

The psychological theories in the education essay sample



The psychological theories are important to education because it enables educators to meet the needs of learners effectively. The theories guide them to enhance learning and apply it to their teaching process. It allows teachers to understand the needs of students and the ways to achieve the desired result.

There are many educational psychologists, including Lev Vygotsky and B. F. Skinner. Lev Vygotsky study about the social constructivism and people build their new knowledge through social interaction. B. F. Skinner is a psychologist who studies about behaviorism, he explains the human behavior by observing how people respond to stimuli. We understand the importance to find a suitable way in teaching and individual's learning process through their theories.

Relevance of theories to the practice of teaching

Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky)

Lev Vygotsky is a Russian psychologist who develops the sociocultural theory. He disagrees that cognition is an individual construction (Robbins, 2005). The learner's cognitive development is shaped by the social interaction with people who are more knowledgeable.

According to Vygotsky, language becomes an important tool for the communication purposes. Adults transmit knowledge and express ideas to children by using language.

Moreover, development occurs when people learn within the Zone of Proximal Development (Leong & Bodrova, 2001). ZPD emphasize that the

level of a child achieved in a task when they are given guidance by knowledgeable persons. It is the distance between actual development level and potential development level.

Teachers can help the learners perform a task within ZPD by using scaffolding. Learners are able to link the old and new information together when they use the strategies of scaffolding. They need to identify the goals of learners in order to help the learners raise from their ZPD under the guidance of knowledgeable persons. Learners were provided in a cooperative learning environment to co-construct the knowledge with peers. It can help the learners who have less competent develop with knowledgeable peers.

Operant conditioning (B. F Skinner)

Operant conditioning was developed by B. F. Skinner, it was based on Edward Thorndike's law of effect. The theory proposes that our behavior depends on the consequences. It involves the relationship between a stimulus and response. They use the reinforcement and punishment to modify behavior in the learning process.

There are two kinds of reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is the favorable outcomes that are given to increase the desired behavior. Negative reinforcement is removing the unpleasant outcomes to increase the desired behaviors.

Punishment is the use to decrease the probability that the unpleasant behavior will occur again. Positive punishment occurs when unfavorable

outcomes are given to weaken the undesired behavior. Negative punishment is to decrease the undesired behavior by removing something favorable.

The positive reinforcement was encouraged to use in teaching. The teachers can apply the concept to reinforce students' motivation. Students will more likely to learn when they want to accomplish goals and receive certain rewards. For example, the teacher gives some sweets as a reward when students behave well in the examination. Students will be satisfied with their behaviors after receiving the positive response.

Discussion

Sociocultural theory

According to Vygotsky, human cognition is formed by the participation in society. Children learn about the cognitive goals through society and shape their environment. The interaction between teachers and students cause them to generate new knowledge in process of co-construction. People are able to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

His theory enables the teacher to find the zone of proximal development of the learner. Teachers can use a suitable instruction for their students when they understand each student's ZPD. This will allow learners to perform a task successfully when they are given appropriate guidance.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) does not clearly explain the learning needs of the learner and the process of development. There is not enough information about the stability and generality of learner's ZPD. We

do not know about if the learner's zone change over time and whether the improvement within the ZPD is permanent. (Liu & Matthews, 2005)

The theory ignores the role of individual and overemphasizes the importance of collective and social. The mind is not separate from the social-cultural group. He does not believe that people can produce personal understanding to overcome social norms according to their abilities. The people are including gifted learners.

Operant conditioning

Operant conditioning is usefully in a classroom setting. Teachers can change the student's behavior problems by using the theory. They are able to use a lot of rewards in order to reinforce students' learning behaviors. Students will more likely to repeat the good behavior when there are given a good response. In contrast, students will not be able to have undesired behaviors because of punishment.

Alfie Kohn is an educational theorist, according to his criticism, the extrinsic motivation and rewards bring about compliance. People have high expectation of the rewards. They will become more reliant on the rewards when receiving more of them. It results in people fail to find their own motivation if they are not given any rewards. He also argues that the experiment and practices are usually involved the animals other than people to study operant conditioning. (Omomia & Omomia, 2014)

Operant conditioning can only develop the superficial learning skills. Giving correct response does not mean understanding. The teacher needs to

consider whether the learning style is suitable for students. Operant conditioning is not appropriate for the students who demand to understand. Learning without understanding will cause the frustration and misconception to students.

Conclusion

Educators can train to have effective practices of teaching if they focus on the learning style of learners. The practices of teaching need to be improved constantly in order to raise the quality of learning experience.