Learning Theories Paper

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The purpose of this paper is to describe three learning theories and how they may be applied in the classroom. The three learning theories include the Social Learning Theory, the Self-Determination Theory, and the Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory. I will also reflect on how these learning theories are important to me and how I plan to connect them to my overarching teaching philosophy.

The Social Learning Theory is part of the larger learning theory called Behaviorism. Behaviorism is the theory that behavior is mainly based upon the learner's response to stimulus. The Social Learning Theory operates on the idea that people make observations and begin to imitate and behave like the people being observed. In addition to being a Behaviorist Learning Theory, the Social Learning Theory also includes conditions such as attention, memory, and motivation that need to be met for the reproduction of the learners motivation. The way in which we see this implemented in the classroom is through teaching the students what to do by praising good behavior. Similarly, for the opposite scenario, providing consequences. The learner will learn how to and be motivated to behave by seeing how others in the class behave (David, 2018).

The Self-Determination Theory is a Humanistic Learning Theory. Humanism is an approach that values the humanity of a person and focuses on building up a learner's intrinsic motivation. The Self-Determination Theory seeks to meet three psychological needs of the learner: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Through competence a learner feels that they are experiencing mastery. Through relatedness the learner has empathy and can connect with others. Autonomy is having control of the outcomes of one's own life. This theory focuses on building up intrinsic motivation by meeting these needs. The way in which we could see this implemented into the classroom is to relate the content to the real world more often. Grades are

not enough to motivate students because it seems to make school feel like work sometimes (Bourgeois, 2016). Also, giving students a choice on what content they want to cover or what type of examples and homework they want empowers them. It fulfills autonomy.

The Cognitive-Apprenticeship Learning theory is a Constructivist Learning Theory. Constructivism views learning as constructive and focuses on the "learner as an information constructor" (David, 2018). Cognitive-Apprenticeship is like the Social Learning Theory in a sense that they both facilitate learning through the learner's observation and imitation. The difference is that Cognitive Apprenticeship involves the learner being mentored along the way. A mentor guides the learner and gives feedback as well as hints. Scaffolding also plays a major role in this learning theory because it builds up on knowledge and supports the learner in this way. This can be implemented within the math classroom easily. By giving them the steps to do a problem the learner observes and can imitate the same steps to solve a similar problem. Then the job of the teacher is to mentor the student and guide them when they need assistance. Scaffolding is natural in math because it builds on itself. You cannot learn algebra without knowing how exponents work (Looi, 1998).

The vision I have for my future classroom is of an environment that is focused on student learning and empowering the student to be confident and unafraid to ask questions. Using these learning theories in my future classroom is something I know will help me achieve this goal every year with the new group of students.

The way in which I envision the Social Learning Theory being a part of my teaching vision is simple. I will follow through with any consequences that we have established within the classroom and the students will observe this. This behaviorist approach will help them to imitate

proper behavior. Also, a major point I must add is that a lot of the observations they make will be on my own behavior which my goal is to be enthusiastic, respectful, and true to my word.

The Self-Determination Theory is one of the theories I look most forward to learning how to implement within my classroom as I gain more experience. I say this because it is a humanistic learning theory and it focuses on intrinsic motivation and the student developing to grow in maturity, confidence, and empowerment. This is something I plan on doing by not doing things on my own in my classroom. I say this because I am not alone. My students are what make the classroom, not the teacher. So, we will build up the rules and consequences together. I will also be asking the students if they have any interests in which they would like me to relate the math too. This will gain further interest and garner more motivation to succeed in something they want to learn.

Cognitive-Apprenticeship would have to play one of the largest roles within my future classroom. I say this because this is what a math teacher does. They provide examples to the students to observe and imitate on similar problems. Math naturally builds on itself and therefore scaffolding is necessary. Coaching the learner and pushing them to think critically by asking questions and thinking of different ways to solve the same problem is key to this theory and is something I believe will be a big role in helping my students to garner confidence in asking questions.

In conclusion, I chose to research these three learning theories because they all encompassed something I already believe in. They also provide further insight into how the various strategies I mentioned work beneath the surface. They are a good fit with my teaching philosophy and allowed for a closer examination on how I plan to develop my students to succeed in my future classroom.

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