Learning paradigms

Learning theories are usually divided into several paradigms which represent different perspectives on the learning process. Theories within the same paradigm share the same point of view. Currently, the most commonly accepted learning paradigms are behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, connectivism, social learning and humanism but there are others as well.

Here we will refer to named learning paradigms and their related learning and instructional design theories. A brief overview of the paradigms follows, and more information can be obtained by clicking on each paradigm name.

- Behaviorism:
    - Time line: Since 1910s
    - What is learning: Development of desired behavior
    - Control locus: Environment
    - Learner role: Passive
    - Learning process: Support of desired or punishing undesired behavior
    - Critics: Ignores learner and his mental processes, depends exclusively on overt behavior
    - Authors: Ivan Pavlov, Burrhus Skinner, John Watson

- Social Learning:
    - Time line: Since 1950s
    - What is learning: Acquisition of new models of behavior or social competences
    - Control locus: Split between both learner and environment (reciprocal determinism)
    - Learner role: Acquisition and interpretation of new knowledge through social interaction
    - Learning process: Prerequisite for meaningful learning is learners engagement in social activities
    - Critics: Offers no insight into complex cognitive processes (later improved by social/cognitive theory)
    - Authors: Julian Rotter, Albert Bandura

- Cognitivism:
    - Time line: Since 1960s
    - What is learning: Acquisition of new knowledge and developing adequate mental constructions
    - Control locus: Learner
    - Learner role: Active and central to the process, he learns objective knowledge from external world
    - Learning process: An active process of acquiring and processing new information using prior knowledge and experience
    - Critics: Views knowledge as objective and external to the learner
    - Authors: John Sweller, Richard Meyer, David Ausbel

- Humanism:
    - Time line: Since 1960s
    - What is learning: A mean which should help learner in self-actualization and development of personal potentials
    - Control locus: Learner
    - Learner role: Active and discovery
    - Learning process: Active learning through experience
    - Critics: More psychologically then experimentally grounded approach based on

assumptions of free will and a system of human values which are generally believed to be true, yet impossible to prove and sometimes discredited through counterexamples.
    - Authors: Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow

- Constructivism:
    - Time line: Since 1990s
    - What is learning: Construction of new knowledge
    - Control locus: Learner
    - Learner role: Active, constructing his representation of knowledge using preferred learning styles
    - Learning process: Construction of subjective representation of knowledge based on prior knowledge and experience
    - Critics: There is little evidence for some constructivist views, and some even contradict known findings
    - Authors: John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Philip Candy, Rosalind Driver

- Connectivism:
    - Time line: Since 2000s
    - What is learning: Process of network-forming
    - Control locus: Mostly learner but also environment
    - Learner role: Knowledge acquisition in form of establishing connections to other nodes
    - Learning process: Learning can also reside outside a person (within a database or an organization) and is focused on establishing connections
    - Critics: A relatively new and according to some not fully developed theory
    - Authors: George Simens

- Other Learning Theories:

Instructional design theories

We will also refer to some instructional design principles:

- Cognitive Apprenticeship

Other related theories

Some theories that are not directly orientated on explaining of the learning process, but are also worth mentioning can be found here:

- Gestalt Theory (Wertheimer)
- Theory of Cognitive Development (Piaget)
- Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger)

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