

A Process Education Primer: 2019

WHAT IS PROCESS EDUCATION?

Process Education™ (PE) can be defined as a **performance-based** philosophy of education which integrates many different educational **theories, processes, and tools** in emphasizing the continuous development of **learning skills** through the use of **assessment** principles in order to produce **learner self-development**. (www.pcrest.com/PC/PE)

The PE philosophy is founded on two premises:

1. Every learner can learn to learn better, regardless of his or her current level of achievement; one's potential is not limited by current ability.
2. Educators have a responsibility to “raise the bar” in their profession because learning is enhanced and achieved for all learners when educators help build learning skills, create and improve quality learning environments, design solid coherent curricula, and serve as effective facilitators of learning.

PE requires that learning and facilitation of learning take place within an assessment culture, rather than a culture of evaluation. In the traditional educational model, the focus is upon evaluation—an educator judges a student's efforts and performance against objective criteria with standards. While this evaluation can provide a useful snapshot of performance, it does not encourage the *improvement* of that performance. Through the careful use of assessment, however, students can continually improve the quality of their performance. This is critical, as the goal of PE is to help individuals develop into self-growers. Self-growers are learners who seek to improve their own learning performance; can create their own challenges; serve as leaders and mentors to others; take control of their own destiny, and self-assesses and self-mentor to facilitate their own growth.

Process Education is based upon a foundation of several different educational philosophies and approaches, most of which fall into the general category of constructivism. Constructivism is built upon the cognitive theory of development pioneered by Jean Piaget. One of the core assumptions of constructivism is that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge. This knowledge is constructed on the basis of personal experiences and the hypotheses that a learner makes about the environment. Piaget is also credited with identifying stages of (largely cognitive) learner development. Subsequent theorists built on or provided alternatives to his ideas. Lev Vygotsky's social developmental theory, for example, focused more heavily on the influence of social interaction in the process of cognitive development. Jerome Bruner also emphasized environmental and experiential factors in his theory of learning. Building on constructivism, his book, *The Process of Education (1960)*, described people as being active in the process of learning, continually structuring and restructuring their environment and recommended approaches such as the “spiral curriculum” and discovery learning.

Educational theorists like Alan Tough and Malcolm Knowles have applied these concepts to adults, using the term *self-directed learning*. Self-directed learning has become increasingly important as our rapidly changing world necessitates life-long learning, extending well beyond any formal classroom. Knowles was an especially strong advocate for the self-directed learner, arguing that proactive learners enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation, leading to increased retention (Knowles, 1975).



PRINCIPLES OF PROCESS EDUCATION

1. Every learner can learn to learn better, regardless of current level of achievement; one's potential is not limited by current ability.
2. Although everyone requires help with learning at times, the goal is to become a capable, self-sufficient, lifelong learner.
3. An empowered learner is one who uses learning processes and self-assessment to improve future performance.
4. Educators should assess students regularly by measuring performance, modeling assessment processes, providing timely feedback, and helping students improve their self-assessment skills.
5. Faculty must accept fully the responsibility for facilitating student success.
6. To develop expertise in a discipline, a learner must develop a specific knowledge base in that field, but also acquire generic, lifelong learning skills that relate to all disciplines.
7. In a quality learning environment, facilitators of learning (teachers) focus on improving specific learning skills through timely, appropriate, and constructive interventions.
8. Mentors use specific methodologies that model the steps or activities they expect students to use in achieving their own learning goals.
9. An educational institution can continually improve its effectiveness in producing stronger learning outcomes in several ways. A process educator can continuously improve the concepts, processes, and tools used by doing active observation and research in the classroom by:
 - a. Aligning institutional, course, and program objectives;
 - b. Investing in faculty development, curricular innovation, and design of performance measures;
 - c. Embracing an assessment culture



BELIEFS OF PROCESS EDUCATORS

Collectively, members of the Academy of Process Educators believe that:

1. Every student deserves success, and as educators and significant institutional stakeholders, we can provide a set of experiences that empower every student to succeed (i.e., produce Self-growers).
2. Every faculty and staff member, by continual self-development, can increase their contribution to student success (modelers of self-growth).
3. Every institution can increase student success by creating a Learning-to-Learn and Self-growth culture.