

Learning Theories: What Really Drives Great Teachers

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Introduction

Students are all different in so many types of ways that every single student is one in a million. This means that each student has their own unique personality and may learn differently from one another. Great educators from the past have created these ways on how they believe students learn. These are referred to as the learning theories. Some of the learning theories includes humanism, behaviorism and 21st century skills. Each teacher needs to know how to adopt and use each of these different learning theories in their classroom. Humanism, behaviorism and 21st century skills will lead students into academic success.

Behaviorism

The idea of behaviorism is that in a way all students should be looked at like a blank sheet of paper or a unmolded ball of clay. Through different conditions and tactics you can shape that ball into the most appropriate behaviors for students to learn. What behaviorists considered learning is adding these new behaviors based off of different environmental conditions (Kitchener and O'Donohue, 1999). Some big names in behaviorism are Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner. These men all used different types of conditioning techniques to show that behavior can be shaped by different environmental stimuli. Thorndike claimed that there was a *Law of Effect* when it comes to humans. This law states that if an act is followed by something favorable that it will be more likely the act will be repeated again and vice versa with a negative effect and not doing an act. B.F. Skinner found a style of conditioning called Operant Conditioning. This uses reinforcement and punishment to strengthen and weaken different behaviors (Behaviorism, 2017). He uses reinforcement that are any event that follows a behavior that increases likelihood

of that behavior happening again. Behaviorism can be an effective tool in the classroom and can lead to a smooth school year with impeccable behavior from your students.

Humanism

Humanistic education, also known as person-centered education, tells us that teaching with emotions and truly caring about your students are traits that great teachers have. Humanism is based off of some important principles that teachers should follow. The first principle is giving students choice and control in the classroom. This means allowing students to have choice on what activities are being done that day or what kind of classes they would like to take to spark their interests. Teachers like this because it gives students a reason to learn because it is something they enjoy. Humanistic educators like to teach to the whole person. They see both knowledge and feeling are important parts in the learning process and will help students better their skills in both areas (Zucconi, 2016). Students should be more focused on self evaluation and less on grades. Students should see how they need to improve by looking back on their work themselves. This allows them to grow stronger academically and actually retain what they have been learning. Lastly, teachers should be facilitators and really foster an engaging environment. They should give students the tools to learn and help guide them using those tools to knowledge (Thomas, 2008). Humanistic education is truly a student driven type of education and it works wonders with all different kinds of students.

21st Century Skills

21st century skills are the skills and traits that all students should master so they are successful in their future profession. These were determined by educators and successful people in business. The first skills that they thought was important for students to master is critical

thinking. Critical thinking is a student's ability to apply, analyze and understand information that they gathered through observations, experiences and such (Denda and Hunter, 2016). It is a skill that employers would like their students to have because it helps with problem solving and having that ability to think quick on your feet. Students should also master the skill of communication. Communication is a must needed skill in today's world. It helps you become a more effective leader but also a more effective person overall. Being able to express ideas and concerns in an articulate manner will ensure students will be successful in the workforce. Teamwork is something that students will be exposed to for their entire lives. The skill on collaboration is what needs to be perfected. Students have to be able to work well with each other and work together to finish projects and tasks in a quick and effective way. This will allow them to transition that into their job and allow them to be successful at it (Denda and Hunter, 2016). Lastly, students have to be creative. Creativity is what drives some of the most successful people. They have to have the ability to have dreams and aspirations that will drive them to success. These skills clearly are important for students to be successful both in and out of school and teachers must be able to help students perfect them.

My Philosophy

In my classroom I believe that behaviorism can be an effective tool in making sure students are put on their best behavior in the classroom. Using Skinner's operant conditioning technique I will help shape appropriate behaviors for the classroom. One way of using this conditioning technique is with cell phones in the classroom. If a student has their cell phone out when it is not appropriate to have it out they will be docked an attendance point for that day. The use of negative punishment. I would also have a cell phone rack where students can put their cell phones in for extra credit. This is a use of positive reinforcement to have your cell phone but away during class time. The effective use of punishments and reinforcements I believe is a very important skill that teachers should master and I will be implementing them in my own classroom.

Students should have a large part in their education. They should have a voice in the classroom and that is why I enjoy the use of Humanism in the classroom. I would allow students to have a choice in my classroom. Like what topic they would want for a project or who they would want to work with in a group activity. When students have these choices they get excited and really want to learn because it is something that they are interested in. When it comes to choosing partners I want students to choose who they think they would work best with but if it does not work out or there is no work being done then I will have to choose for them. I would also adopt the use of self evaluation. I want students to see what they did wrong or where they made mistakes and give them a choice to correct it themselves. I would give students the opportunity to take an exam and then correct the questions they got wrong and give them points for it. This allows students to see what they missed and find the answer themselves and not just me telling what it is. This extends the learning onto them because they have to go back and find

out what they did wrong and correct it, which will help ingrain the information more effectively.

I really like the use of humanism in the classroom because it treats students like adults and less like children and I believe it is an effective tool that the best teachers use.

School is not just teaching students content but it is training them to be an effective member of society when they graduate. I will modify my lessons and assignments so that students will be practicing the 21st century skills that are so important for life after school. Making sure my assignments have problems that make students think. I will be using problem based learning in my classroom. In science it is easy to create problems or have discussions that really make students think. I would like to use group discussions in my classroom because it help perfect all the important 21st century skills. they have to have good collaboration between group members which involves having good communication skills. Then as a group they must think critically so they can create an argument and defend it against the opposing group. There are so many ways to incorporate all these skills and the best part is there can be more than just one skill in use. I want students to perfect these skills because I know it will help them in college and in the workforce. It is the best way to prepare students for their incredible futures ahead.

Conclusion

The use of different learning theories and using them correctly is a sign of a great teacher. They recognize that students learn differently because of their different unique learnings styles. They adapt these theories to their classroom and integrate them into their lessons. Great teacher can effectively use behaviorism, humanism, 21st century skills and all the other different learning theories to create an environment that students can successfully learn in.

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