Better Teaching Means Better Learning: 45 Minutes, 100 Years of Educational Psychology, and 4 Concepts You Can Apply Today

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Better Teaching Means Better Learning

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Social Cognitive Theory

- American Psychologist
- Early work on social modeling and aggression
- Later work on self-efficacy
- Bridged behavioral and cognitive learning theories
- National Medal of Science Award Winner, 2004

Bottom Line: people, behaviors, and the environment interact reciprocally in learning

Albert Bandura
Image from bandura@Stanford.edu

Social Constructivist Theory

- Russian, Marxist scholar
- Critical of Pavlov's Classical Conditioning
- Focused on social learning
- Work banned in the Soviet Union until 1980s
- Increasingly studied

Bottom Line: learners construct knowledge within a social environment

Lev Vygotsky
Image from the Vygotsky Project
Bandura—Social Cognitive Theory

Modeling

- Models have high status when they’ve had past successes
- Models are viewed as competent when they demonstrate success on behaviors the learners will perform
- When learners believe they would get similar consequences, they learn vicariously
- Complex skills often start with vicarious learning
- Learners can also learn from others’ failures

Self-Efficacy

- One’s personal belief about ability to learn and perform actions
- Impacted by intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental factors
- Heightened by
  - history of success
  - positive feedback
  - assistance from teacher or model
  - alignment with traditional gender roles
  - success of peer models
  - small group work that leads to success

Instructional Self-Efficacy

- Teachers’ beliefs about their ability to help learners learn
- When low, challenging activities and restating concepts are avoided
- Improved by
  - observing others
  - practicing
  - increasing knowledge of subject matter
  - being supported by administration in improving teaching ability
  - working collaboratively with others on teaching goals

“Human well-being and attainments require an optimistic and resilient sense of efficacy….
To succeed, one cannot afford to be a realist.”

-Albert Bandura, 2013
Scaffolding

- Teachers actively structure learning situations
- Focus first on what the learners already know
- Builds on what learners can master quickly
- Sets small, achievable goals
- Helps learner move just beyond current knowledge
- Learning occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development
- See one, do one, teach one
- I do, we do, you do

Effective Peer Collaboration

- Based on the idea that knowledge is co-constructed with others
- Encourages learners to seek and value other viewpoints
- Uses discussion and feedback
- Requires clear, overall objectives
- Combines positive interdependence with individual accountability
- Ensures that each learner is clear on his or her area of responsibility
- Does not move forward until all learners obtain competency
- Works best when applied to real-world problems

Parker Palmer—The Courage to Teach

- “Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique”
- “Good teaching comes from good people”
- Good teachers connect themselves, their subjects, and their students
- The need to perform, fear of diverse opinions, and fear of conflict are limiting
- Different types of teaching suit different teachers
- When the teacher’s and learners’ passion for the subject is central, the classroom is neither teacher-centered nor learner-centered
References


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