

A New Theory of Education

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An educational theory is an assumption about how students learn and thus guides educational technology choices, methods of teaching and forms of assessment. A new theory is needed for online education because educational technology involves a paradigm shift with new concepts and methods of learning not covered completely by existing theories.

For example, Behaviourists suggest people learn content by doing and are motivated by rewards. Teachers give knowledge and students receive it. Cognitivists focus on memory and thinking and Social theorists suggest people learn by interacting with others. Constructivists suggest people learn by collaborating and constructing knowledge. Although online learning encompasses all of these ideas, these theories do not speak directly to the vast changes in education.

These changes include new roles for teachers as facilitators and students as co-creators of knowledge. Previous theories were applied to classroom learning; however, new virtual learning environments exist with new norms, roles and forms of interaction. New types of media are available allowing for new ways of learning and interacting (Anderson, 2008, p.53). Connecting and creating are new motivators for learning. Furthermore, there is an “abundance” of knowledge whereby students must learn to move beyond gathering information to organizing it, analyzing it, synthesizing it, changing it and creating new knowledge. Culture and previous knowledge have gained importance. Also, a shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 includes learning by creating.

Therefore, a new theory could have a combined focus of existing theories which would include doing, thinking, interacting, collaborating, constructing, reflecting, and creating. Furthermore, it would include individualized and collaborative learning as well as unintentional learning. Anderson (2008) suggests a “good theory builds upon what is already known” but goes further (p.46). Overall, a new theory is needed because of significant changes in education and the anticipation of future changes (Anderson, 2008, p.46).

References

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