

## Students as Curriculum Designers: Deep Constructivism

MS: [00:00] The issue of constructivist environments is very interesting because most educational models these days are compared to transmission environments. So people think of a modern, inquiry-based, project-based stu—classroom as compared to drill and kill, tran—you know, transmission models. We've been trying to argue that education's just got to get a bit more subtle than that if it's going to really make the advances that we believe are important.

Like, most modern environments are constructivist environments. Knowledge building is constructivist. Students create their own knowledge. Most environments are constructivist environments. In order to try to make these distinctions, we've been thinking that maybe we need to make a distinction between deep constructivism and a shallower constructivism. It—that is, students construct their own knowledge, and all of that is different from this transmission model.

But if you think about knowledge creation, then you have to think you've got to go some place where no one's been before. Somebody just can't guide you there. You've got to finally step out on your own. And so this notion, even guided discovery, it's always this sense, "I know why I'm having this—" from a teacher's point of view, "I know why I'm having this—the children question. I know what ideas I want them to come to." From the point of view of a teacher who wants to deal in a knowledge creation classroom, they've got to think, "Whatever the highest level things I'm doing, I've got to think of a way to turn that power over to the students."

So it's a never-ending, the—what they call in expertise literature, the "executive processes." Planning the unit, deciding what to do next, "How am I going to evaluate it?" These are things that are thought to reside with the teacher. The teacher typically plans the inquiry unit, plans how they're going to evaluate if it was effective, plans the project. All of those constructivist.

Deep constructivism says the students need to do the planning, the students need to be able to evaluate are they getting anywhere, the students need to identify their gaps in understanding. So those highest level capabilities that we tend to think reside only and could ever only reside with the teacher need to be taken over by the students. So we call that deep constructivism. It's more than constructing your own understanding. It's actually constructing the whole space of invention. It's—it's living as design communities live. And so, we've tried to make that distinction, as I say, between shallow and deep constructivism with knowledge building.

Of course, some people say we're insanely out in this end because schools could not conceivably live as knowledge-creating organizations. So just as it's hard to understand that dimension from shallow to deep constructivism, it always kinds [sic] of makes me laugh because those people criticize us because we're off on the deep end. And but I—but I think you've got to always come back and say, "Is that how it would be in a knowledge-creating organization?" And if not, then, well, maybe schools could be more powerful. What's it—what would it take? And we come together as de—design community to keep ratcheting up education.

[END OF RECORDING – length, 03:58]