

Personal Theory of Learning

Learning can happen on a moment's notice and involuntarily. Sometimes learning can happen when we least expect it but we may appreciate it the most. Learning surrounds us and is an important part of our entire lives, not just childhood and adolescence.

Learning is building onto our preexisting schema and making connections to a new concept that we have just been exposed to. Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2000) state that "...initial understandings can have a powerful effect on integration of new concepts and information." (p. 15) which reinforces the idea that making connections from the old with the new is an essential building block to learning.

Learning is not going through the motions to memorize facts but is understanding the concept as a whole and the underlying why that is within it. Learning to memorize facts or rules can be seen in Erlwanger (1971) work with Benny, a sixth grade student reflecting on his arithmetic. Benny worked with math as if it was a time to make rules that satisfy what he believes to work even when he was wrong. To fully understand a concept, we need to understand the underlying why and fit the pieces together, not to make and memorize a rule that may or may not work every time.

Learning is from partaking in real world experiences and learning from others. From an early age, it is known that we learn from mimicking other children, people, and even our parents. We learn from experiences that we have seen actually happen around us and insert that new knowledge into our schema because we know there is a possibility that we need that information later.

Learning consists of constant reflection and having a growth mindset. Learning is about taking risks and reflecting upon those experiences to grow and get better. We hinder ourselves when we make mistakes and walk away from them without taking a moment to learn from them which is known as a fixed mindset. This is a belief that you are stuck where you are and can't get any better. Whereas, a growth mindset, we know we can grow and become better when we can take a step back, reflect, problem solve, and to try the task another time.

Learning is knowing yourself as a person or a learner and using that information to help put yourself in the best possible position to take your learning to its fullest potential. You know yourself the best therefore you know how you best learn. Whether you learn best visually, auditory, kinesthetic, etc., you take charge of your learning and how you perceive the material best so you can make the most of it.

Lastly, learning a particular way is not universal for all; everyone has different learning styles. For example, I learn best with visual, kinesthetic, and a hands-on approach. If there is a book in front of me, I love to mark up the pages, make visual connections, and visually read the words. On the other hand, if I were to listen to a podcast on the very same topic, the information will go in one ear and out the other and there would be little to no absorption of the material. I know many people that can listen to podcasts while completing other tasks and they are able to

take away very useful information. Learning is different for everyone and that is something to embrace rather than knocking each other down because of our differences.

References

Bransford, J. L., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded Edition). National Academy Press.

Erlwanger, S. H. (1971). Benny's conception of rules and answers in IPI mathematics. *Journal of Children's Mathematical Behavior*, 1(2), 7-26.