

Instructional Strategies: Learning Theories

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“The moment you say ‘I know everything’ is the end of your growth” (Divine, 2013, n.p.). Learning theories are important in helping educators comprehend how students receive, process, and maintain knowledge. Based on that understanding, education can be designed, developed, and provided in the best format for learning. Therefore, this paper will provide an overview and classroom practices of the 21st century skills, humanism, and constructivism learning theories along with a reflection of how these theories fit into my personal teaching philosophy and future classroom practices.

Learning Theories and Classroom Practices

In considering the 21st century skills learning theory, the goal is for students to learn survival skills to succeed in school and future careers. Therefore, the important 21st century skills encompass “critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and leadership, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, and curiosity and imagination” (Rosefsky et al., 2012, p. 8). These skills require being able to work with computers and technology in addition to developing social responsibility, which are highly relevant in the world today due to globalization, the ability to connect with almost everyone, and low levels of civic commitment. Thus, implementation of classroom practices that reflect the 21st century skills learning theory consist of making the lesson relevant to the students so that there is motivation to learn. To illustrate, most students like sports or music, so a lesson could be focused on these topics. Moreover, technology must be utilized to support learning under this theory. Technology is everywhere today, so using computers, iPads, and even video games in classes are 21st century skills. Lastly, lessons that encourage creativity like allowing the students to brainstorm ideas and

act on those ideas should be employed for critical thinking. Therefore, the 21st century skills learning theory encourages relevant skills and problem solving for students in the current world.

Indeed, in the humanism learning theory, the goal is student-centered. This theory is based on the student person as a whole and how they will grow and develop. Humanism attempts to fulfill the potential of each student with the teacher serving as more of a facilitator. In fact, the humanistic learning theory is defined as the “holistic growth of the person, including cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal domains” (Purswell, 2019, p. 359). With this theory, there is trust in the student capacity to learn and self-directed learning is believed to provide the best growth. Hence, implementation of classroom practices that reflect the humanism learning theory encompass more student-directed learning, instead of teacher-directed learning. An example of this would be collaborative decision making between student and teacher where they both decide on the rules, procedures, or rubrics for an assignment. A second illustration would be the teacher introducing a topic and asking questions so that the students answer and learn based on discussion. Another humanistic classroom practice is to allow the students to select the purpose of a project with a choice of how to complete that project as the teacher facilitates the direction. Lastly, a humanistic practice would be to have project-based learning activities instead of homework. Consequently, the humanism learning theory focuses on intrinsic motivation, allows errors as a valuable tool, and works to enable student development to their full potential and idea of who they want to be.

In addition, for the constructivism learning theory, the goal is a “learner-centered view of teaching...rooted in cognitive psychology...[so that] knowledge does not move into the learner, but, the learner has to construct knowledge” (Masethe et al., 2017, p. 2). In other words, constructivism requires active students, feedback, social interaction, and goals. Students are

expected to participate in obtaining meaningful knowledge by adding to past experience through means such as critical thinking, making mistakes, and finding solutions (Masethe et al., 2017).

Therefore, implementation of a classroom practice that reflects the constructivism learning theory involves facilitating group work to stress social interaction. Additionally, learning should transpire by doing or active participation in the classroom. This could include the teacher asking questions and students using problem solving to answer. Finally, a constructivism classroom practice would be to have students reflect on learning through journals, portfolios, or feedback. As a result, the constructivism learning theory emphasizes critical thinking and student involvement based on previous experiences.

Reflection on Learning Theories and Teaching Philosophy

Particularly, the 21st century skills, humanism, and constructivism learning theories fit in with my own teaching philosophy and future classroom practice. In that regard, my teaching philosophy has been based on previous personal experience from teaching observations and practicums. Additionally, education coursework has benefitted my philosophy development.

First, my teaching philosophy incorporates the fact that every student is unique and learns differently. Hence, it is essential for the teacher to adapt teaching methods to individual learners in a classroom environment through diversity of learning styles and activities. This necessitates adaptability through the utilization of numerous instructional and learning methods, which can involve visual, auditory, linguistic, and kinesthetic methods. Thus, this philosophy corresponds to the 21st century skills learning theory which requires adaptability, agility, initiative, and imagination. Additionally, the humanism learning theory agrees to the philosophy of uniqueness since the goal is to be student-centered, helping the student to grow as a whole person. Lastly, the constructivism learning theory relates to each student learning differently by providing

feedback, participation, and social interaction for their benefit. These learning theories applied in the classroom will promote the uniqueness and learning differences of each student.

Second, my teaching philosophy encompasses contributions in the classroom by all participants, including teacher and student. Teachers are also learning every day. Therefore, feedback and critical thinking is extremely crucial. Accordingly, the 21st century skills learning theory relates to this philosophy through the building of vital skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, analyzing information, communication, and collaboration, which are prevalent in this theory. Moreover, the humanism learning theory is consistent to this philosophy in that self-directed learning is highly valued through collaboration and the teacher believes each student has a great capacity to learn. Lastly, the constructivism learning theory matches this philosophy through feedback, active students, and social interaction. As a result, these learning theories are relevant to every person contributing to the classroom.

Third, my teaching philosophy embraces fostering critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, which are critical to lifelong learning and life in general. So, my classes will utilize a wide variety of techniques and technologies to facilitate these skills. Obviously, the 21st century skills learning theory is fundamental to this philosophy since these skills are critical to both. In addition, the humanism and constructivism learning theories highlight instructional methods centered around the student in order to benefit their growth and development through motivation, feedback, and active participation in the classroom. For that reason, the 21st century skills, humanism, and constructivism learning theories correspond to my teaching philosophies that every student is unique, contributions should be made by every person in the classroom and embracing critical thinking and problem-solving strategies.

Conclusion

Consequently, it is apparent that the diverse learning theories generate an excellent foundation to understand and explain how people learn, while allowing analysis and prediction of learning. In that respect, the learning theories benefit teachers by aiding them in making informed decisions to design, develop, and determine methods of learning. Specifically, the 21st century skills, humanism, and constructivism learning theories are well suited for my personal teaching philosophy and future classroom practices. In fact, learning is a lifelong experience and these theories will facilitate my teaching philosophies to better student opportunities for growth and learning in the future.

References

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