

## **Introduction**

After analyzing each learning theory one comes to the conclusion that there is almost no learning environment where a single theory can be effectively used standalone. For instance, if an instructor were to use behaviorism exclusively in their classroom it would most likely be void of meaningful learning and very formulaic. With students constantly worried about behavior. This ultimately would lead to stress instead of learning. In contrast if an instructor relied solely on meaningful learning there classroom would lack structure.

Every theory lacks something – depth, structure, or meaning. To be most effective it is necessary to use one of the theories as a framework and inject principles from other theories. This type of blending will facilitate the completion to the framework theory. A blended approach is the one I will use to describe my personal learning theory, which I will call – Meaningful Event Based Constructivism

## **Foundation**

As the foundation or framework of Meaningful Event Based Constructivism I will use a combination of constructivism and Ganges Nine Events of Instruction. Now, Driscoll (2005) points out that constructivism and Ganges theory of instruction are incompatible by stating “As a theory [constructivism] may indeed be incommensurable with an instructional theory such as Gange’s, because the two would have been built from opposing assumptions.” However, I believe that you can combine them in an effective way and have them correlate succinctly. Meaningful Event Based Constructivism or MEBC as I will refer

to it combines many other theories. It combines principle from many of the other theories. MEBC takes the best principles from Meaningful Learning, Motivation, and Interactional Theories of Cognitive Development. Leaving how each theory's principles factor in, shape and influence MEBC for later, I will now discuss how constructivism and the nine events can be combined.

### **Five plus nine gives you four**

It is helpful to know the description of each of the five conditions of constructivism. First, complex and relevant environments are described as environments that provide the student with the opportunity to solve complex problems in a real world type environment. This allows students to observe various phenomena and manipulate in a way consistent to the real world. It is proven that this is very effective in ill-structured domains.

But one of the drawbacks of constructivism on its own is the problem of scope. Not every domain or body of knowledge is ill-structured. For instance math has a very structured hierarchical path. Constructivism starts to become ineffective in these types of domains if it is not adapted. I can provide more structure to these types of domains by using some of the principles found in other theories.

Specifically I can organize the environment using a constructivist approach but I can add a few of the events from Gagne's Instructional theory. If I utilize the last three events to provide structure it will aid the learner in constructing models. Namely, I can use the seventh, eighth and ninth events. Which are providing feedback, assessing performance, and enhancing retention and transfer respectively.

Within the complex and relevant environment if the facilitator provides the student with feedback as they go it will help the student complete their model. This will remove misconceptions and inaccuracies in the student's model. Now many state that this would influence and bias the student and deconstruct any learning the student has learned so far. I argue that if the student is left on their own they will flounder and lose time trying to find this feedback by them self.

Constructivism lacks structure when assessment is concerned. So synthesizing Gagne's 8<sup>th</sup> event with constructivism can lend some structure to MEBC. Students must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their performance and have it mean something. Assessment is a form of indirect feedback it provides the learner with a mark of their progress. To provide this foundation some form of assessment must be incorporated in to the learning environment.

For example in an ill-structured domain like medicine where constructivist approaches are frequently used one should incorporated something like a skills demonstration. The will allow students to correct the performance. This will give the facilitator the opportunity to provide direct feedback. This principle relates heavily to motivation as well. One of the principles of this tenant of constructivism is relevance. It is also one of the core concepts of the ARCS model presented by Keller. It is the R in ARCS. If the student is given the chance to make an assessment goal and then improve upon this goal it adds relevance. Assessment can also help with satisfaction especially if goals are met.

Gange's 9<sup>th</sup> event enhancing retention and transfer has much in common with constructivism and many other theories. I find this important because if it is one of the only things that is agreed upon between theorist. This is should be one of the core principles in MEBC. Dirscoll (2005) points out that a "variety of examples and contexts are critical learning conditions for learners to be able to transfer intellectual skills appropriately." Examples of an activities that are part of a complex and relevant learning environment include role-plays, scenario based discussions, and computer simulations.

Second, Social negotiation is described as learning in a communal setting. Above I explained how three events above could aid MEBC and move it beyond constructivism. I will now discuss how combining the principle of social negation can be combined with three events to create a new condition of learning within MEBC. This principle I will call Social recall. Social Recall and Information includes Gange's first three events. These are gaining attention, informing learners of the objectives, and stimulating recall of prior learning. Adding a social aspect to all of these events is will add another dimension that Gange's events do not provide by default. One event in particular can be aided by adding this social dimension and this recall of prior learning. By putting students in groups at the beginning of an activity and asking them to recall specific facts will learn something that they either haven't found on their own. Brainstorming sessions will always provide more results then someone on their own.

At this point I have two core principles of MEBC and I have combined six events with two conditions of constructivism. There are still three events and three conditions I will combine. I will combine multiple perspectives and multiple modes of learning with

presenting the stimulus. And I will combine the events providing learning guidance, and eliciting performance with the conditions ownership in learning, and self-awareness of knowledge construction in to one core principle called guidance and ownership.

Multiple presentation, is what I what I will call the third principle of MEBC. “Multiple presentations” incorporates multiple modes of learning and presenting the stimulus. Ganges event as Dirscoll (2005) points out “if the goal of instruction is information acquisition, the stimulus may consist of a textbook chapter, lecture, or film containing the content.” It is very inline with the multiple modes condition. MEBC will use this principle because it serves the student well. Discroll (2005) states “Revisiting the same material, at different times, in rearranged contexts, for different purposes, and form different conceptual perspectives is essential for attaining the goals of advanced knowledge acquisition.”

Guidance and ownership will be the fourth principle of MEBC. This principle will lend depth to the learning of the student. If the student fells that sense of ownership they will be motivated to learn on there own. This will lead them down the path of learning discovery. If you then have them demonstrate their skills of knowledge it will reinforce this ownership. Also the facilitator can guide them down this path of discovery by providing limited guidance. Assuring they are careful not to create branches of the self-discovery path.

MEBC now includes four core principles:

1. Complex and Relevant Learning Environments
2. Social Recall and information
3. Multiple presentations
4. Guidance and Ownership

These principles are a combination of Gange's nine events and the five conditions of constructivism. So far I have not talked about how meaningful learning is incorporated into MEBC. The core principle of Meaningful learning is that the material must be potentially meaningful. This dictates that all materials used in MEBC are potentially meaningful and relevant to the learner. All materials must be organized and critically analyzed for relevance and meaning.

### **Conclusion**

I believe that students learn best when they are engaged. Presented with multiple options and feel a sense of ownership. I think that can be best accomplished by use the four principles of MEBC. This will create a complex but meaningful learning environment where students can thrive.