

# **EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TCCS**

In order to create a vision of what the school will look like it is necessary to set forth a view of learning and the aim of education. Once these are established the curriculum, instructional approach, and assessment tools will follow. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment will flow from the view of learning and fulfill the aim of education. These reasoned connections would allow a balanced system to exist where assessment impacts instruction, and curriculum.

## **I. View of learning**

The way that learning occurs is a blend of the two theories of cognitivism and constructivism. Learning is ultimately constructivist (personal discovery based on insight) not cognitive (the programming of a new rule for information processing). The focus is on problem solving that provides for an active, self-regulating, reflective learner who is grounded morally. The view combines with cognitivism under the concepts of goals, assessments and strategies.

The cognitive conception of the goal (predetermined goal driven statements of purpose) must be combined with that of the constructivist (each learner develops a contract - whether internally or externally - which specifies what their individual goal is in relation to the topic). The synthesis produces a goal that is predetermined (for the sake of appeasing the administration), negotiated (for the teachers sake), contains elements of personal goals (for the sake of the student), and goal driven activities (for the sake of gaining wisdom / learning).

## **II. Aim of education**

The aim of education is freedom. Freedom thus conceived is triune in nature. This freedom is made manifest in an extremely pragmatic fashion through the three separate but equal spheres. The spheres will be tied with the nexus of our educational being (curriculum, instruction, and assessment). This will allow a balance, flexibility, and an epistemic ground to permeate the concepts of curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

The first sphere of freedom is economic (Skills) [body].. This is the sphere that has impacted how we feel about the curriculum (the WHAT). The curriculum cannot be divorced from personal, pragmatic, and necessary meaning.

In order to give meaning to the skills we need to teach the skills authentically. This way the students would not only learn the content and basic factual knowledge that they were required to. They would also learn how to think synthetically, comparatively, and evaluatively. Thus, the same knowledge that is required in order to ensure employment and grant economic freedom is attained via a curriculum that is grounded in the liberal arts.

The intellectual sphere of freedom (knowledge) [mind] is the second of the three spheres that make up the total aim of education. This second sphere of intellectual freedom is associated with the notion of assessment. Here is the education of the mind.

Assessment has to become 'authentic'. These new forms of assessment (outlined below) will spill over into cooperative learning activities as well as various types of individual authentic assessments that will spring from the curriculum and thus allow authentic learning to take place.

The third sphere of the ultimate aim of education is spiritual freedom (wisdom) [soul]. Roosevelt once said that to educate a man in mind and not in spirit is to create a menace to society and David Patterson is quick to point out that some of the brightest minds in Germany devised the "final solution" to the Jewish problem. Although some of this sphere is tainted with curriculum and assessment it all seems to culminate in the view of the teaching learning process. Here is meaning given, connections exposed, and wisdom gained.

### **III. Curriculum (instruction & assessment)**

The instructional strategies of the cognitivist consist of cognitive mapping, chunking, advanced organizers, imagery, analogies, and visual imagery. The constructivist values argument, discussion, debate, collaboration, reflection, interpretation, construction, and generally any collaboratively made authentic task. Within this framework the multiple intelligences will be emphasized and instruction will be differentiated.

We are not so rash as to burn the bridge of behaviorialism and the content and knowledge levels that go hand in hand with it. Some of this is necessary. For example, one has to know the name of the character and what they did before one could write about him / her. However, assessment does not have to stop here. Why should we be content with the distribution and memorization of facts when we can get genuine synthetic and evaluative knowledge saturated with meaning?

In most cases the strategies of the cognitivist camp will have to be utilized before the student can function in the constructivist realm. For example the student may have to map before he / she can debate or he / she may need an advanced organizer before they are able to discuss.

The assessment style of the cognitivist consists of a diagnostic of mental representation and process (having the student generate visual representations of concepts and skills). The constructivist on the other hand values peer and self-evaluations through various types of anecdotal reports (portfolios and interactive notebooks). The emphasis of assessment must rest on both processes, output and peer / self-evaluations.