Learning Theories

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Learning theories are a huge thing in the education world. Each theory takes on its own nature of how to effectively have your students learn content, understand the content, learn new skills to further their person, and come to gain what it takes to propel them into the next level. This paper will examine Humanism, Behaviorism, and 21st Century learning skills, and will look at how they fit into my teaching philosophy.

Humanism is an educational approach that views learning as something that is personal, to fulfill their human potential. This philosophy came to be in the 1960's, and its main focuses are on human freedom, dignity, and potential. There is a widespread belief in humanism that it is a necessity to look at the person, when one grows and develops over their life time. Study of self, motivation, and goals are areas that are of great importance in this learning theory (Humanism, 2015).

The two big contributors to the humanistic view are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. According to learning-theories.com, "A primary purpose of humanism could be described as the development of self-actualized, autonomous people" (Humanism, 2015). This puts the focus of learning on the student and allows the teacher to act as a facilitator. The goal of this theory is to foster growth and self-actualization in a supportive and collaborative environment.

Behaviorism is a learning theory that is based on a principle of 'stimulus response'. All behavior is a product of external stimuli, or operant conditioning, and all behavior can be explained without needing to consider mental states or consciousness. This theory sees people as beginning with a clean-slate, and that one's actions and behavior is formed by either positive or negative reinforcement. Through either positive or negative reinforcement, the probability of a certain behavior will occur again is increased. Whereas punishment, decreases the likelihood that

a behavior will happen again. Positive reinforcement show that a certain stimulus is applied, where negative reinforcement shows that a stimulus is withheld (Behaviorism, 2007). Developers of this learning theory from its earliest stages were the likes of John Watson, Ivan Pavlov (and his dogs), as well as Albert Bandura.

21st Century skills are necessary skills that students need to master to experience school and life successfully in an ever-evolving digital and connected world. The seven C's of 21st Century Skills are; critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, culture, communication, computing, and career readiness. These skills are supposed to be developed within an integrated approach to the traditional subject like math or history (21st Century Skills, 2014).

Within 21st Century learning, teachers are at times encouraged to create their own curriculum, following the guidelines of this learning theory (21st Century Skills, 2014). These skills are intended to prepare our students for the next level, and in our world, that is always seeking to get to the next level, this learning theory looks to equip our students to have the ability to move with the times and to continue to learn each day.

Regarding integrating these learning theories into my personal philosophy of education, I first wish to give a basic outline of my philosophy. I am a firm believer that every child has the potential to do something great with the world, even if it by simply being the best student, mother, banker, carpenter, or you name it they can be. My job as a teacher is to care for my students enough to get them to a point to where they can desire fulfillment and can attain that fulfillment of self. I want the best for my students, so I will work very hard for them, I will never stop learning, I will never stop self-reflection, and I will never stop working to fulfill my potential as a man for them, and all I meet. So, my philosophy of my own life is like the one I

hold for my students and my teaching; be the best man you can be, for your family, friends, students, and all around you, by never stopping to grow into who you were created to be.

From my philosophy, you can tell that I am very humanistic, and I desire to bring that into my classroom in many ways. One way is to encourage and praise my students when they do something well, and by letting them know what potential I see in them by the way I treat them. I will listen to my students needs and will respond to them, I will show them my humanness by being myself in my teaching in hopes to have them pursue their own humanness, and I will always seek to create a positive classroom environment.

Regarding using behaviorism, this is something that I believe can work well with humanism. I am a firm believer that every action has consequences, so I will use a humanistic approach to hopefully prevent bad things. But, in the case that something does happen, I will use some sort of discipline with a behaviorist approach to help with the problem. For example, if one of my students is texting in class, I will politely remind them of my no technology policy and will have them give me the phone until they leave my class. After class, I will have them pick it up, and will again reinforce the rule, but will also tell them that I think highly of them and know that they can follow the rules. I will also ask them why he may have been on the phone, and if it was because of some trauma or emergency, I will attend to that accordingly.

To bring in 21st Century skills, I hope to have 1 to 1 technology in my classroom to have the ability to be connected and to have the students do research in groups for certain lessons. I also plan on teaching lessons on different cultures or having my students present about their cultural backgrounds.

One specific example of 21st Century learning I have is that I desire to have six to eight markerboards around my classroom, and I will split my students into even groups. The different groups will be assigned a whiteboard and a topic related to our lesson of that day. From there, they will use their laptops to research the topic they have been given and write out everything on the board that they can find in 5 minutes. After that time is up, I will have them rotate to the next board, and they will have 5 more minutes to add onto what the previous group had found. They will continue to do this until they make it all the way back to their own board, and they will then collect all the information, fact check it, and then formulate a small presentation together to be given the next day on the smartboard. This involves communication, collaboration, culture, critical thinking, and creativity.

In looking at these three learning theories, I have found different things from each of them that I will use in my future classroom. I intend to find new ways to integrate them into my teaching philosophy to better serve my students each day. I look forward to becoming a teacher someday and being able to have a positive influence on our world through teaching and caring for kids who are to be coming the next generations of our nation.

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