Running: Active-Passive-Intuitive Learning Theory

Active-Passive-Intuitive Learning Theory: A Unified Theory of Learning and Development

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There are many theories of learning and human development. Many of them are very similar with regards as to how they suggest learning occurs. The differences in most of the theories exist in how they treat the development of the learner compared to methods of teaching. Most of the major learning theories taught to educators today are based on decades of research; thus, they are decades old. The time has come to unify many of the theories of learning and development into one that takes into account a modern approach utilizing technology and its effect on learning.

Active-Passive-Intuitive (API) Theory takes into account several ideas that the great educational psychologists of the twentieth century neglected; as such, it incorporates many of their ideas and will show its importance as it continues to develop. API Theory defines an effective modern classroom. It also largely incorporates the ideas of multiple intelligences as differing active processes. Further research will be necessary to validate and explain the workings API Theory, but the basic premises are explained below.

API Theory and its Importance

A simple premise comprises API Theory. Learning is explained in one of three ways: active learning, passive learning, and intuitive learning. Progression through these three phases of learning exists in every phase of development; proper progression is essential to bridging a chasm between developmental phases.

The crudest form of learning is intuitive. This type of learning occurs starting at birth. Piaget would likely compare intuitive learning to his motor operational stage of life because intuitive learning occurs primarily because of the senses directing learning (Slavin, 2009). An example of intuitive learning would be an infant crying and receiving attention from a parent; the child

intuitively learns that noise equals attention. This is intuitive because an infant is not capable of making a conscious choice to cry when it needs attention.

Passive learning is the second phase of learning. This type of learning occurs when the learner does not care about what is being taught; however, the learner is aware that something is being taught. This type of learning is best exemplified as a toddler listening to a fable or parable in which a moral is taught. The toddler is aware that he is learning something, but the learning is not yet relevant to the toddler (Newell, 2009).

Active learning is the highest form of learning. The word 'active' is used to describe this learning because a student is intentionally making choices in the learning environment. A young learner poking a frog with a stick to see what happens involves active learning because the learner is choosing to learn (Ornstein, 2006). Active learning is the goal of every learner in every stage of life.

Erikson would likely argue that a learner is resolving some sort of crisis when moving between the learning phases (Slavin, 2009); Erikson would be wrong. The shift between the phases of learning is much more similar to the building of a bridge over a chasm; a person cannot progress forward if the path is blocked. Each learner must build their own bridge, but tools and materials can be given from mentors or tutors (Slavin, 2009; Swafford & Bryan 2000). Teachers and mentors are crucial elements of bridging the chasms to active learning and it is critical that an effective learning environment exists.

An Effective API Environment

A community of people makes up every effective learning environment; each person is both a teacher and a learner (Van Brummelen, 2008). An API environment is no exception. Each phase

of API is present and encouraged in a safe classroom, and a safe classroom is essential to learning and bridging (Getch, Sherrod, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). Safety is met in an API classroom through an intentional process.

Intentional safety is a process managed by the instructor and modeled to the learner. This is modeled after the methods Jesus used in his teaching (Newell, 2009). Students will not feel safe to participate in learning if the instructor does not encourage and welcome all student ideas (Van Brummelen, 2008). This is initially difficult in an API classroom because welcoming students to ask questions, even those that may seem irrelevant, appears to slow down instruction. Misbehavior and bridge collapse could result if the teacher does not make the students feel safe enough to engage their own learning (Getch, Sherrod, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009).

An API classroom uses a lot of technology. Students learn best when they draw from their own experiences (Newell, 2009; Ornstein, 2006; Parker & Parker, 2007). The internet provides a method for students to experience places and phenomena which they normally would not be able to interact with (Reid-Griffin & Carter, 2004; Swafford & Bryan, 2000). The use of technology is ignored or overlooked by Piaget, Vygotsky and Gardner because of its availability at the time their theories were developed (Slavin, 2009).

API Theory does rely heavily on a mentor as a supplier of bridge materials. Vygotsky suggested that a mentor is necessary in the early stages of learning and that mentorship decreases as learning progresses (Slavin, 2009). API Theory operates on a similar premise: a mentor provides learning tools to the student and the student uses these tools to build a bridge. The mentor then provides the ultimate bridge building tool as the student is then asked to help another student in the bridging process; this shift in mentoring allows the original student to

become an active learner as well as providing the student with the ability to socialize with peers. Peer socialization is important in growing up (Slavin, 2009). An API classroom will have several students in the active phase assisting those students in the passive phase.

API and Learning Modalities

Howard Gardner suggested that several different intelligences exist (Slavin, 2009). Each of these intelligences are valuable to those who possess them (Slavin, 2009). The multiple intelligence theory is not disregarded in API Theory because it makes up the backbone of the intuitive learning process. Multiple intelligences are simply the delivery methods by which people use intuitive learning.

Intuitive learning is the crudest form of learning; this does not mean it is not important. API comprises a trinity. Each phase exists because the other two phases exist. The statement seems confusing; but, if examined properly, it is the defining statement for API Theory.

A toddler avoids staring at a bright light bulb because the sun hurt his eyes is intuitive learning turning into active learning; a conscious choice based on previous experiences was utilized by the toddler. A drummer setting up her equipment the same way as Ringo Starr did is also intuitive learning turning active because the drummer used her sense, or intelligence, in music to actively change her set up in order to produce a desired change in her playing style. This same relationship exists when developing writers begin to write in similar styles as their favorite authors. This shows how Gardner's intelligences influence our intuitive learning (Slavin 2009); we intuit those things which we enjoy.

Parker and Parker (2007) describe the methods in which we learn best. They developed a series of questions designed to help educators examine their own styles of learning. The analysis

of the questions revels how these educators use learning styles in the classroom (Parker and Parker 2007). The Parker study plays a role in development of API Theory in how it explains the importance of diverse teaching methods (Parker and Parker, 2007).

Effective teachers use a variety of strategies (Newell, 2009; Parker & Parker, 2007; Slavin, 2009). Using differing strategies provide a variety of learning experiences from which a learner can draw; this helps the learner achieve a large base of ideas from which the intuitive phase of learning can relate. The Parker study describes differences in auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning and offers examples of each (Parker & Parker, 2007).

API Theory allows room for the Parkers' views on audio, visual, and kinesthetic learning. Each of these three methods exists within a learner to some varying degree. Those students strong in visual aptitudes will likely require an instructor to provide visual cues for learning: intuitive learning occurs from what the eyes see; passive learning occurs from viewing charts and graphs; and active learning occurs when making visual representations of learning. Auditory and kinesthetic learners use their strengths in each of the API phases as well.

The Parker study also describes people as leader, managers, entertainers, and a variety of others (Parker & Parker, 2007). These people serve in the described roles as a function of how they learn; they need to teach in the roles as a function of how their students learn. Some API learners need more entertainment to learn; they are stimulated by movement and color and enjoy the passive learning of a movie or learning based video game. Their active learning bridge is built when the teacher, as entertainer, allows these students to produce a video, skit, or game that others can use to learn. This also fits in well with the premise that learners must also teach during the active phase of learning.

The best fit for unification involves the Parkers' idea of those who serve others (Parker & Parker, 2007). The concept that people learn by assisting other people exists in the Multiple Intelligences Theory as an inter-personal intelligence (Slavin, 2009). It exists in this API theory as the main facet of active learning being the process passing on learning to another person. Mostly it involves the methods of teaching used by Christ (Newell, 2009).

Conclusion

There have been many great theories of learning and development. Piaget describes the stages at which certain concepts are most readily integrated into a person's schema (Slavin, 2009). Vygotsky explained that it is necessary for a mentor to provide some sort of base knowledge for a student (Slavin, 2009). Erikson described crises that must be resolved before a person can progress and be at peace (Slavin, 2009). Gardner proposed that people have differing intelligences (Parker & Parker, 2007, Slavin, 2009). Each of these ideas is true and valid.

Since each idea is valid, there must be a single method to describe how learning occurs. Active-Passive-Intuitive Learning Theory attempts to unify the learning theories of the twentieth century into a cohesive idea. It does this by incorporating the best of each theory and combining similar elements. It also does this by including the technology that did not exist during the development of the other theories. Lastly, it is a unifying theory because it incorporates the concept of service learning as the highest phase; this is the method of learning Jesus Himself used to teach the variety of people He encountered in His ministry (Newell, 2009).

Many studies need to be conducted to validate API Theory. A study into how well a student can learn a concept alone compared the use of a mentor can prove the importance of bridge building from intuitive to passive learning. A similar study comparing the scores of a student

who assisted another student to those of a student who just received passive learning can prove the importance of a passive-active chasm bridge. Also, a study forcing students to receive sensory cues from sources in which they are weak can help show the importance that individual learning methods have on intuitive learning. Many more studies will validate API Theory.

This is the right time for a unification theory. Some will present themselves as leaders and some will fail. API theory should present as a leader because of its incorporation of valid theories from the past. Time will tell if API is the next idea that will help educators mold the future of this world.

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