Learning Theories Paper

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Learning theories are an important piece when looking at education and teaching. Each learning theory can have different effects on an educator's teaching style and the classroom they teach in. Six major learning theories encompass education. 21st-century skills and humanism relate the most to my teaching philosophy and future classroom practice while behaviorism is a theory that I want to explore and learn more about. I hope that these learning theories will help to explain my teaching philosophy.

Overview

The first learning theory is 21st-century skills. The goal of 21st-century skills is to go beyond the basics taught in school and focus more on cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and technical skills (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 246). Cognitive skills look at "non-routine problem solving, critical thinking, and systems thinking" (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 246). Intrapersonal skills look at "self-management, time management, self-development, self-regulation, adaptability, and executive functioning" (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 246). Interpersonal skills look at "complex communication, social skills including collaboration, teamwork, cultural sensitivity, and dealing with diversity" (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 246). Finally, technical skills look at "research and information fluency skills as well as entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy" (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 246). Assessing these skills is very important, but it is just one part of 21st-century skills. To implement these skills into the classroom and assess them properly, "one must identify such skills, define them, organize different 21st-century skills into coherent systems, develop, and adapt curricula to include such skills…, consider instructional approaches…, develop actual instruction and instructional materials" (Geisinger, 2016, pg. 245). 21st-century skills are very

important to the current education system and I believe that every teacher should implement these skills into their curriculum in some way.

The second learning theory is humanism. This learning theory is very student-centered and focuses on student success (What is Humanistic Learning Theory, 2020). The humanism learning theory is adapted from humanistic psychology and when referring to education, humanism focuses "on the idea that children are good at the core and that education should focus on rational ways to teach the "whole" child. This theory states that the student is the authority on how they learn and that all of their needs should be met in order for them to learn well" (What is Humanistic Learning Theory, 2020). Students can work on goals, self-esteem, social skills, artistic and practical skills, and feelings (What is Humanistic Learning Theory, 2020). These skills along with many others are important to children and can be developed throughout their education. Students should be in touch with their feelings and they should have the opportunity to explore their creative side. Humanism is my favorite learning theory. Educators focus on children, but with humanism, this focus is deeper and allows students to understand themselves by exploring who they are and what they feel.

The last learning theory is behaviorism. Behaviorism "emphasizes changes in behavior that result from stimulus-response associations made by the learner" and concerns "observable and measurable aspects of human behavior" (Zhou & Brown, 2017, pg. 6). Behaviorism believes behavior is learned, habits are formed, and that behavior can be unlearned by using a system of reward and punishment (Zhou & Brown, 2017, pg. 6). For this system of reward and punishment to be successful, the rewards should be specific and important to the learner. While the rewards should be important to the learner, the success will be determined by the learner's stimulus, response, and association (Zhou & Brown, 2017, pg. 6). Behaviorism is a learning

theory that I wanted to explore more. I was unsure of this learning theory because if used wrong, then it will not provide much benefit.

These three learning theories are important aspects of education. They are not the only learning theories, but these three learning theories would be beneficial to my teaching philosophy and future classroom practice.

21st Century Skills

21st century skills are high up on my list of important learning theories. All learning theories are important, but this specific learning theory is very important to the future of education. Students should not only be learning about content, but they should also be taught skills that will help them mature into adults and enter the workforce. As a social studies education major, I have a lot of responsibility to teach my students about becoming educated citizens. I can teach them skills that will be valuable to them inside and outside of the classroom. Just like any other content teacher, we have a responsibility to teach applicable skills. I often see that a lot of my friends and co-workers do not understand the importance of voting and being involved in local and national politics. Some are not sure where to begin when it comes to politics, how to register to vote, and how to communicate their own beliefs. As an educator, I can help students to feel comfortable with their role as United States citizens. I am also responsible for teaching students about past and present history. This is another important role I have as an educator especially with the history our country is currently making.

This is a learning theory that I would incorporate into my teaching philosophy. It would be helpful to have in my teaching philosophy because it emphasizes the importance of teaching students to become upstanding citizens who are aware of their local and national community. The next learning theory I examined is another part of my teaching philosophy.

Humanism.

Humanism is another learning theory that is high up on my list of important learning theories. Every individual is unique, and it is important to make sure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect no matter what. More specifically, students are important, and educators should treat them as such. Teachers should not be afraid to teach students how to get in touch with their feelings and work with them to better manage these feelings. Students deal with a lot outside of school. I might not be aware of these situations, but by using humanism I will be able to create relationships with students and help them express their thoughts and feelings. I hope that using humanism will help to create a safe and respectful environment while also teaching students that is okay to learn about their emotions and find ways to manage them. Humanism is a great way to let students become more independent and explore new thoughts and ideas.

As I mentioned before, this learning theory is my favorite. If I were asked to pick my top learning theory, humanism would be the one. Getting to know oneself, exploring emotions, and becoming more creative is exactly what educators should be fostering in their classrooms. Teachers should not only get to know their students but allow their students to understand themselves better.

Behaviorism.

Behaviorism has always interested me throughout my education. I have learned about John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner throughout many psychology courses in both high school and college. I was never sure if this learning theory would be utilized in my classroom a lot. After reading almost half of our class textbook from Todd Whittaker, I have learned that the reward and punishment system can be beneficial if you make it beneficial for the student. Whittaker gives the example of Elliot in chapter 13, to show that modeling for students can help them learn

from their behavior and prevent future mistakes from happening (Whittaker, 2012, pg. 80-82).

Whittaker was able to explain why Elliot should apologize and how to apologize (Whittaker,

2012, pg. 80-82). If educators can model behavior and provide rewards for students, then they

can avoid harsh punishments that may upset the student or cause some hard feelings between the

teacher and student. If teachers just give out punishments without any explanation or room for

improving behavior, then the student may never be able to positively change their behavior.

Behaviorism is something that I would consider including in my teaching philosophy. I

think that behaviorism can be beneficial with lots of modeling for the student and room to let the

student improve their behavior without just giving a punishment. In my teaching philosophy, I

would emphasize the importance of modeling and give students the chance to improve their

behavior and learn from mistakes.

Conclusion.

For me, 21st-century skills, humanism, and behaviorism are the three important learning

theories. These would be used every day in my classroom. Humanism is the most important to

my teaching philosophy. I want students to explore who they are. 21st-century skills are

important to my teaching philosophy and can be connected to humanism. As a social studies

educator, it is my job to prepare students to become upstanding citizens. By letting them explore

who they are I can help them develop confidence when dealing with political issues and

identities. Behaviorism is important to my teaching philosophy because students should be

rewarded whenever possible and punished when needed. Both rewards and punishments should

help to better the student. All the learning theories are important when looking at education, but

these three theories are the basis for my teaching philosophy.

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