Humanism

About humanism

Humanism as a approach to education and learning paradigm was being developed since the **1960s** as a contrast to cognitivism and behaviorism and perception of a human being as an object in scientific inquiry. Humanism starts from the belief in **inherent human goodness** and contrasts Sigmund Freud's and biological approaches, which claim human behavior and cognition are determined by experience and prior events. Most important humanist authors that shaped this theory were Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow whose works were mostly orientated on understanding of personality.

Humanists emphasize:

- importance of **responsibility** for individuals actions, and **present moment**,
- **worth of every individual**, and
- **happiness through self-achievement** as the ultimate living goal.

Humanist perspectives on learning suggest:

- learning is a **natural desire**, a mean of **self-actualization** and development of **personal potentials**
- importance of learning lies in the **process**, not outcome,
- learners should have **more control** over the learning process, which should be based on **observing** and **exploring**
- the teacher should be a **role-model** encouraging the learner and provide him with reasons and motivation for every new part of the learning process.

One of Maslow's contributions widely accepted even far beyond borders of humanism is the hierarchy of needs in which he tried to formulate the **human motivation framework**. Hierarchy of needs approaches human motivation in terms of different kind of needs that have to be satisfied in order to move to the higher level of needs. Those levels include **psychological**, **safety**, **society**, **esteem** and **self-actualization needs** and need to be **satisfied in the mentioned order**.

Learning theories:

- Experiential Learning - David Kolb (1939 -)
- Transformational Learning Theory - Jack Mezirow

Instructional design theories and learning models:

- Facilitation Theory - Carl Rogers (1902 - 1987)
- Invitational Learning - William Purkey (1929 -)

Other important contributors:

- John Holt, Malcolm Knowles, Paulo Freire

Criticisms

Common criticisms of humanism suggest:

- humanist approach has a **reduced capacity for experimental research**,
- lack of methods for treating of different mental health problems, and
- **disagreement on the basic humanist assumption of inherent human goodness**.

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Read more

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