

Unit 2

Delivering Education

In this unit we will cover:

- The theories that shape the learner's learning process
- Principles of Psychology and developments in education
- Instructional techniques
 - Whole class; group work; pair work
 - Team teaching; problem-based learning, etc.
 - Classroom Management
- Learners and their needs

The theories that shape the learner's learning process

- Historical perspectives
- The three important theories
- A look at current best practice
- Looking at your own school environment

The theories that shape the learner's learning process

Historical perspectives

Pre-history: education through self-directed play and expression.

The rise of agriculture: skills needed for growing crops, raising animals.

Classical period: tutors for individuals, but only a tiny fraction of the population.

Middle Ages: the start of universities and “public” schools.

19th century: Act of 1883 forbade employers to hire children under the age of 9.

Early 20th century: free schooling for young children.

21st century: free schooling to age 18.

The theories that shape the learner's learning process

What was taught?

Up to 20th century: Latin, Greek, rhetoric, logic, some maths

Very little science

Very little education of women

No university education of women until 1869 (Girton); 1872 (Newnham)

Women were not allowed to graduate until 1920

Three important theories

Behaviourism

Behaviourism states that learning can be achieved to condition the behaviour of learners by means of reinforcement and repetition. Successful learning can also be affected by the judicious use of positive and negative reinforcement. Acceptable behaviour is rewarded, while undesirable behaviour must be punished. Behaviourists believe that their methodology assists students to excel academically and socially. It requires conformity at all times.

The behaviourist classroom is an environment where the teacher has total control. S/he evaluates learning personally and decides what is right or wrong. The learner does not have any opportunity for self-evaluation or reflection within the learning process; s/he is simply told what is right or wrong. There is no opportunity for emotional involvement.

Three important theories

Cognitivism

The developmental process of assimilating and expanding our knowledge of the world (and how to function within it) is known as cognitive development. Not just our brains and nervous systems, but our whole human physiological structure is able, in different degrees, to absorb all kinds of stimuli from the environment in which we live.

Cognitivists define stimuli as the interactions that can produce knowledge and skills. Students acquire knowledge informally at home, at play and on their own as they learn about the world, while teachers assist them to acquire knowledge formally in an educational context. Cognitivists contend that successful students actively seek out new knowledge with enthusiasm. It is the job of the teacher to help inspire them to do so, thereby motivating them to learn. If they do not, learning is tedious and ultimately of little value.

Three important theories

Constructivism

The constructivist approach to teaching is based on influential experience. It suggests that education builds and enlarges on individual experience while the role of an educator is to structure and explore the learner's thinking and reflection within an experiential context. It contends that we learn by expanding our knowledge while relating it to the experiences which began in infancy and continue throughout our lives.

In other words, contextualisation is essential for future learning. These beliefs now form the basis of progressive education. Meaningful knowledge cannot be acquired without learners relating it to both past and current conceptions. It follows that we learn best when we are allowed to construct a personal understanding based on our personal history and reflecting on relevant connections.

Important theoreticians

These are important figures in the development of education theory:

- Jean Piaget and developmental psychology
- Lev Vygotsky and zones of proximal development
- Reuven Feuerstein and mediated learning
- Max Wertheimer and Gestalt theory
- Charlotte Buhler and theories of human development

Do your own research into their work and see how their theories and belief systems accord with Behaviourism, Cognitivism or Constructivism.

Instructional techniques

This list is not exhaustive, just important. We will be looking at:

Classroom management, covering:

- Whole class teaching
- Group work
- Pair work
- Team teaching
- Problem-based learning, etc.

Classroom management

Main principles of classroom management:

- Timing
- Discipline
- Lesson planning
- Use of resources
- Follow-up sessions
- Monitoring progress

Group & Pair work

Reasons for using group and pair work in class:

- When? Make time for it in most lessons.
- Why? Self-discover; avoid too much spoon-feeding.
- Who? Pick your groups well: strongest Ss with weakest.
- What? Choose content that builds on existing knowledge.
- Where? Don't be confined to the classroom: study groups, etc.
- How long? Rule of thumb: no more than 10-15 minutes in a class.

Team teaching

What is team teaching?

- When? Maybe directed by management, maybe peers.
- Why? Dynamic way to present new ideas/concepts.
- Who? Classes who are deemed to need it.
- What? Challenging, complex subject matter.
- Where? Classroom or laboratory.
- How long? Must be a coordinated programme – not *ad hoc*.

Problem-based learning

What is PBL?

- When? To get students to apply knowledge.
- Why? Motivation, challenging, innovative.
- Who? Complacent students.
- What? Experimental, hypothetical, discursive content.
- Where? As appropriate.
- How long? Must be part of a plan or SOW.

Other instructional techniques

When should a teacher.....

- ask questions of a whole class?
- ask individual students to present to the whole class?
- see students individually to go through their work?
- use praise or blame in the classroom?
- raise an individual's issues with HoDs, management, parents?
- punish a student? How?

Learner Preferences and Engagement

The Seven Learning Styles:

- Visual (spatial): prefers using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural (auditory-musical): prefers using sound and music.
- Verbal (linguistic): prefers using words, in speaking as well as writing.
- Physical (kinesthetic): prefers using body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (mathematical): prefers using logic, reasoning, systems and patterns.
- Social (interpersonal): prefers to learn in groups or with other people.
- Solitary (intrapersonal): prefers to work alone and use self-study.

Modern research suggests that learners do not possess fixed learning styles. However, varying teaching approaches can improve engagement and support understanding for a diverse range of learners.

Teaching and Learning in a Digital World

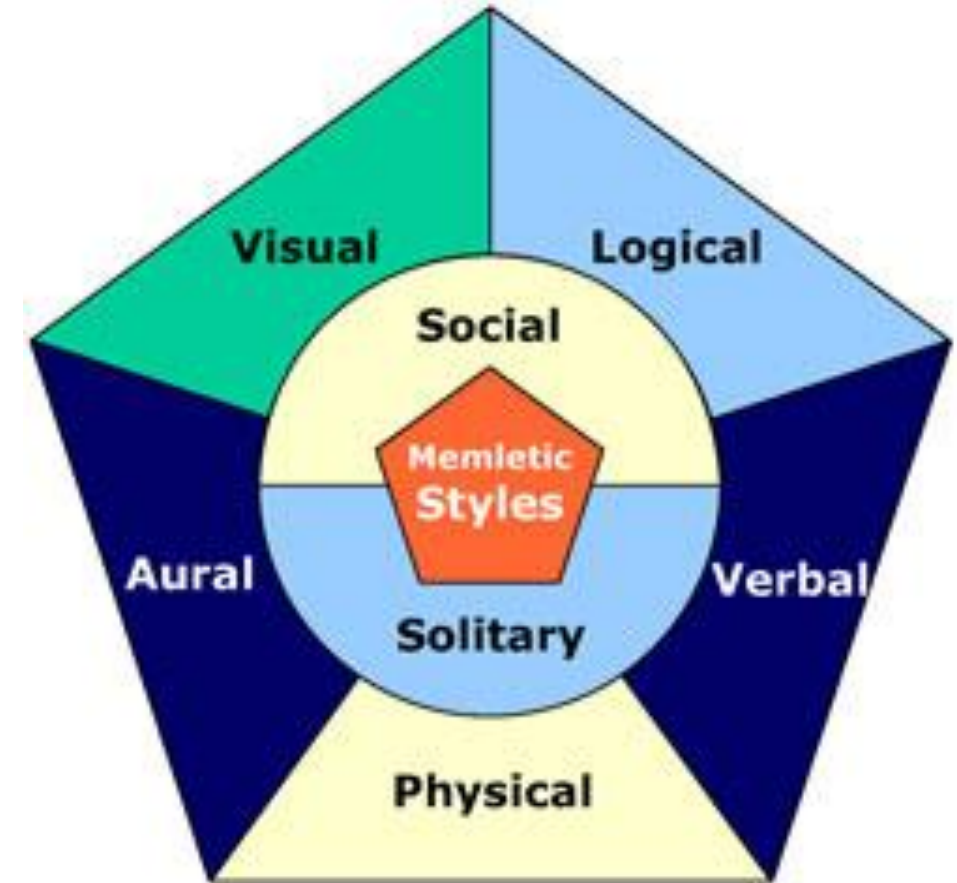
- Blended learning
- Online and hybrid classrooms
- Digital literacy
- Responsible use of AI
- Critical evaluation of online information

Learners and their needs

In reality, it is very unlikely that an individual learner will choose to use only one learning style.

The majority of learners will use a blend or variety of styles, depending on the learning task that has been set.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to recognise which style(s) individuals prefer and prepare his/her teaching so that it plays to each learner's strengths.



Suggestions for further study

You might like to consider the following now:

- What do you think of learning theories, based on your own experience?
- Could you read more about the theorists and write a critique of one of them?
- Could you write a reflective piece, showing evidence of classroom management?
- Which learning styles personally suit you?
- What do think are the main problems of teaching a class of mixed ability students?
- What generally have you learned from this unit?

