

Learning Theories Paper

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There are various learning theories that are used all around the world, with each teacher using the ones that fit them the best. Out of all the learning theories out there the ones I think best suit me are Constructivism, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, and Humanism. In this paper you will find a brief overview of these three learning theories. My goal is to use these three theories in my classroom, so the students can have the best experience I can help provide for them.

Constructivism is suggesting students construct knowledge and meaning from experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. This means for students they get to bring their own unique prior knowledge, experience, and beliefs to what is being taught. Students are taking in information, and processing it into how they see fit in their own life while building on new understanding. Adams (1999) sums it up best by stating, “ Constructivist theory tells us that we learn in a variety of ways. The more opportunities we have, the richer our understanding becomes.” If we as teachers actively engage our students, the richer their understanding becomes.

There are two concepts I think of when I hear constructivism. The first is Project Based Learning or known as PBL. The PBL is a common practice used among classrooms today. During a PBL students get to collaborate with each other, and with members of the their community to create an experience to build upon to knowledge they already have. Another classroom concept is inquiry and discovery learning. This encourages students to build on past experiences and knowledge, use their intuition, imagination and creativity to search for new information and facts.

Humanism is a learning theory that is used through student centered learning and where the teacher promotes self-esteem and motivation. The teacher’s role is to facilitate the students

learning. Humanism engages social skills, feelings, intellect, and practical skills as part of their education. Katherine Purswell (2019) an assistant professor at Texas State university stated, “ A humanistic learning environment promotes a sense of care, acceptance, and respect towards individuals in society.”

Humanism is used in classrooms through collaboration. After some teaching occurs the students have time to turn and talk to each other on what was just talked about. This is a way for students to enhance their communication while reviewing what was taught.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are important skills for students to learn as they are essential for success in their careers in the future. Teachers do not take time and cover this, but they try to install them into what they are teaching. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are split into three categories: Learning skills, Literacy skills, and Life skills. The Learning skills are more commonly known as the “Four C’s” and are considered the most popular skills. These four skills are critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Literacy skills are sometimes called IMT skills. These skills are each concerned with a different element in digital comprehension. The skills that fall under this are information, media, and technology. The final category is Life skills, and these are skills that pertain to a person’s personal life, but they also bleed into the professional setting. These skills consist of flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, and social skills.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are all over in physical education classes. Think in a game of capture the flag. Critical thinking is involved on trying to get the flag, students get the opportunity to collaborate with their team which requires communication when trying to find the best strategy for the game. Elementary school physical education class even uses these skills. If a teacher pulls

out the big parachute for the students to use, the students have to collaborate and communicate to achieve the task at hand.

Being a preservice Physical Education teacher, I am delighted to use these learning theories in my classroom. My classroom learning will use all three theories I talked about. This will be achieved by being a positive role model, and building relationships where students can come talk when they have problems. My goal is to have an environment that's fun, safe, and engaging, while challenging the students at the same time. Teaching young growing minds is a task that cannot be taken lightly, especially in high school. It is full of challenges, frustrations, and responsibility. However, it is a task that is also full of excitement, joy, and wonder. I firmly believe that all students are capable of learning, if they have the proper motivation and directions from their teachers. Todd Whitaker stated "Great teachers know that they are the variable in the classroom. Good teachers consistently strive to improve, and they focus on something they can control: their own performance" (Whitaker, p. 41,2015). This quote challenges me to be my best every day, so these students can get the best education they can get from me.

Being a basketball coach I have to be able to change plans when a team counters one of my plays. There are going to be things that come up while teaching that will do no go as envisioned. Whitaker said this, and I could not agree more on it " Great teachers have a plan and a purpose for everything they do. If plans don't work out the way they had envisioned, they reflect on what they could have done differently and adjust accordingly" (Whitaker, pg.82, 2015). As a teacher I will reflect not only on my own, but get the student's reflection on the lesson as well. Students will provide feedback that could be very useful to teachers on how certain lessons went, and this can help change how it will be taught the next time.

The two learning theories I really want to focus on in my classroom are humanism and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. One of the important skills that are both in humanism and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is collaboration. I want to build my students up and find ways for them to be able to collaborate, so it becomes easier for them as they get into life. I want to apply as many skills as I can into class that students will use in the professional world or even when they get to college. Another thing I want students to know is the importance of self-reflection. As this is a skill that can be used every day, and I strongly believe that it's important to self-reflect as you can see your strength and weakness.

As I conclude this paper, I am excited to begin my teaching profession. It only takes one person to make a difference in a student's life, and I am excited that I have the chance to help make a difference. If there is only one thing that students remember from my class I hope students remember this about themselves : You are strong. You are unique. You are meant to be here. Somebody out there needs you. You are chosen. And lastly don't under value yourself.

### References

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