**ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**Masome Nkwabi**

**(UD87599ED96820)**

***Theories of Learning***

**Doctor of Education**

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# INTRODUCTION

Theories are principles and phenomenon which are developed to guide a certain practice or process while Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour, and it is the result of reinforced practice. Others define Learning as the process of acquiring knowledge that brings permanent change whereby Schunk, (1991) argues that, “Learning is an enduring change in behavior, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience”(Schunk, 1991.p.4). Learning involves acquiring and modifying knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Learning takes place in different areas and aspect of humanity. There are five major theories of learning which will be discussed in this lesson: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, humanism, and social learning theory. In this study we are going to discuss about these theories and have some reflect and respond session where you will have to answer some questions.

# TUTORIAL

To begin with, let us discuss behaviorism theory of learning; the theory was developed time when B. F Skinner and his counterpart John B Watson and Ivan Pavlov did their studies. These psychologists and those who follow this theory believe that the change of environmental and natural stimulus or condition make the change of behaviors. Ratna, (2015) puts forward that, “According to them the learner starts as tabula rasa (which means clean slate) and the behavior is shaped by reinforcement”(Ratna, 2015.p.2). This means that they believe that when the environment change due to the natural stimulus there will be the change towards that change.

There two concepts that explain the theory well. First concept is Classical Conditioning: The experiment done by Ivan Parvlov on dog’s salivating showed that when the natural stimulus which was associated with meaningful stimulus brought the same response. The dog salivated at a sound of bell not at the present of food, and Operant Conditioning: This is where the behavior changes due to the presence of rewards and punishment. The When the learners do well and given the rewards over the performance, next time they will strive to get better performance for better rewards and the contrary is true that when the punishment offered over a certain behavior change must happen in response (Elias et al., 1997). According to Schunk, (1991) Operant conditioning is a learning force which effects the desired response more frequently by providing a reinforcing stimulus immediately following the response.

The theory has been applied by teachers in classroom for specific learning because the outcome can be measured also Ratna, (2015) denotes that, “The techniques of reinforcement and punishment have been employed by the teachers in the classrooms to promote desirable behavior and discourage unwanted behavior of the learners (Ratna, 2015.p.2).

This theory is challenged by other theorists to say it has ignored the internal stimuli that cause behavioral changes. Also the theory make the learner passive recipient of the environmental stimulus. Others critics argue that behaviorism fails to explain the development of human languages.

Then, cognitivism theory of learning, this theory was developed in the Mid-20th Century the err when the behaviorism theory had been criticized. It was developed by Jean Piaget. According to Stavredes, (2011) in Ratna, (2015) “Cognitivism refers to the study of the mind and how it obtains, processes, and stores information”(Ratna, 2015.p.3). This theory focuses on the learning that occur through mental processes such as thinking, remembering and problem solving, thus in this theory, learners are active participants in their learning, and the mind functions like a computer processor.

The theory has two concepts to explain it: Informational processing model: The people who believe in this theory compare the mind to a computer. The way computer encode, store and retrieve information so the mind. They argue that the mind of a learner grabs the information, organizes and brings out the time it is needed. Schema theory: The schema theory proposes that as when the learners receive new information may store in the existing schema or integrate it into a new schema, that is to say Organized structure to learning: Information comes in and is processed into short term memory before being stored away in long term memory (Ratna, 2015).

Cognitivism is suited well for problem solving, where the concepts are complex and must be broken down into smaller parts. Ideas and concepts from these problems are linked to prior knowledge, which in turn helps the learner develop a stronger comprehension. (Stavredes, 2011)

There is some weakness of the theory: The theory has focus heavily on individual intellectual processes without considering the social and environmental factors. As learning is much well-thought-out, it may turn out to be problematic to get used to modifications in what has already been deal with and well-educated.

Thereafter, constructivism theory of learning, by definition the Constructivism theory of learning refers to a process where the learner is actively constructing both the knowledge acquired and the strategies used to acquire it. It is believed that theory is related with Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Constructivism is the study of a learner's own construction of knowledge. According to Schunk, (1991) “Constructivist researchers have addressed self-regulation, which seems natural given that a central constructivist assumption is that learners construct knowledge and ways for acquiring and applying it” (Schunk, 1991.p.427). Therefore, this theory emphasizes active learning. The learners encounter new information through experience and interaction with their environment. The learner receives in new facts and provides connotation to it using his or her own earlier assertiveness, views, and skills. The learners are dynamic members in the edifice of information whereas the teacher serves as an implementer.

Let us see the Piaget’s Stages Of Cognitive development: Piaget suggested that children grow in different cognitive levels and skills through the stages where people learn new knowledge in different methods (Giannakos & Cukurova, 2023). For instance Infants acquire new knowledge by physical contact with their own surroundings and their immediate environment; on the contrary youth and adult are able to learn the abstract ideas.

Constructivism is best employed when students take regulator of the education state, such as Problem-Based Learning, projects, experiments and practical learning (Ratna, 2015).

On the other hand, the theory has been criticized for its lack of structure, its bias, and its inability to accommodate large group. Also a specific, desired outcome may not always be achieved when different people approach the problem or task (ibid. p.5).

Furthermore, Humanistic Learning Theory of learning, Humanistic Learning Theory is a student – centered methodology to which learning process focuses on the individual’s unique needs and potentials. The theory was developed by two theorists namely Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. According Parsons, (2017), “the key proponents of this learning theory are Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Malcolm Knowles”(Parsons, 2017.p.2). These individuals believe that learning has to do with leaner’s emotions, interest and values simply because it is a student centered approach. Humanistic theory considers much about individual’s skills, self-actualization and potentialities as they make agreements and pursue control over their life be in this world (Ratna, 2015). The learning in this practice needs safe and respect environment because it depends with the leaners mood. Also learners learn better when they are presented with safety, respect and all high levers of needs involved in the learning process. So one can say humanistic learning theory depicts that learning is the self-directed process.

There are two key concepts to explain well the theory. Schunk, (1991) had elaborated well the concert of the theory here is the summary of the concepts of the theory. The idea of Maslow’s Hierarchy of need: according to Maslow, persons must be satisfied basic biological needs and security needs before they can pay attention on higher-level needs, such as love, esteem and self-actualization. Also the issue of Self-directed learning: Carl Rogers emphasizes that learner are most successful when they keenly involved in their erudition procedures. (Schunk, 1991.p.364-369)

The teacher using this theory must focus on creating a classroom environment where students will feel safe and respected; this will facilitate the learning process to the meaningful learning of the new knowledge presented in the classroom.

Apart from all that, there are theorists who challenge the theory. They argue that the theory is a belief which cannot be implemented easily because in a normal school setting in most cases it is difficult to established perfect structured education.

Finally, the discussion will base on social learning theory of learning. The theory was proposed by Albert Bandura there also people who believe in the theory. The theory emphasizes on the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes and emotions of others (Giannakos & Cukurova, 2023). Also it focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. Those who believe in social learning theory emphasis that most of the learning processes take place through observation, imitation and modeling.

According to Koutroubas & Galanakis, (2022) depict that, “This theory varies from psychodynamic and behaviorist theories as it encapsulates three factors to address these questions: personal influences, the behavioral influences, environmental factors and the interaction thereof” (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022.p.2). They mean that when people observe from someone personal appearance, behavior and environment do influence the whole processes. This theory is highly relevant in understanding how culture and environmental factors influence learning behaviors (Schunk, 1991).

The theory introduces concepts like modeling, vicarious reinforcement and the importance of self-efficacy. Talking of modeling: The proposer of the theory Bandura identified three replicas of observational book learning: live model: observing someone performs a behavior. Verbal Instructional Model: listening to a detailed description of a behavior and acting based on it and finally Symbolic Modeling: learning through media, such as books, movies, television, or online media (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). Self-efficacy is the belief that a person can perform a specific behavior or achieve a goal. Self-efficacy can raise or go down due some reasons. Bandura proposes that self-efficacy is developed from the four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience verbal persuasion and physiological and effective states(ibid.p.2-3).

On the contrary, there are theorists who argue against or see weakness into the practice of the theory. The theorists who argue against the theory claim that the theory does not adequately consider cultural differences; the theory ignores biological influence on behavior such as brain chemistry, which can affect learning and personality. Also, the theory is reductionist because it focuses on external factors like observational learning, while neglecting internal factors like emotions and cognitive processes.

In conclusion, the diverse theories of learning ranging starting behaviorism towards social learning theory- contribute irreplaceable intuition into how person’s development process and retain understanding. Each theory contributes unique view that improves our understanding of the learning process, emphasizing the significance of context, interaction and individual differences. By means of educationalists and students a like hold this varied methods, we foster environment that provide to assorted needs and promote deeper and promote deeper engagement. Ultimately be familiar with that there is no one size fit all technique lets us to generate additional comprehensive and active instructive knowledge, pavement the way for all-time learning and personal growth.

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

**Reflect and Respond**

1. What is the best premise of behaviorism in learning?

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1. On you view how does these theories affect learning on normal setting? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think the position of a teacher can be in a humanistic learning environment? Explain why.

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**Short Answers**

1. What distinguishes cognitivism from behaviorism?
2. Who are the key theorists of social learning theory?
3. How does social constructism differ from individual constructivism?
4. How can humanistic principles be applied in educational setting in your county**?**

**Essay Question**

Write an essay about the role of collaboration and discussion play in constructivism learning.

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