

Learning Theorist Research Report

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What is learning? How does one learn? These are the base line questions used to establish the different types and perspectives on learning. There are a host of learning theories that one can come across. The theory you personally align with is the one that you can easily understand. Learning is seen as a form of communication. Lever-Duffy and McDonald (2015) says, “teachers are senders of messages; students are receivers...learning occurs when information is accurately transmitted”. Teachers are the facilitators of the knowledge. They bestow the knowledge (message) to students and “feedback checks for message accuracy” (Lever-Duffy and McDonald 2015). Teachers use many scaffolding techniques to effectively communicate with all students. In education there are three popular types of perspectives on learning. The perspectives are behaviorist, cognitivist, and constructivist perspective. Lever-Duffy and McDonald (2015) tells that the behaviorist perspective is when “learning is the result of the stimulus-response cycle”, cognitivist perspective is when the “learning is a mental operation that occurs when information enters senses, undergoes mental manipulation, is stored, and finally used, and lastly constructivist perspective is when “learning is knowledge constructed from a process resulting from individual cognition and is unique to the individual. In this paper I will research three theorist and explain how their perspectives would impact teaching and learning. The theorist at hand will be Jean Piaget, B.F. Skinner, and Howard Gardner.

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist was best known for his theory of cognitive development. In the earlier years people thought kids and adults were the same people mentally. They assumed kids and adults thought alike. Piaget was able to prove this wrong through his research. Through his research he concluded “children sort the knowledge they acquire through their experiences and interactions into grouping known as schema...when new information is acquired, it can either be assimilated into existing schemas or accommodated through revising an

existing schema or creating an entirely new category of information” Cherry (2017). In a sense kids were constructivist. Meaning they “learned by doing, rather than by being told” Elearning Infographics (2015). I am a firm believer of Piaget’s theory. Kids learn through experiences. In the classroom teachers utilize real world applications so that students can relate certain topics to the real world. These real-world applications are experiences that students go through and learn from. When a situation that was practiced and applied in the classroom does come up in the real world the students have already had somewhat of an experience with it and then they can either” assimilate it into an existing schema, change their schema, or develop new schema” Elearning Infographics (2015). When you become a teacher, it is your job to educate students with the content that associates with their grade level. On the first day of school most teachers do get to know you activities then some kind of “knowledge check” meaning show me what you know. This in a sense is activating students’ schema. This would be even more beneficial before a lesson. Incorporating technology with Piaget’s theory would be easy. There are a host of educational software that gives students the hands-on experience and software that lets students learn at their own pace. I have used GeoGebra, which give students technological tools to manipulate geometry and see how the change in bases, vertices, angles, etc change the area or perimeter of a shape. Also, software like Aleks allows students to learn at their own pace. This allows for students to develop their own schema based on their progress.

B.F. Skinner follow a behaviorist perspective. According to Lever-Duffy and McDonald (2015), a behaviorist perspective is one that thinks “learning is the result of stimulus response cycle”. This is cause and effect in a sense. Skinner came up with the idea of “Operant Conditioning”. Operant conditioning is a “method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behavior, through operant conditioning, an individual makes an association

between a particular behavior and a consequence (McLeod, 2018). Skinner's idea is typically how educators deals with students. Positive reinforcements would be for good behavior, good grades, helping others, etc. In return students may get candy, extra free time (recess), praise, etc. Negative reinforcement could be for bad behavior, failure to complete assignments, attitude, etc. In return students may have a conference, get scolded, lose privileges, punishment, etc. Elearning Infographics (2015) states, positive reinforcement strengthens behavior or increases the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated, negative reinforcement pushes a child away from a behavior. When becoming a teacher, you must find your way. What will your classroom procedures and management look like? Like I stated earlier most educators use Skinners Operant Conditioning. I utilize Operant Conditioning with technology in my classroom along with other reinforcement. Students who receive positive reinforcements can use their tokens on the educational software called USA TEST PREP. Students earn tokens by completing their assigned assignments or completing their self-paced guided practice activities. Some teachers may give students free time meaning play games on the computer, listen to music on phones, etc. Technology can be incorporated into any learning theory.

The idea of "multiple intelligences" came about by a Harvard grad by the name of Howard Gardner. Lane (200) proclaimed Gardner's researched proved "students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways". Becoming a teacher, you always hear the phrase "all students are different, you must find a way to reach everyone". This brings justification to Gardner's theory. He states there are seven types of learning styles; visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, and logical-mathematical. There are countless technology websites and software that provides multiple intelligent inventories. Students would be given different

questions about their learning and through the compilation of the results the software would tell which learning style fits closely with that child. Teachers could really benefit from these inventories online at the beginning of the school year. Teachers would know firsthand what type of learners they have in their classroom therefore being able to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of every student.

Through my small research I described the learning theories of three heavily acclaimed theorist, Jean Piaget, B.F. Skinner, and Howard Gardner. Each theorist had a different perspective on learning. I was able to identify how each perspective would impact teaching and learning. Also, we saw how technology could be incorporated into each learning theory. The biggest concept when it comes to learning theory, I believe is how can we reach each student and incorporate technology to better prepare our students for the real world. Technology is ubiquitously so we must incorporate into our everyday learning styles.

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