

Human learning and development

Business



This essay investigates the literature available on human learning and development. It establishes the extent of the knowledge that currently exists with regards to multiculturalism and cultural backgrounds in fostering diversity in any learning environment. According to the literature available, the theories of learning that are applicable to teaching practice include constructivism and behaviorism. Ideally, this essay draws mainly from the video “ Preschool in three Cultures”.

This video shows a typical design of a learning environment that would holistically develop children into socially interactive individuals. According to the video, this is achieved through cooperative learning as well as a self-motivation of the learners (Rowland, 2010). The video “ Preschool in Three Cultures” was made from one of the typical school days in Japan, China and the United States. During these sessions, the videotapes were used as interviewing cues whereby, non-verbal means were applied in obtaining information about what practitioners believe should take place in an ideal preschool setting. These were then linked with narrations that provided the context of the practitioners’ explanations of what actually appeared in the videos. The three videos that are fused into one depict of the different directions that have been taken by each country with regards to early childhood education (Taylor, 2008).

There are various theories that have been put forward to explain the idea of human learning and development. For instance, constructivism is one of the philosophical theories that are popularly used. This theory was based on the premise that people get to construct their own understanding of the environment in which they live in without having to be made to do so by

external forces. As such, every individual gets to generate his or her own rules as well as mental models that can then be used to make sense of the daily adventures. Accordingly, the art of learning is thus, explained as a simple process through which people adjust their mental models with a view to making them accommodate new experiences (Rowland, 2010).

Ideally, constructivism can take several shapes and guiding principles that give it a proper meaning. For example, there is the aspect that emphasizes that learning is basically meant to search for a meaning. According to this aspect of the constructivism theory, learning has to start with the very basic ideas around which learners are engaged in with a view to constructing a meaning. Nonetheless, the meaning itself requires that the basic ideas are understood both in parts as well as in entirety. This simply implies that holistic learning is not focused on isolated facts, but rather on the primary concepts that will never change with time. Thus, for teachers, they must strive to understand the mental models that are applied by students in order to perceive the world if they wish to be good teachers.

In addition, teachers must understand the basic assumptions that students make in supporting these models. This further supports the popular notion that learning is intended to enable individuals to construct their own meanings from the basic principles given, rather than try to memorize the right and the wrong answers or cram other people's meanings (Taylor, 2008). Education being quite interdisciplinary, it is postulated that the most realistic way to measure the success of learning is to make an assessment of the entire learning process, and ensuring that the process provides students with the information that they need concerning the quality of their learning.

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Ideally, constructivism advocates for a complete withdrawal from the system where learning is standardized. Instead, it roots for a curriculum that is modeled with a view to prior knowledge of the students as well as emphasizing on a hands-on search for solutions.

According to this theory, educators are supposed to focus mainly on trying to connect between learning facts and teaching new ideas to students. This should, however, be done in a way that encourages the students to make a clear analysis, interpret as well as predict the type of information that could be relevant to their learning. In addition, it elucidates that teachers should also heavily rely on face to face communications in order to promote dialogue between the learners and their tutors. Essentially, the assessment of this type of learning should be based on elimination of the unnecessary grades that have been the face of standardized learning. Instead, it should incorporate a testing system where students play a significant role in assessing their personal progress.

With regards to the movie “ Preschool in Three Cultures”, the classrooms that appears to be more constructivist is that of the Chinese Preschool. In these classrooms, the learners are free to use whatever they wish during their learning sessions. In addition, there are more friendly communications between the students and their tutors. According to the constructivism theory, this is supposed to model the students into better learners who can socially interact with a lot of ease. In addition, the kind of assessment that is done to these students is slight break from the conventional learning environment that encourages learning.

Instead, it appreciates the diversity of culture and preferences by allowing learners to take most of their time in what they enjoy best. Although this does not perfectly conform to the typical constructivism learning environment, it correlates better to the ideals of this theory (Rowland, 2010). There is also the behaviorism theory of learning that focuses mainly on observable behaviors while at the same time discounting the activities that seem to independently originate from the mind. This theory defines learning as the progressive acquisition of new behaviors based on the kind of environment that the learners are exposed to. For the experimental findings of several behaviorists, conditioning is a significant idea in the learning process. However, there are different types of conditioning that should be considered while studying this theory.

For instance, there is the classic conditioning which uses the analogy of a reflex responding to a stimulus. According to this aspect of behaviorism, humans are biologically modified to certain environmental stimuli that produce specified responses in the process of learning. This perfectly exemplifies itself in the popular phenomenon where children develop fear of failure or public speaking due to negative preconditioning. In this case, learners develop these attitudes because the environment in which they learn has made them to believe that failure is totally unacceptable or that public speaking causes one to freeze on their knees. This is the basis of conditioned learning and how they can impact of the process of learning (Taylor, 2008). There is also behavioral conditioning that usually occurs as a result of stimulus being reinforced.

According to this aspect of behaviorism, rewards should be used in learning with a view to reinforcing the stimulus such that the required responses become more probable at a later date. However, there have been quite a number of criticisms that have been directed at this theory. For instance, it has been widely claimed that behaviorism does not take care of all aspects of learning and that it operates with little regard to the creative workings of the mind. In addition, critics have claimed that behaviorism does not concern aspects of learning like, learning of new languages in infants due to the fact that there are no reward schemes for this stage of learning. However, research continues to point to the fact that animals adapt better when their learning is reinforced with sounds or loud noise (Rowland, 2010). Essentially, the theory of behaviorism is quite easy to comprehend in that it relies mainly on those behaviors that can be observed in the learning environment and responding to them appropriately.

In addition, it describes several laws of behavior that have historically been applied in learning. In fact, these laws have been quite significant in certain human disorders like autism, antisocial behaviors as well as anxiety disorders. As such, it's largely true to claim that behaviorism can be applied by tutors to reward or punish the behaviors of their learners. Basically, this is a complete contrast to the idea of constructivism in that it allows for little experimentation. According to the videotape, the classroom that best exemplifies this theory of learning is that of the United States. This is because this learning environment focuses more on the teachers' behavior as well as the general cleanliness of the surrounding to teach the students about the principle of self-respect as well as respect for the environment.

In fact, the students seem to learn a lot from the environment that they are exposed to during the learning sessions due to the belief that it will greatly impact on their progress of learning. That is the reason the system emphasizes on morals among the teachers as compromising it may have adverse implications on future generations (Taylor, 2008). In conclusion, knowledge of multiculturalism is very significant to the holistic learning of children by enabling them to appreciate the cultural backgrounds of their colleagues as well as their tutors. This is summed up in the constructivism as well as the behaviorism theories. These theories should be properly understood before an attempt is made to design the environment of learning as they significantly affect the process of learning.

Thus, the better theory should be adopted with regards to the kind of students that a particular system wishes to produce.