W02-1: Learning Theories

To familiarize ourselves with the different learning theories and the respective teaching strategies they can entail, we look at three different teaching scenarios that each represent a learning theory. They will lead us into the main features of the theories and will allow us to reflect on their respective benefits and challenges.

Teaching Scenarios

1. Get together in a small group of 2-3 people. Look at the teaching/learning scenario provided here M02-1: Teaching Scenarios. In your point of view: can learning be successful in this scenario? What do you personally like and dislike about the scenario?

Let's find out which learning theory dominates your teaching scenario.

2. What learning theory do you think the teacher applies in your learning scenario? Is there a specific one or does the teacher mix learning theories? Write down what aspects in the scenario show the application of the respective learning theory (instructions, role of teacher/learner, assessments formats…). To answer the question, have a look at "Learning Theories – an Overview" below to get an idea of three major learning theories. For deeper information check the links in the headlines of Tab. 1. Also, watch the short videos provided to you with application examples to each learning theory: Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism

Let's apply the learning theories to your scenario and change a few things.

3. If your teaching scenario is mainly behaviorist: how could you effectively include elements of cognitivism? What would change (instructions, assessment formats, participation of students, role of teacher, quality of learning outcome …)?

If your teaching scenario is mainly cognitivist: how could you effectively include elements of constructivism? What would change (instructions, assessment formats, participation of students, role of teacher, quality of learning outcome …)?

If your teaching scenario is mainly constructivist: how could you effectively include elements of behaviorism? What would change (instructions, assessment formats, participation of students, role of teacher, quality of learning outcome …)?

Finally, let's summarize what the benefits and challenges of each learning theory are.

4. Discuss the benefits and challenges of each learning theory in plenary. What do the scenarios gain or lose by the changes you have made to them?

5. Reflect: Which scenario would you prefer to learn in and why? Which scenario would you prefer to teach in and why?

Hungry Minds:

Kirschner, P.A. & Clark R. E. (2006). Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based

Teaching. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4102_1

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