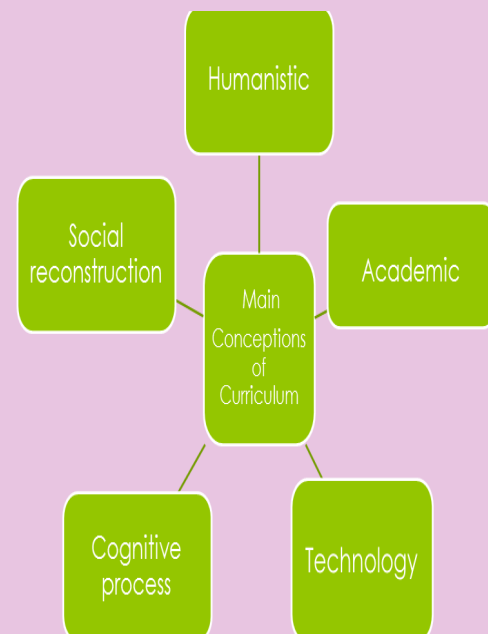
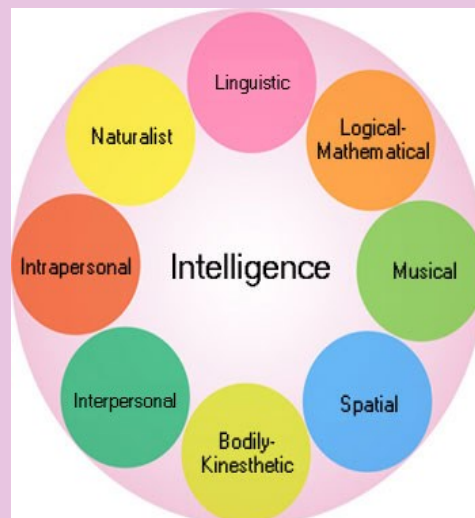
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What are the different types of conceptions of curriculum?

Social reconstruction conception: focuses on society needs (Eisner & Vallance, 1974). We should create an education where subject matter focuses on environmental, economic, social and political issues or perspectives happening in society (ie. pollution). This conception sees the curriculum as a way to produce social change. (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; McNeil, 2006; Orstien & Hunkins, 2009; Pratt, 1994; Sowell, 2005) Education should be structured to prepare students for living in a changing society by providing them with tools they can use to function appropriately. It's about giving the learner real life situations they can experience in the curriculum. (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Sowell, 2005) This allows young learners to have a better understanding and connection with society where in the curriculum they are learning ways on how to live (Sowell, 2005). *Note:* also called social transformation and reconceptualist.

Cognitive process conception: focuses on the development of the intellectual process. The curriculum should shape the intellectual and cognitive skills of the learner. Once they gain the skills the learner can apply it to other forms of learning and in any context. It focuses mainly on the learner, the materials and the learning process where they see the individual as interactive. (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Sowell, 2005) This approach believes if the learner is provided with the correct set of intellectual skills they can grow to be intellectually independent and can use them in situations outside of school (Eisner & Vallance, 1974). *Note:* also relates to humanistic and technology conception.

“Conceptions of curriculum can be used to look at a curriculum through various viewpoints. It's simply a way to see how a curriculum is defined. When you're looking at a curriculum is it focusing on social and culture needs, the individuals needs or subject matter (Sowell, 2005). This is what you notice when you look deeply into a curriculum and see how it should be used or what we should focus on.”



Social Reconstruction: Curriculum should be an extension of society

Cognitive Process: Shaping the intellectual skills of young individuals



Technology: Technology can be to transmit learning through audio visual aids or computer assisted programs giving students immediate knowledge

Technology conception: focuses on how curriculum should be taught or how knowledge should be communicated. It looks for a system of instruction that can be used to teach any content. (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; Vallence, 1986). Curriculum technologists believe that learning is preplanned and that goals, standards, expectations and objectives should be predetermined. The content, lesson plans, learning outcomes, assessment measures must align with these elements. (McNeil, 2006; Orstien & Hunkins, 2009) It helps the learner see what's expected of them and where they can improve (McNeil, 2009). Through this conception you focus more on the organization and presentation of materials to the learner. Everything is decided before children come into the classroom (Eisner & Vallence, 1974). *Note:* also called systemic, behavioural, social efficiency and managerial.

Humanistic conception: focuses on the individual and the individuals needs and interests (Orstien & Hunkins, 2009; Schiro, 2008). A curriculum should be student oriented and child centred meaning children can pursue their individual choices. This lens helps the learner discover and construct learning for themselves. (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; Schiro, 2008; Sowell, 2005) It sees education fully supporting an individual's life and development (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; Orstien & Hunkins, 2009; Pratt, 1994; Sowell, 2005). Everything in the curriculum should bring personal meaning to each individual that relates to experiences unique to the learner. This can allow the individual to learn ways on how to manage things of personal significance. (McNeil, 2006; Pratt, 1994; Sowell, 2005) This conception is truly about developing the child's fullest potential where the curriculum should be responsible for developing a child identity, individuality, personal freedom and autonomy (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; McNeil, 2006; Orstien & Hunkins, 2009; Schiro, 2008). *Notes:* also called self actualization, individual fulfillment and learner centred.

Academic conception: is

the traditional way of approaching curriculum (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; Sowell, 2005). The main mode of teaching is that the individual needs to learn various academic subjects (math, English, science, history, social studies) in school (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; McNeil, 2006; Schiro, 2008; Sowell, 2005). In each academic area there are a set of academic standards. Academic thinkers believe school should be structured to help repair needs and gaps in an individual's understanding. The transmission of information should also be taught by teachers through verbal or written means (Pratt, 1994). Basically, the curriculum should be used to help individuals understand knowledge (skills, tools, concepts) that they need to participate actively in their cultural needs (Eisner & Vallence, 1974; Sowell, 2005). *Note:* also called cultural transformation and scholar academic.



Humanistic: Focuses on the whole child



Academic: Focuses more on subjects, cognition and knowledge.

Traditional
VS
Contemporary

Educational Philosophies

Traditional Philosophies:

Perennialism Philosophy (Realism):

- * To educate the rational individual
- * Focuses on mastery of facts and knowledge
- * Focuses on classical subjects
- * Teaches traditional values
- * Educator helps the child think rationally
- * Content and knowledge focused
- * Teacher lecture approach

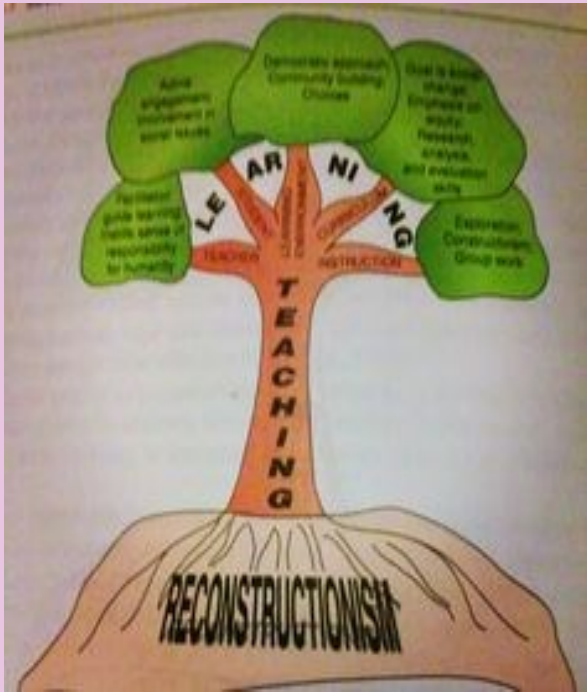
Essentialism Philosophy (Idealism/Realism):

- * Focuses on essential skills and academic subjects (english, science, history, language and arithmetic)
- * Mastery of concepts and principles in each subject is important
- * Educator is the main authority in their area of expertise's
- * Focuses on developing the intellectual growth of young individuals
- * Used to educate the competent individual
- * Teaching basic ideas

(Ornstein, 1991)



Progressivism and Reconstructionism Philosophy



Contemporary Philosophies:

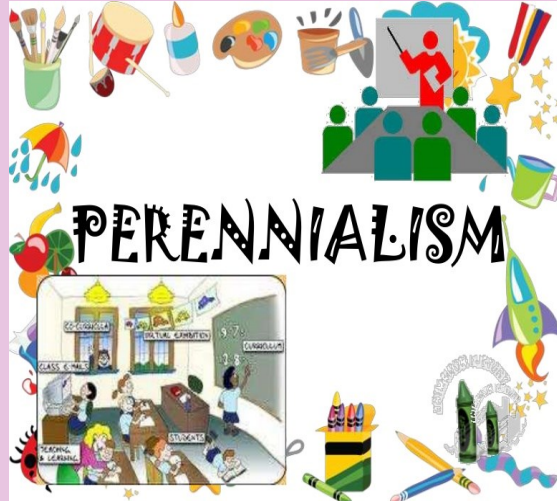
Progressivism Philosophy (Pragmatism):

- * Knowledge emphasizes growth and development
- * Focuses on active participation and interesting learning
- * Educator is a guide, resource or facilitator
- * Children's interest and needs are important
- * Focuses on interdisciplinary subject matter, activities and projects
- * Curriculum based on individuals experiences
- * Focuses on the whole child

Reconstructionism Philosophy (Pragmatism):

- * Education can lead to social change and improve society
- * The educator is a change agent, researcher and leader
- * Education should help learners become knowledgeable about issues in society (ie. social and economic issues)
- * Children learn about real life experiences or their environment

(Orstein, 1991)



Perennialism Philosophy
Essentialism Philosophy





Learner centred design: Focuses on learner

Curriculum Designs

Learner Centred Designs

⇒ Learner centred designs can be categories into:

- Child Centred Design
- Experienced Centred Design
- Radical Design
- Humanistic Design
- Developmental Design

An overview of all learner centred designs:

- ⇒ Children must be active in their learning environment and learning should not be separate from students lives (pg. 165)
- ⇒ Focuses on children's lives, needs and interests
- ⇒ Children need opportunities to explore, firsthand, physical, social , emotional and logical knowledge (pg. 165)
- ⇒ Children should be taught in their natural environment
- ⇒ Teaching needs to suit the whole child and promote personal growth
- ⇒ The educator is seen as an observer
- ⇒ Curriculum needs to emphasize the child's creativity and self direction
- ⇒ Learning is a social activity (pg.166)
- ⇒ Children should design their own learning by exploring problems and topics of their interests
- ⇒ Focuses on child's point of view rather than the adult
- ⇒ Radical design believes that individuals must critique knowledge (pg.167)
- ⇒ Learning is reflective (pg.167)
- ⇒ Children need to find their true selves through the curriculum (pg.167)
- ⇒ Learning needs to start with a child's experience. Educators should analyze children's experiences and see how these experiences shape children's knowledge. (pg.166)
- ⇒ This design believes that an open and free school environment stimulates all students to excel (pg.166)
- ⇒ Classroom questions should foster learning and deep thinking. Children should also experience learning with emotion, imagination and wonder. (pg.169)

(Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009)



Problem/Society centred design: Focuses on society and learners connection to society

Subject Centred Design

- ⇒ Subject centred designs can be organized into single subject, interdisciplinary, thematic instruction, discipline, board field, correlation and process design
- ⇒ It stresses school standards where content is preplanned before instruction (thematic instruction)
- ⇒ Indicates with subjects such as language, mathematics, science and history
- ⇒ Curriculum is organized according to how essential knowledge has developed in various subjects (pg. 160)
- ⇒ Consists of a variety of courses that meet students needs
- ⇒ Students learn about one subject and the content within that subject.
- ⇒ This design also believes in correlating or linking subjects together where learning in one or two subject areas relate to each other. (Sowell, 2005)
- ⇒ Teachers have a role in direction, lectures and large group discussions
- ⇒ Introduces individuals to essential knowledge of society (pg. 160)
- ⇒ Believes in filling students with knowledge and fostering student thinkers
- ⇒ Process design focuses on students as meaning makers and teaching for intelligence and on the development of intellectual character (pg.164)
- ⇒ Individuals need to experience the subjects and be able to comprehend the information

Problem/Society Centred Design

- ⇒ Problem/society centred designs can be divided into life situation, social function or reconstructionist design
- ⇒ Content should be organized in ways that allow students to view problem areas (pg. 170)
- ⇒ Students need to learn about social or life situations in society
- ⇒ Children need to be directly involved in improving society
- ⇒ Children should be engaged in critical analysis
- ⇒ Curriculum should focus on societal problems and needs
- ⇒ Curriculum should foster social action and promote social, political, economic development (pg.170)
- ⇒ Curriculum should address unmet need of the community and society (pg.169)
- ⇒ Student should be given opportunities to connect outside the classroom.

(Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009)

Social Studies
Science
Writing Math
Reading
Language Arts
Spelling

Subject centred design: Focuses on subjects and knowledge

The relationship between the different conceptions of curriculum, educational philosophies and curriculum designs

Conceptions of curriculum	Philosophical Foundations				Curriculum Design		
	Traditional: Perennialism	Traditional: Essentialism	Contemporary: Progressivism	Contemporary: Reconstruction	Subject centred	Learner centred	Problem/society centred
Academic	*				*		
Technology		*			*		
Cognitive		*	*		*	*	
Humanistic			*			*	
Social reconstruction				*			*

This table shows each conception and the corresponding educational philosophy and curriculum design they relate too

Academic conception comes from the traditional philosophy of perennialism.

Academic conception is based on subject centred and single centred curriculum design.

Why?

They all focus on content and believe the teacher is the main source for knowledge. They also believe the materials for teaching subjects should be standard and traditional.

(Sowell,2005)

The technology and cognitive process conception comes from the traditional philosophy of essentialism. The cognitive process can also come from the progressivism philosophy depending on how it used with the learner.

Technology and cognitive process conception are based on subject centred designs such as correlated and discipline curriculum design. The cognitive process conception can also be based on learner centred designs.

Why?

They all emphasize in developing and fostering student thinkers. They also believe students should act as little scholars.

Social reconstruction conception comes from the contemporary philosophy of reconstructionism. This conception is based on problem/society centred design. It focuses on the life situation and reconstructionist curriculum design.

Why?

They all believe education should focus on issues and problems in society and in an individuals life.

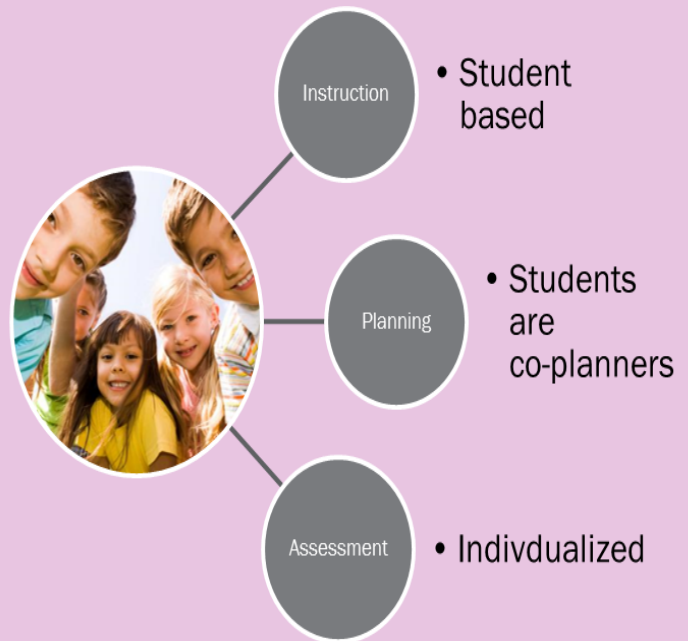
Humanistic conception comes from the contemporary philosophy of progressivism. This conception is based on learner centred curriculum design.

Why?

They all believe the curriculum should focus on the learners needs and interests.



Planning in a learner centred design



Planning, Instruction and Assessment in the Different Curriculum Designs

Learner Centred Design

How is planning done in a learner centred design?

Students are co-planners where they get to participate and be involved in the planning (Canadian Education Association, 2013). Teachers plan some topics at the beginning but they don't plan it all. The students will have interests or inquiry questions they show excitement for as the year progresses. Teachers will plan as they go. The students have a voice on what they want to explore. (Canadian Education Association, 2014) In other words, it comes from the students not the teacher. Teachers also adapt the planning to each child's learning needs (Canadian Education Association, 2013).

In this design teachers understand the curriculum better when they focus on the learner. When teachers plan they go through the curriculum backwards. Teachers before they plan know and understand the outcomes. Then they use the topics from the children to plan around it. (Canadian Education Association, 2014)

Topics and learning opportunities focus on one or more curriculum area or outcome. Teachers incorporate other curriculum areas that would supplement the topic. Using this approach teachers can integrate all the outcomes without realizing it. When teachers don't do an outcome they either incorporate it into another topic or extend the current topic they are doing with the students. (Canadian Education Association, 2014) Teachers try to add a new outcome each time.

How is instruction done in a learner centred design?

Instruction can be done in peer groups and at tables. Students work together on learning opportunities. At the beginning of the year teachers will teach how to work in groups where they talk to their students about strategies so they understand how groups work. (Canadian Education Association, 2014) This is the same for a new topic teachers will teach them at first to give students background knowledge. Then the students are on their own and they can construct their own learning and discoveries. (Canadian Education Association, 2013) At this point, teachers act more as a mentor, a resource or a facilitator with the students (TEDTalks, 2013).

They use different teaching styles with their students during instruction. If students are visual learners, hands on learners or auditory learners they gear their activities or teaching to each child. (Canadian Education Association, 2013) Teachers also instruct using music, dance, doodling or the arts to teach the students. Children also have a voice on what to do or how they want to implement a learning opportunity (Canadian Education Association, 2014).

During instruction children are given time to work on projects and activities. If the work takes longer teachers provide extra days or time slots to finish. There is not a set time frame (McMillan, 2014). Instruction therefore is interactive between teachers and students (Canadian Education Association, 2013).

What educators can use in a learner centred curriculum design to formulate their assessment, planning and instruction:

- **Inquiry:** Exploring inquiry questions of students in the classroom (Canadian Associate Education, 2014).
- **Democracy education:** Students have a voice and freedom in school .
- **Co-construction:** Students are actively involved in constructing their own meaning and learning with others (Hayes, 2003).

How is assessment done in a learner centred design?

Assessment is done at the beginning, middle and end of each topic. Teachers use many modes of assessment which gives flexibility in how students demonstrate knowledge and understanding (McMillan, 2014, pg. 6). At the beginning of the year they will assess each student. Teachers will physically ask the children how they learn, what learning opportunities they want to do or what they need from their teachers. They use that to adapt their curriculum and build on it. This helps them see what the students want in their education. (Canadian Education Association, 2013) Teachers assess during each topic using ongoing assessment to see what a child can do independently and what they can do with adult guidance. (Shepard, 2000). Teachers also provide ongoing feedback that is specific and individualized to each child. This can encourage and develop a child self confidence and motivation in their learning. (McMillan, 2014) Teachers assess at the end of each topic using student self assessments. This helps increase students responsibility for their own learning and to make the relationship between teachers and students more collaborative (Shepard, 2000, pg. 12).

Teachers also use other alternative forms of assessments such as teacher observations. Teacher observations are used constantly in a learner centred design. This helps teachers assess their students progress, interests and understanding. Other forms of assessment that these teachers use are performance based assessments such as exhibition, demonstrations or paintings of children's work and knowledge. This gives children the freedom in their responses to the topic. Teachers also assess students through oral questioning. (McMillan, 2014). Teachers will know if their students are understanding the knowledge or not just by the conversations they are having with them or other students. (Canadian Education Association, 2014) They may also do this through individual interviews or conferences (McMillan, 2014). Children also create journals of their learning or child centred portfolios. Teachers use these to assess children's learning. (Canadian Education Association, 2014)

Children are able to choose their own learning activities or projects. Since they have a choice on what to do children are not assessed the same way as other children. (Canadian Education Association, 2014) This gives students more choices in how to show mastery and competence (McMillan, 2014, pg. 6).

Problem/Society Centred Design

How is planning done in a problem/society centred design?

Planning is done based on what is going on within society and the problems society is facing. In other words, when something is going wrong or not working, you need to look at the main problem; the big picture. Everything stems from something bigger and broader and needs to be understood through that lens to be fully fixed or tweaked (Ursula Franklin, CBC Radio). That's why planning needs to be based on helping children prepare for the environment in which they live. Planning also focuses on societal and environmental issues. In this curriculum design teachers plan the curriculum backwards using backwards mapping where they start with the outcome and then figure out what they need to do to achieve it. (Hayes, 2003)

How is instruction done in a problem/society centred design?

Instruction is done through looking at society and social reform as a whole. Instruction is also done through the use of technology or taking children outside into their environment and community to learn. Learning needs to be connected to the outside world where children need to learn about the issues and problems that are happening outside the context of their classroom. It's important to share with children what happening in society rather than pushing them away from expanding and learning more about it. Children may have thoughts or suggestions on how to make society and their environment a better place to live.

Example: Ursula Franklin Academy has an enriched Wednesday program. The students get to choose the courses they want to take on Wednesdays that have personal significance to them. The curriculum areas include community building, connected knowledge, and healthy and active living. These courses provide the students with the opportunity to connect with other students from around the world or in other classes. It also provides them with an opportunity to connect to their community and society by giving them experiences to learn about societal issues that are happening in their lives. (Ursula Franklin Academy, 2015)



Instruction in a problem centred design



How is assessment done in a problem/society centred design?

Assessment is based on a changing society. The diagram listed above comes from the Ursula Franklin Academy. The list informs educators that they need to assess real life issues and make sure the children are better prepared to actively participate in society that is always facing challenges. Assessments in this curriculum design are usually provided to the children before the learning opportunity or project. The children have a clear picture and idea on what is expected of them in the task. (Hayes, 2003) This design also believes assessment should enhance a child's learning and not just be used to document the learning that transpires in an activity. Assessment should also be used in a way to provide feedback or give children a chance to evaluate and assess themselves through self assessment. (McMillian, 2014)

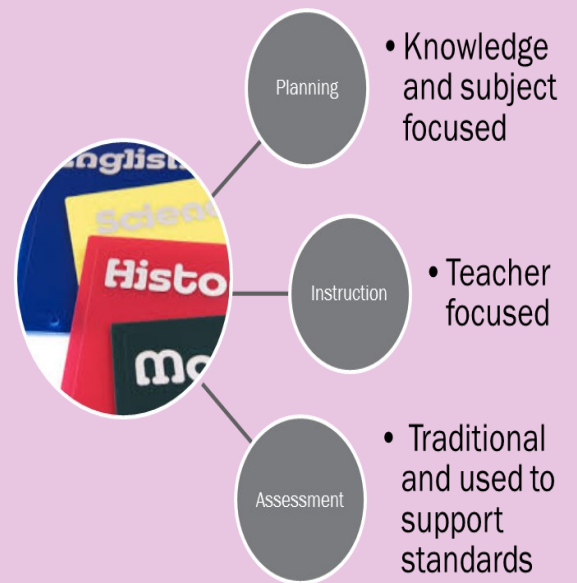
Subject Centred Design

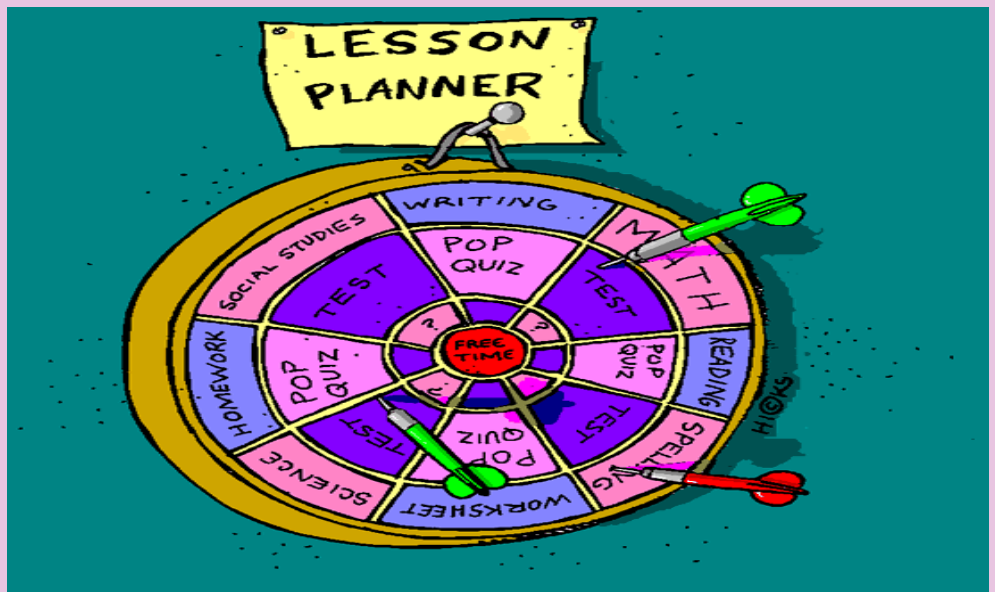
How is planning done in a subject centred design?

- * Planning is done based on the subjects and the curriculum
- * Teachers organizes the content and their lesson plans based on what students are expected to know in each subject
- * The planning and the teaching materials used are all standard and traditional

How is instruction done in a subject centred design?

- * Instruction is done based on standardization and is teacher directed
- * The learning and the knowledge is all taught to the children
- * Instruction is done through the curriculum and is based on getting children to gain the skills teachers want them to achieve
- * Instruction is also done through testing, reporting and standard lessons created by the teacher





Planning and assessment in a subject centred design

How is assessment done in a subject centred design?

- * Teachers align assessment to state standards and content driven standards using the standard based education.
- * There are common objectives that are used to assess each student 's learning. In doing this student's achieve better on tests.
- * One form of assessment that is most commonly used is high stake tests or standardized tests. These types of tests influence teacher 's effectiveness and the content they provide in the classroom. When they have these large scale tests teachers use it as bases for assessment. They focus a lot on test prep by aligning tests in the classroom to support these large scale test formats. Teachers also use technology in evaluating and assessing students learning. (McMillian, 2014)
- * Assessment is usually done after instruction but it is also done throughout in both formal or informal ways. Some assessments that are done in a subject centred classroom include both selected response assessments or constructed response assessments. This could come in a form of multiple choice, matching, true and false, short answer, label a diagram or show your work responses. There is usually one right answer. This can be seen in tests and exams which is fundamental to assessing children's understanding and knowledge in this type of curriculum design. But essays and papers with restricted responses and teacher created portfolios are also used. These questions or responses are the same for every child. Teachers also use oral questioning and teacher observations in formal ways. They use it as a way to test or as a way to determine students understanding (McMillian, 2014, pg. 61).
- * Assessments are done to support specific instructional goals that the teacher puts in place. (Shepard, 2000). Assessments are usually preplanned before the learning activities are determined (Hayes, 2003). Assessments are seen as separate from instruction. (Shepard, 2000)
- * Teachers provide a set time frame for assessments to be completed where they may not allow for extra time.
- * Teachers provide feedback to the learner about performance which will lead to self correction and improvement (Shepard, 2000, pg.11).
- * Teachers provide children with the same scoring criteria and how they will be evaluated before the assessment. Teachers use the same form of assessment for every student making it standardized. Reporting is also standard for each student. (McMillian, 2014)

Curriculum in a Childcare

The conceptions of curriculum, the different educational philosophies and curriculum designs can be used as a tool for analyzing planning, instruction and assessment in different professional settings. At any setting, you can view your content, the subject matter, the role the teachers play, how you format the curriculum, your teaching style and the evaluation and assessment procedures used. By analyzing these elements you can see what view is being taken to develop, organize and present the curriculum to students.

At my daycare setting, we have no set curriculum. We just have a philosophy we use to plan activities. We focus on the planning, instruction and assessment aspect. When using the conceptions of curriculum, educational philosophies and curriculum designs to analyze how we plan and implement our programs I found we use different ones. We focus on the cognitive process, technology and humanistic conception. We also focus on the essentialism and progressivism philosophy as well as use subject and learner centred design. When we program plan we focus on developmental areas such as social, emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy, motor and creative. In relation to the humanistic conception we focus on the whole child. In each developmental area there are skills that a child needs to learn and be taught for them to fully participate as individuals. For example, they need to learn their numbers, letters, colours, shapes, learn skills on how to socialize with others, how to share and take turns, learn how to express emotions appropriately, learn how to hold a pencil, learn how to kick a ball etc. We focus on these areas and many other skills in our activity plans. The main area that we focus on is cognitive where we integrate these skills in all activity plans. For example, we may plan an art and craft activity that will support a specific skill in fine motor, a specific skill in creative and cognitive. We hope through our program plans the children will learn the necessary skills needed to move to the next level in their development. This relates to the cognitive process conception because we believe in shaping the cognitive skills of the children so they learn the tools and skills needed to participate actively in other contexts. This idea also supports the essentialism philosophy because we believe in focusing on teaching essential skills to the children. But how we plan also supports the technology conception and the subject centred design because all the skills we incorporate into our plans are predetermined skills that a child at a specific age must achieve. We believe this helps a child progress better in their learning.

We also incorporate humanistic ideas in our planning. We use a play based philosophy to plan our activities for the children. This philosophy believes children learn about themselves, the world and others through play and social interactions. We try to capture that in our program plans when we create hands on, playful, child centred activities that allow children to discover and explore their play materials freely. To us each child is unique and has a potential to learn, so our plans are individualized to the children's needs and interests. If some children have an interest in cars, buildings or animals then we plan activities around that interest and we explore that topic. Also if children are at different levels in their development then we gear our activity plans towards those needs so each child can be included. This relates to the humanistic approach, the learner centred design and the progressivism philosophy where a curriculum should focus on active participation of individuals in the planning giving them the opportunity to learn on their own and gain personal fulfilment of their abilities (Orstien & Hunkins, 2013). Our activity plans and use of play materials help our children gain confidence in their own skills.

When looking at how we use instruction, I found we use both humanistic, academic and technology. But it also supports the subject centred and learner centred design. There are moments where we use a teacher directed approach where we sometimes use the traditional ways of teaching children. We may focus more on the product rather than the process of learning. We feel that if we don't teach them these skills at a young age they won't learn the skills needed to participate in the public school system. We tend to implement teaching related activities where we teach them something like letter recognition or French. It usually involves us telling them what to do. We may also use a computer program to instruct and transmit information to the children. For example, to teach French we use a computer with video recordings of songs for the children to listen to and sing. This relates to academic rationalism and technology as well as subject centred design because it's a teacher focused instruction that we choose. But sometimes, we change our role and act more like a resource or a guide where we step back and let the children learn on their own where we provide individual choice or free play. The children get to choose the activities they want to play with and how they want the activity to be implemented. We give the children the opportunity to work with peers or they can sit on the floor or at the table to do their activity. The children have as long as they want on their activities since there is not a set time frame. We also feel a child needs an adult who is nurturing, caring and respectful which can help a child develop in our classroom. This is what a teacher in a humanistic and learner centred classroom displays.

When looking at assessment we don't focus on the formative assessments we do more informative assessments of children's learning. This relates to the humanistic, progressivism and learner centred design. Before we plan we observe the children in their play. We observe the conversations they are having with other children or the materials they are playing with to see what their interests are and where they are developmentally. We document these ideas and interests and use them in our planning of activities and the type of teaching style we use to teach the children. We also assess the children during the implementation of activities to see how the children are learning or grasping the skills we wanted to work on. We do that through oral conversations, documentation of children's work, taking pictures or through the use of anecdotal observations. Then we use these evaluation pieces to try to make connections to other things the children want to learn about to expand their understanding. At the end of each topic, with the help of the children we make a child centred scrapbook of all the children's accomplishments to show the parents. In my centre we are always doing assessment not just at the end of each topic. This supports the humanistic conception and learner centred design because we are focusing on the child and their learning where they get a chance to be involved in documenting and assessing their own learning.

Using the conceptions, philosophies and curriculum designs to analyze my professional context allowed me to go deeper into how educators at my work plan and implement program plans and assess the children. I never knew we took different viewpoints to define our philosophy and incorporated them into the learning opportunities we present to the children. It showed me that the traditional way is still being used sometimes influencing our choice of focusing strictly on the individual. I learned using these conceptions, philosophies and designs can be helpful because it makes people see what view they are taking and what they could do to change or adjust their curriculum to make it better for the learner.

