

Learning Theories

Trevor Savelkoul

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The three learning theories that I will be discussing in this paper are social collaboration, choice theory, and constructivism. I chose to write on these three because I see myself using these the most in my classroom. In this paper I will dig into what each of these are and then I will discuss ways in which I will use them in my classroom in the future.

Choice Theory

Choice theory focuses on the ability for students to make choices that affect them in the classroom. This theory draws mainly from the work of Dr. William Glasser (Sullo, 2020). Dr. Glasser developed this theory while at a correctional institution and a mental hospital (Wubbolding, 2010). After a mere three years the ideas he developed found their way into teaching (Wubbolding, 2010). In order to effectively use choice theory a teacher must create the motivation for students to learn by showing them real world things that will make them want to learn the concepts. Student's learning starts to increase while disruptions decrease because the student feels a connection to the material and freedom to enjoy themselves as they learn (Sullo, 2020).

In my classroom choice theory will predominantly be used in the creation of class rules or guidelines. I really think this use will make the students care more about the guidelines that they all come up with and then they will hear the reasoning of why they cannot do things in the room. Another way that I think that choice theory can be used is to make sure that the students understand why they are learning concepts. Teachers can help students want to learn by making sure that they have a good understanding about why they are learning a topic so they can choose to learn about it. When students can make a reasonable choice to learn I think they will take more

care in it and make sure that they understand it more. Even in cases where I cannot find a direct connection, I can make sure students understand that math is focused on critical thinking.

Social Collaboration

Social collaboration is a great way to let students learn from each other. It happens when students work in groups of two or more towards a goal, like getting an assignment done (Williams, 2006). There are two main things that need to be controlled when letting students work collaboratively are equality and mutual engagement (Williams, 2006). Equality is in regard to the workload and how it is split. If one student constantly is doing all the work while explaining everything for the other student. Mutual engagement is speaking to how the students can engage with the given lesson. One student may find the given lesson useful and take all the information in while the other one sees no real practical use of the information. Another point that Williams (2006) brings up is that working in a group promotes a student's willingness to share and creatively or critically think. Some students will learn from explaining it to their peers and others will learn from what the other student did. These aspects of a student's learning are important when they get into a job since they will need to share information with peers and will need to know how to explain that information. Having to explain concepts to each other will strengthen their understanding as well by thinking through the concept in a different way.

I find that group work is important in math for many reasons. One thing that it does is makes students use the mathematical terms in their discussion which lets those terms sink in and explain them in order to show how they did a certain problem. When students must work through the problem and explain it to another, they start to understand the material better as they get a deeper understanding of it. This along with discussing why they are finding something useful will get spread into the groups and let every student have a better understanding of real-world

applications for the math that they learned. As the teacher I will have to be mindful of the groups and make sure they are getting the work done and students do not just copy answers from one student. This will be important because then no students get frustrated with the group and can grow from it themselves and learn how to work with peers which is a good 21st century skill.

Constructivism

Constructivism helps learners by building them up from where they are to where they should be. More specifically it is the building of a learner's understanding of concepts in their zone of proximal development by another more knowledgeable person (Watson, 2001). This idea focuses on reaching out to the students and helping them where they are at and not expecting them to do all the work to learn what they need to. Watson (2001) talks about twelve different things that a constructivist teacher does different: encourage and accept student autonomy, use raw data and primary sources, use cognitive terminology, student responses drive lessons, ask students understanding before sharing their own, ask thoughtful open ended questions, seek students elaboration, try to have students see contradictions in their initial thoughts, allow for wait time after questions, construct relationships and create metaphors, frequently use the learning cycle model. These twelve things are important to a constructivist classroom because it makes the focus predominantly on the students and where they are at. This also talks about having a scaffold teaching approach because the teacher meets the students where they are at and helps move them forward.

I think this approach will benefit my classroom the most because math builds on itself so much that students need to know previous concepts before they understand new ones. Therefore, I think that the use of scaffolding will work great. I can help a student through the more difficult parts of the lesson while helping them learn the easier ones and then move them to the harder

concepts. One of the twelve things that Watson talked about that I want to include in my classroom is letting the students drive the lessons. I can find out where they are at in their learning by seeing their homework and asking questions during the lesson. Doing these things will let me help students in the best way possible because I can see what needs to be readdressed to help the students understand information better. Another one of the twelve that I found particularly important is letting students be autonomous and encouraging that as well. Not every student learns the same way so letting students learn in a way that helps them the most makes the material sink in more and helps them retain it.

In conclusion I think that these three learning strategies will benefit both me and my students in many ways. Choice theory will open up communication lines sooner than if another approach is used. Social collaboration will help students learn how to work together and deepen their understanding of the material. Finally, constructivism will help me meet the students where they are at and not get frustrated when they are not where they should be. After incorporating these three learning theories into my classroom philosophy I know I will be a well-rounded and effective teacher.

References

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