

Educational psychology theory research assignment

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My Research-Based Theory of Teaching Educational Psychology research can be applied to solve everyday problems in teaching. Teachers must have some research-based practice for managing classes, but also must be able to stray from the practice when the situation calls for a change. Anita Woolfolk's Educational Psychology provides multiple views for different aspects of learning and teaching. Theories presented in the areas of cognitive and psychosocial development, labeling students, diversity in classrooms, Operant Conditioning, motivation, and classroom management strongly influenced my views on teaching.

Based on the Educational Psychology research included in Woolfolk's text, I have developed my own philosophy for teaching adolescents and high school classes. Development occurs in all human beings from birth to death, which makes understanding where adolescent students fall in the stages of cognitive and psychosocial development important to effectively teach them. Jean Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development have implications for teachers about what students of a certain age think and what they can learn.

Piaget's fourth stage, formal operational, applies to adolescents age eleven through adulthood, which includes high school students. At the formal operational stage, students develop the ability to solve abstract problems in a logical manner, think scientifically, and concerns for social issues. Not all students, however, will reach the levels of formal operational thinking and may only be able to use formal operational thinking in areas in which students have the most experience or interest (Woolfolk, p. 38-39).

Because all high school students may not be able to think hypothetically or abstractly when solving new problems, I would present new information in a manner to aid students in using formal operations in my classroom. For example, I would provide visual aids for the concrete operational students while also requiring the students to reason scientifically to answer questions through group discussions. Vygotsky's views of cognitive development differ from Piaget's views and highlight the important role a teacher plays in a student's cognitive development.

Although I value the importance of Piaget's stages of cognitive development, one aspect of Vygotsky's view will greatly influence my teaching philosophy. Vygotsky believes that learning takes place within a zone of proximal development, a phase at which a student can understand and master a task with the appropriate guidance (Woolfolk, p. 47). In order to effectively teach my students, I will have to establish the level of understanding the students already possess and teach information and provide tasks slightly beyond their current reach in order to make lessons challenging and exciting.

If the students the task is too easy, the students will be bored. At the other end of the spectrum, teaching information that is too difficult and beyond the grasp of the students may cause students to give up. Therefore after teaching a lesson and providing my classroom with a task to complete, I will walk around the room checking for understanding and assisting students in the process. While developing cognitively, students also develop socially and create identities for themselves.

In explaining the concepts of self and reality, Erik Erikson proposes Eight Psychosocial Stages of Development in which crises occur and resolving the crises result in a greater sense of self. Adolescents fall into the fifth stage, identity versus role confusion. In this stage, adolescents attempt to achieve identity in gender, sexuality, religion, and politics in order to gain peer acceptance in answering the question, “ Who am I? ” (Woolfolk, p. 83).

To assist students in achieving identity, in my classroom I will allow students to provide their own views and opinions on topics and allow the discussion student’s feelings on the importance of those topics in their lives in a comfortable environment. Additionally, my teaching philosophy provides that I will also intervene when I hear students using terms such as “ gay” that could interfere with another student’s achievement of identity and acceptance.

Although Educational Psychology research has shown conflicting opinions on the advantages and disadvantages to labeling children, I find that labeling students can be effective in a student’s education when done in a “ person-first” manner and will implement labeling in my classroom. As Woolfolk presents, labeling exceptional students can protect the students from other students and can provide opportunities to enter different programs, get assistance, and financial aid. Alternatively, labeling can become a self-fulfilling prophecy or a stigma (Woolfolk, p. 12). Woolfolk also presents a solution to emphasize the student first through using “ person-first” language (Woolfolk, p. 114). Through further research on labeling exceptional students, the shift toward “ person-first” language has been

implemented in special education referring to disabled children as “ children who exhibit learning disabilities” in order to bring the student back into focus. Gifted education programs, however, failed to follow suit referring to students who exhibit gifted behavior as “ gifted students. The gifted label serves as a hindrance to the self-concept of a student and also a sense of identity along with the previously mentioned disadvantages of labeling. Teachers need to regard the student first and the label second in order to identify the wants, needs, strengths, and challenges of the individual prior to making educational decisions or developing expectations for performance or behavior. Additionally, teachers can help students deal with giftedness through individual or group meetings to discuss how the students feel about themselves or through one-on-one journaling between the student and teacher.

Students are then more apt to talk about emotional needs in the future and often feel a great sense of relief (Gates, 2010). As part of my teaching philosophy, I will work to consider the student first as an individual and provide exceptional students with the opportunity to discuss their giftedness with me in an open manner in order to reduce the disadvantages and emphasize the advantages of labeling. Along with regarding students first on the subject of labeling, I believe it is important to examine the background of individual students in regards to social class and ethnicity.

Understanding the background and cultural differences allow teachers to teach every student in the classroom and accommodate for different learning styles and cultural values. My teaching philosophy provides that I

will get to know the background of students through parent conferences at the beginning of the school year and by observing student interactions during free time in and outside of the classroom. Also, because cultural diversity in classrooms can result in stereotyping, I will treat all students with respect while also decreasing the effect of the stereotype threat on students by allotting an unlimited amount of time for exams.

Stereotype threat is an “extra emotional and cognitive burden that a student’s performance in an academic situation might confirm a stereotype that others hold,” which can create test anxiety and undermine performance (Woolfolk, p. 172). Educational Psychology research supports that social class, ethnicity, and gender can predict academic achievement, and therefore my teaching philosophy supports implementing strategies that will allow students to achieve the highest possible level of academic success.

My teaching philosophy continues on into behavioral learning theories. Operant Conditioning results in learning through reinforcements and punishments, which strengthen and weaken voluntary behavior. I would utilize reinforcing and punishing in my classroom. I would use positive reinforcement, or present a desired stimulus after the behavior to strengthen it (Woolfolk, p. 203). I would praise students for appropriate behavior, but present rewards for only outstanding behavior.

Other examples of positive reinforcement are exams and quizzes. Although the a variable-interval reinforcement schedule provides a slow, steady, constant response rate, I will administer exams or quizzes on a fixed-interval schedule, in which the response rate drops after reinforcement, to allow

students to prepare while trying to maintain the persistence through other techniques such as using group discussion to check for keeping up with material (Woolfolk, p. 05). Additionally, I will present a punishment in order to decrease a behavior in students, such as detentions for breaking class rules. Operant Conditioning can be a useful tool in teaching to achieve desired behavior from students. Although the previously mentioned teaching strategies will be effective in the classroom, motivating students is one critical duty of teaching. Woolfolk's Educational Psychology lists numerous approaches to motivation.

My teaching philosophy, however, encompasses an attempt to get students intrinsically motivated toward school achievement goals. Intrinsic motivation is an self-determined motivation to perform activities that are their own reward. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is created by external factors, or rewards and punishments (Woolfolk, p. 377). As discussed with Operant Conditioning, I will implement a reward and punishment system in my classroom as a factor of behavioral learning not specifically as a source of motivation.

A research study completed by Gates and Nisan on the " Effects of No Feedback, Task-Related Comments, and Grades on Intrinsic Motivation and Performance" results suggested that grades may encourage extrinsic motivation, undermine interest in learning, depress creativity, and foster fear of failure while none of the negative aspects occurred from students in the study receiving task-related individualized comments, which included both positive and negative feedback.

The participants receiving individual, written comments as evaluation conveyed the greatest interest in the task especially in the task that required the most commitment, which suggests, although does not measure, an enhance in intrinsic motivation by answering desires for mastery and self-evaluation. In the three participant groups, 50% of the group receiving no feedback would have rather received a grade, 78.9% of the group receiving grades would have preferred written comments, and 86.3% of the group receiving comments were satisfied with receiving written comments (Gates & Nisan, 1986).

Woolfolk suggests multiple methods for teachers to enhance student motivation, however, focusing on evaluation and recognizing accomplishment can stimulate students internal desires to learn and achieve. Using information from the study and the textbook while focusing on intrinsic motivation, I will attempt to motivate students traditional ways by encouraging self-determination and personal growth, for example, and also incorporate individualized comments as evaluation into my grading system. For instance, I would have students complete a series of assignments to be turned in assignments will not be graded and rather provide feedback.

While motivation assists students to achieve academic success, creating a positive learning environment from the first day of class assists teachers to achieve success. As noted by Woolfolk, establishing and maintaining a positive learning environment throughout the school year is essential for beginning teachers. The basic task of gaining the cooperation of the students

must be completed in order to achieve order and create productivity. The challenge of gaining the cooperation of the high school students in my classroom falls into managing the curriculum to fit to the interests and abilities of the students and assisting the students in becoming self-managing (Woolfolk, p. 419). To begin the process of gaining the students' cooperation, on the first day of class I will clearly communicate my classroom expectations for classroom behavior and move into the class rules, which will be around five in number and the class will read aloud. A copy of the rules will be provided to the class and conveniently located on the classroom wall. After the rules have been read, I will discuss the consequences for breaking a rule and maintain consistent with the consequence throughout the school year.

After establishing cooperation, in order to be time efficient and keep students engaged, organization and planning becomes critical in influencing how students learn in the positive environment that has been created. Planning provides routines and patterns for classroom action, transforms time and learning material into tasks, and reduces uncertainty in the classroom. In lesson planning strategies, I lean towards Bloom's taxonomy, which includes knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in order to check the understanding of students (Woolfolk, p. 59). For example, I would implement a preplanned lesson in class by first lecturing and having the students take notes. I would then provide an example and have a question prepared that the students must use the new concept to solve. The students will work on quietly on the question and volunteer answers. Following the question, I would break the students into

small groups and provide them with an essay question or group activity to finish and present to the rest of the class.

After creating a positive learning environment through student cooperation and structure, organizing and planning lessons while being flexible, clear, and enthusiastic will aid in my ability to teach successfully. In order to obtain information on student performance and learning, teachers create classroom assessments. Creating classroom assessments involves making judgments including what form the assessment will take and how the assessment is structured. I would choose testing because it supports learning. At the high school level, traditional paper and pencil tests would be preferable as students are learning basic concepts.

Although the form of the assessment should be based on the subject and topics covered, as a beginning teacher I would start with objective because the tests can be administered quickly and easily and answers do not require interpretation. Additionally, essay tests do not cover as much information (Woolfolk, p. 501). After administering assessments, teachers must evaluate the assessments through grading. As previously mentioned, research supports that grading can have the detrimental effects of decreasing interest in learning, depressing creativity, and fostering fear of failure.

Grades, however, are necessary in the education systems and require teachers to choose the method in which grades should be awarded. My teaching philosophy supports the criterion-referenced grading at the high school level, which represents an assessment of a predetermined set of objectives (Woolfolk, p. 514). During the first class, I will hand out a syllabus

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with the assignments and exams with the amount of points allocated to each task that way the objectives the student must master are clearly communicated and the student can track achievement.

Additionally, Woolfolk expresses that students, teachers, and families become too focused on the letter grade, and the process should involve open communication to report to families (Woolfolk, p. 516). Grades do not always reflect the learning process or total student experience in a class. Therefore, as part of my teaching philosophy, I will attach notes to report cards and send home progress reports in addition to the parent conferences previously mentioned that will be at the beginning of the school year to help in understanding the student's background.

Educational Psychology research has formed the basis of the philosophy I have developed drawn upon the topics of cognitive and psychosocial development, labeling students, diversity in classrooms, Operant Conditioning, motivation, and classroom management. My teaching philosophy provides that first I must understand the students that I will be teaching on the developmental level, get to know the students at an individual level, understand how to motivate the students, then create a positive learning environment and implement lesson planning, assessments, and a grading system in order to effectively teach the students in my class.