

## **Personal Theory of Learning**

### **1) Learning is a continuous process of that requires time, and the ability to recall information in meaningful ways.**

Learning can take place when attempting to acquire knowledge about a range of topics such as history, math, pop culture, and more. Learning can also take place as one develops a skill such as changing a flat tire, roasting chicken, or sewing a dress. However, experts in any subject area must be able to recall knowledge and apply their leaning in different situations. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) describe learning as “conditionalized” (p.43), meaning that individuals must be able to apply knowledge in meaningful ways for learning to take place.

I don't believe that anyone can learn everything there is know about a topic or process, so learning becomes a continuous process that never really ends. Brown et al. (2000) emphasize that adequate time is necessary to for learning to take place. During this time, learners must develop “pattern recognition skills” (p. 56) that allow learners to fluently recall and apply information.

### **2) Learning can serve a variety of purposes that meet academic, personal, or social needs. Learning can also take place with the help of task-specific tools.**

There are different kinds of learning that serve different purposes. Individuals may engage in learning to gain knowledge about a particular topic or process. The purpose for learning may be academic or personal. For example, one individual may study the anatomy of dogs in pursuit of becoming a veterinarian, while another learner might research different breeds of dogs before adopting a pet. Learning can also take place to serve social purposes. For example, students in Kindergarten learn to share and take turns while playing. This type of learning serves a completely different and valuable purpose.

Learning can also take place in a variety of settings, and with a range of tools. Learning can take place in schools, homes, the workplace, and more. Different tools like books, search engines, and even social interactions can be used to facilitate different types of learning. However, similar tools and processes can be used across topics to promote learning. For example, observation, research, and consultation with experts are strategies that can be used across many different kinds of learning. Resnick describes as people who can use learned skills and strategies in a variety of situations as “adaptive learners” (p. 18). Learning can take place across settings through the use of tools, resources, and thought processes.

### **3) Factors like motivation, attitude, emotional needs and can impact one's habits and learning.**

An individual's motivation and attitude about their ability to learn is also important to consider. When students don't believe they are capable of learning, their attitude may hinder learning. Emotional needs are also an important aspect of learning. If

students are struggling to manage stress, cope with anxiety, or manage anger and frustration, learning can be hindered. It is important to consider how certain feelings and emotions can impact learning habits. For example, learners may experience certain emotions like frustration when learning new things. For some, this may cue responses such as abandoning certain activities or learning altogether. Removal from the learning acts as a reward and eliminates frustration. Existing habits can help or hinder learning goals.

#### **4) Learning is greatly impacted by social systems.**

Vygotsky initiated important ideas about the social implications of learning. Saul McLeod summarizes some of Vygotsky's core beliefs and states, "According to Vygotsky (1978), much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. The tutor may model behaviors and/or provide verbal instructions for the child. Vygotsky refers to this as cooperative or collaborative dialogue." Vygotsky believes that social interactions from a young age impact learning.

Putnam and Borko (2000), also state that describe cognition as social. The authors state, "interactions with the people in one's environment are major determinants of both what is learned and how learning takes place" (p. 5). The authors even state that learning occurs so that individuals can function within specific discourse communities. This suggests that social interactions across a variety of settings drive learning.

Social learning is important across all settings. While learners can gain knowledge from others within a group, individuals can also learn how to interact with group members by learning how to show kindness and respect, follow a routine, and communicate effectively with others.

#### **5) Individuals may develop preferences and strategies for learning**

Individuals are unique, and therefore may display preferences for their learning. Individuals may prefer a particular topic, method of learning, or environment for learning. These preferences may even develop and change over time. I believe preference and motivation could greatly affect how someone learns. Learners will most likely show a preference for topics they see as valuable or interesting. This added motivation might increase an individual's learning.

Learners also take use of a variety of strategies in order to learn new things. However, as Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, and Willingham outline, certain learning strategies are more effective than others. For example, very little research supports highlighting and underlining a text as an effective learning strategy. However, learning strategies like practice testing were seen to have "high utility" by the authors.

## Philosophy of Teaching

### **1) Teachers should assist students in developing higher-level thinking skills, rather than *only* requiring memorization and recall.**

In a school setting, students are often asked to recall information rather than apply their knowledge in meaningful ways. If we want students to become experts, we must ask them to recall information, but also to organize their knowledge around big ideas. For example, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) compare experts and novices in physics. While experts' thinking is "organized around big ideas...novices tend to perceive problem solving in physics as memorizing, recalling, and manipulating equations to get answers" (pp. 37-38). When teaching our students, teachers must assist students in moving beyond recall and manipulation of equations. Instead, students can begin to organize their thoughts around essential ideas and principles.

### **2) Teachers must provide students with adequate time to learn complex processes and skills.**

When we ask students to develop a complex understanding of a topic, we must also provide them with adequate time to learn new ideas. Bransford et al. (2000) note, "the development of expertise occurs only with major investments of time" (pp. 57-58). Bransford et al. also warn educators that "attempts to cover too many topics too quickly may hinder learning and subsequent transfer because students (a) learn only isolated sets of facts that are not organized and connected or (b) are introduced to organizing principles that they cannot grasp because they lack enough specific knowledge to make them meaningful" (p. 58). For this reason, teachers must balance specific content-knowledge with opportunities to grapple with overarching principles and ideas. In a school setting, students must also be given time to develop an understanding of complex ideas. Instead of exposing students to many topics and facts, teachers must allow students to develop deeper and more meaningful understandings.

### **3) Providing students with authentic experiences in school can assist in learning.**

Learning can take place in a variety of settings. However, it seems that learning in schools differs greatly from learning that takes place outside of school. Learning in schools lacks authenticity, which can lead to little transfer of knowledge. While many educators think that in school learning should have certain features. Putnam and Borko (2000) remind us of education's overall goal saying, "If we consider the goal of education to be preparing students to be lifelong intentional

learners, then activities are authentic if they serve that goal” (p. 4). Teachers must ask themselves about the purpose of their instruction, to ensure that content and practice in school is meaningful and prepares students for the future. Resnick also discusses important differences between the learning that takes place inside of schools versus learning outside of schools. Learners outside of schools use tools to make tasks easier, while students are asked to complete tasks “without the aid of physical and cognitive tools” (p.13). This causes students to focus on learning cognitive skills that could be completed with tools, rather than developing complex understandings of a topic.

#### **4) Students should be taught problem-solving skills that allow them be successful in a variety of situations and settings.**

Learning in schools often focuses on specific subjects and problems. These tasks are often inauthentic and students may struggle to transfer learning to different settings. Teachers should be preparing students to solve problems in multiple settings. Instead of teaching content in isolation, teachers should help students become what Resnick describes as “adaptive learners” (p. 7) who have the skills to learn and solve problems in different settings. Bransford et al. (2000), suggests the use of “metacognitive” strategies to help students monitor their own progress and “increase the degree to which students transfer to new settings and events” (p. 19). When students develop an inner dialogue that allows them to work through problems, we are helping students become adaptive learners.

#### **5) Positive reinforcement can allow students to develop positive habits that aid learning and motivation.**

One of our responsibilities as educators is to teach students how to follow routines, communicate, and treat each other with respect. As teachers, we can help students develop positive habits by establishing routines and rewarding students with positive reinforcement. For example, we can reward students for adhering to classroom expectations, completing work on time, and even communicating effectively. Over time, students participate in what Duhigg calls “the habit loop” and develop habits that can help them participate in learning and function within the school community. Developing positive habits can make a lasting impact on how children view themselves, and positive affect learning.

#### **6) Students should be allowed to learn and work in groups.**

Learning takes place in social settings. Resnick (1987) describes the vast difference between learning that takes place in schools and outside of schools. She states that in authentic settings, shared cognition is highly valued. In schools, more value is placed on individual knowledge and performance. In authentic settings, participants work together and share knowledge to complete a task. One individual is not expected to know every element of a task. Instead, knowledge is shared.

Vygotsky also suggests the idea of social learning by theorizing that individuals learn from a “more knowledgeable other”. Gradually, the MKO tapers their aid to the student, allowing the learner to complete a task independently. Teachers can use this process to guide students through learning processes.

However, both teachers and students can act as a MKO in a classroom setting. For this reason, teachers should be flexible their ideas about how learning can take place. Students can learn from both teacher guidance and peer interactions. It is important for teachers to vary learning experiences in a classroom setting.

**7) Students should be taught a variety of strategies for learning, and be taught how to use them effectively.**

Teachers must balance content-specific instruction with guidance for independent learning. If we want students to become lifelong learners, we must provide them with the tools and skills to effectively acquire new information. It is also important to provide students with learning strategies that are proven to be effective. Dunlosky et al. (2013) provide teachers with ten learning strategies and rate their effectiveness. As teachers, we often neglect to teach students *how* to engage in learning. Educators must spend time teaching students the best and most effective ways to learn. Then, students can use these skills in a variety of settings and situations.

## Connection Document

After revising my personal theory of learning, I decided to write a personal theory of teaching. Throughout this course, I learned about multiple theories and elements to learning. In my theory of teaching, I examined how student learning and teaching connect and work together. In the table below, I will connect ideas from my personal theory of learning and teaching.

Personal Theory of Learning	Philosophy of Teaching	Connections
<p><b>1) Learning is a continuous process of that requires time, and the ability to recall information in meaningful ways.</b></p>	<p><b>1) Teachers should assist students in developing higher-level thinking skills, rather than <i>only</i> requiring memorization and recall.</b></p> <p><b>2) Teachers must provide students with adequate time to learn complex processes and skills.</b></p>	<p>In my theory of learning, I cited Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) to explain how experts recall and use information. In my theory of teaching, I discuss how educators can help their students develop into experts. While students do need to recall information, they also need to apply knowledge identify meaningful patterns while learning complex skills.</p> <p>In this section, I also connect ideas about time from Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) to teaching. As an educator, it seems like we are “checking boxes” on a long list of curriculum requirements, rather than diving deeply into content. In my theory of learning, I discuss how providing students with adequate time for learning can make their experiences in school more meaningful.</p>
<p><b>2) Learning can serve a variety of purposes that meet academic, personal, or social needs. Learning can also take place with the help of task-specific tools.</b></p>	<p><b>3) Providing students with authentic experiences in school can assist in learning.</b></p> <p><b>4) Students should be taught problem-solving skills that allow them be successful in a variety of</b></p>	<p>In my theory of learning, I discuss the idea that learning can take place in a variety of settings, and meet specific needs. Cognitive and physical tools can also be used to aid in the learning process.</p> <p>In my philosophy of teaching, I discuss the differences between learning in schools and out of schools. While in-school activities become inauthentic, students are less likely to transfer knowledge and learning to different settings. Instead, we can teach students strategies for learning and problem solving through a variety of authentic experiences.</p>

	<b>situations and settings.</b>	
<b>3) Factors like motivation, attitude, emotional needs and can impact one's habits and learning.</b>	<b>5) Positive reinforcement can allow students to develop positive habits that aid learning and motivation.</b>	<p>In my theory of learning, I discuss that habits can affect the way we behave both in and outside of school. I also discuss that emotions can impact the habits we form around learning.</p> <p>In my philosophy of teaching, I examine how teachers may use positive reinforcement and rewards to help students establish positive habits that are conducive to learning.</p>
<b>4) Learning is greatly impacted by social systems.</b>	<b>6) Students should be allowed to learn and work in groups.</b>	<p>In my theory of learning, I examine how social systems impact learning. In this section, I cited the work of Vygotsky and Putnam and Borko to highlight the implications the MKO and social cognition.</p> <p>In my philosophy of teaching, I suggest that teachers should encourage students to learn in social settings instead of only emphasizing individual learning. Again, this suggests educators implement more authentic strategies for teaching and learning.</p>
<b>5) Individuals may develop preferences strategies for learning</b>	<b>7) Students should be taught a variety of strategies for learning, and be taught how to use them effectively.</b>	<p>In my theory of learning, I discuss that while students have certain preferences while learning, they also develop individual strategies. As Dunlosky et al. discuss, some of these strategies are proven to be effective while others are not.</p> <p>In my philosophy of teaching, I connect these ideas with teachers' responsibility to assist students in learning <i>how</i> to acquire new knowledge effectively. We must prepare students with skills and tools for learning and thinking.</p>

## References:

Bransford, J. L., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded Edition). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Duhigg, C. (2012). *The power of habit: Why we do what we do in life and business* (Vol. 34, No. 10). Random House.

Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). *Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 14, 4-58.*

McLeod, S. A. (2014). Lev vygotsky. *Simply Psychology, 7.*

Putnam, R. T., & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning?. *Educational researcher, 29*(1), 4-15.

Resnick, L. B. (1987). The 1987 presidential address learning in school and out. *Educational researcher, 16*(9), 13-54.