

# EQ109-15 Theories of Learning

**22/23**

**Department**

Education Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 1

**Module leader**

Sarah Dahl

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

This module introduces students to various theories outlining how human beings learn. The module covers leading child development theorists perspectives on learning in the early years (such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky) as well as exploring the work of theorists who explore learning from the perspective of older children, young people and adults. By the end of the module you will have acquired the tools for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of contrasting learning theories. This module also aims to give you an insight in to the relationship between social values, culture and theories of learning.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

1. To introduce students to a range of theorists and theories of learning for three complementary reasons:
  - a) to give a basic knowledge of the range of theories and theorists relating to education, development and learning.
  - b) to afford opportunities to critically consider how such theories relate to educational practice
  - c) to interrogate own learning in light of these
2. To discuss and debate concepts relating to lifelong learning.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

### 1. Outline Syllabus

WEEK ONE: What is a learning theory?

What is a theory? How are theories made and how do they become legitimised and validated? What is a learning theory? What distinct categories of learning theory exist?

WEEK TWO: Behaviourism

This session examines behaviourism from an historical and applied perspective. By the end of the session students will be familiar with the ideas of key behaviourist theorists such as Thorndike, Watson, Pavlov and Skinner. Students will explore contemporary teaching and learning practices that utilise behaviourist theory.

WEEK THREE: Learning in a social matrix

This session examines how the interplay of culture and society affects learning. By the end of the session students will be familiar with the ideas of key social learning theorists such as Vygotsky and Bandura. Students will explore contemporary teaching and learning practices that utilise social learning theory

WEEK FOUR: Cognitivism

This session examines the principle that learning involves processing information in the mind which translates into changes in the individual's behaviour and beliefs and how they categorise experience. By the end of the session students will be familiar with the ideas of key cognitivist theorists such as Piaget, Bandura and Bruner. However, particular emphasis will be placed on students comprehending the complexity of Piaget's theories on 'stages of Development' and 'Schema Formation'.

WEEK FIVE: Constructivism

This session examines how learners construct an internal understanding of the world. The session will explore the relationship constructivist theorist see as existing between language and learning. Particular emphasis will be placed on exploring Bruner's theory of 'Discovery Learning'. Students will be encouraged to evaluate Bruner's theory with reference to other related theorists' work such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bandura.

WEEK SIX: Psychoanalysis

This session will explore the principle that humans go through psycho-social stages of development.

By the end of the session students will be familiar with the work of key theorists such as Freud, Jung and Erikson. Particular emphasis will be placed on exploring Erikson's theory of psycho-social development. Students will explore contemporary teaching and learning practices that utilise psycho-social theory.

WEEK SEVEN: Humanism

This session explores the Humanist value that the goal of human development is self-actualisation. By the end of the session students will be familiar with the work of key theorists such as Maslow, Mezirow, Montessori and Rogers. Students will explore how these different theorists interpreted concepts such as 'learner-centred', 'an holistic approach to learning' and 'transformative learning'. Contemporary case studies of how this theory is put in to practice will be shared and evaluated.

## WEEK EIGHT: Ecological Theory

This session explores how all learners learn in contexts that will have dynamic and evolving cultural features. By the end of the session students will be familiar with Bronfenbrenner's theory of 'The Ecology of Human Development' and his ecological model of human development. Students will be encouraged to evaluate Bronfenbrenner's theory whilst also considering related theories such as Bandura's theory on Social Learning.

## WEEK NINE: Contemporary Theories

This session will explore the latest trends in learning theory and evaluate what these theories imply about how learner identity and autonomy is being defined, challenged and redefined at this stage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## WEEK TEN: 21st Century Learning

This session will explore the idea that the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires learners to learn in new and adaptive ways that are different to those required in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students will be asked to reflect upon the varied theories they have studied over the course and present their own evaluations of which learning theories are the most relevant and valuable within today's learning contexts.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- 1. Have a basic understanding and knowledge of the range of theories and theorists relating to education and learning
- 2. Consider how these theories relate to and influence current educational practice
- 3. Have an understanding of the concept of lifelong learning and consider how it relates to their own continued learning

## Indicative reading list

### 1. Illustrative Bibliography

Bates, B. (2016) Learning Theories Simplified. London, Sage

Cohen, D. (2013) How the Child's Mind Develops (2nd ed). London : Routledge.

Doherty, J. & Hughes, M. (2009) Child Development: Theory and Practice 0-11 London, Person Longman

Donaldson, M. (1978) Children's Minds. London: Fontana Press

Illeris, K. (2007) How We Learn: Learning and Non-Learning in School and Beyond. Oxon: Routledge.

Illeris, K. (Ed.) (2008) Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists ... In Their Own Words. Oxon: Routledge.

Jarvis, P., Holford, J. and Griffin, C. (Eds.) (2009) The Theory and Practice of Learning. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge.

Nutbrown, C, Clough, P. and Selbie, P. (2008) Early Childhood Education. History, Philosophy and Experience. London: Sage.

Schaffer, H. R. (2006) Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology. London: Sage.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

## **Interdisciplinary**

The module explores theories of learning from multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology and education. It considers how these might be applied in various formal and informal education contexts.

## **Subject specific skills**

Students should:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the underlying values, theories and concepts relevant to learning and education;
- demonstrate a critical understanding of the diversity of learners and the complexities of the education process;
- demonstrate a critical understanding of the societal and organisational structures and purposes of education at all levels, formal and informal, and the possible implications for learners and the learning process;
- be able to constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of learning theory and education;
- be able to reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, biological, historical and philosophical perspectives regarding how people learn and consider how these underpin different understandings of how learning happens;
- be able to apply multiple perspectives to education issues, recognising that education involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications

## **Transferable skills**

- Active listening
- Analysis and decision making
- Cognitive flexibility
- Communication skills
- Problem solving
- Confidence
- Coordinating with others
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Initiative and also follow instructions
- Intellectual ability
- Judgement and decision making skills
- Literacy
- Management of learning
- Managing others
- Motivation, tenacity, commitment
- Negotiation
- Passion
- Personal development skills

- Persuading/influencing
  - Planning and organisational skills
  - Reasoning
  - Team working
  - Using IT effectively
- 

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	10 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
Private study	120 hours (80%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

Independent study hours include background reading, completing reading/other tasks in preparation for timetabled teaching sessions, undertaking research using the library resources, follow-up reading work, working on individual and group projects, the completion of formative and summative assignments, revision.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

---

## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Applying theory to educational practice	100%	25 hours

You will identify one theorist's theory (or part of the theory). You will describe and critique this theory and consider how the ideas might be applied to one aspect of educational practice that you have outlined. Further guidance and discussion regarding this essay will be provided in sessions.

## **Feedback on assessment**

Assignment feedback sheet - sent electronically

---

## **Availability**

## **Courses**

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UEQA-X35B Undergraduate Education Studies
- Year 1 of UIPA-XL38 Undergraduate Education Studies and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 1 of UPSA-C804 Undergraduate Psychology with Education Studies