**Outline of Educational Learning Theories and Theorists**

**(Links to References active as of June 2017)**

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| **Theorist** | **Theory/ Known For** | **Influences** |
| John Locke  (1632-1704) | Mostly known as a political theorist, but was deeply involved in educational matters.  Stated play as a necessary and important part of the educational process. | Book *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693)   * Children must not be hindered from being children or from playing. * Learning should not be a burden. * Children should have “play-things” of all kinds, and learn how to take care of them. * Nothing that can form a child’s mind should be overlooked or neglected. * Children should not have anything like work put upon them because their minds nor bodies can handle it. * <http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume2/june04/primsource.cfm> |
| Jean-Jacques Rousseau  (1712—1778) | One developmental process, driven by natural curiosity; child is driven to learn and adapt to surroundings | Book *Emile* (1762)   * Children are born ready to learn from their surroundings, but because of corrupt society, they may not be able to do so. * Suggested removing children from society during education. * The goal of education was to learn how to live righteously. * Discounted book learning and favored learning by experiences. * <http://www.philosophybasics.com/philosophers_rousseau.html> |
| Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827) | The Pestalozzi Method | Book *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1801)   * Children should learn through activity and things, rather than words. * Children should be free to pursue their own interests, drawing their own conclusions. * Emphasis on spontaneity and self-activity. * Children should not receive prepared answers, but arrive at the answers themselves. * First to recommend educating the “whole child”. * Three elements – hand, heart, and head. * <http://infed.org/mobi/johann-heinrich-pestalozzi-pedagogy-education-and-social-justice/> |
| Friedrich Froebel  (1782 – 1852) | Father of Kindergarten  “Child’s Garden” | * All humans are productive and creative. These should be developed in harmony with God and the world. * Engaging with the world leads to understanding. * Play is creative activity in which children become aware of their place in the world. * Froebel’s Gifts – materials, activities (occupations), and movement. Given to children to be respected as gifts, and function as tools for adults to observe the innate “gifts” children possess from birth. * <http://froebelusa.com/> * <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/pioneers-our-field-friedrich-froebel-founder-first-kindergarten/> |
| Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) | Classical Conditioning *(Behaviorism)* | * New responses are associated with existing stimulus-response pairs. * A classic example is pairing the ringing of a bell with the presentation of food to dogs. After repeated pairings, the dogs will salivate upon hearing the bell (even if food is not presented). The original stimulus (S) response (R) pair was food -- salivate; the new S-R pair is bell -- salivate. * Further developed by Watson. * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/pavlov.html> |
| John Dewey (1859-1952) | Learning Theory  Father of Pragmatism | * Learning happens from the experience that children have in their lives. * “Education is not preparation for life: Education is life itself.” (Dewey, Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 1) * Valued the unremarkable, everyday experiences of young children. * Children learn best by doing and acting in the world. * Continuity of experience is essential to growth. * <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/pioneers-our-field-john-dewey-father-pragmatism/> |
| Maria Montessori (1870-1952) | Constructivist Theory | * Individual development and learning occur through self-realization and self-determination. * “Now, what really makes a teacher is love for the human child; for it is love that transforms the social duty of the educator into the higher consciousness of a mission.” (Montessori, Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 1) * First female doctor in Italy, but began education for mentally disabled children. * First, education of the senses, then the education of the intellect. * Prepare children to learn skills by teaching the movements and actions necessary to perform them. * Focused on the environment, materials, and the teacher as observer. * <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/pioneers-our-field-maria-montessori-sensory-approach-learning/> |
| John Watson (1878-1958) | Behaviorism | * For most children, learning and behavior are controlled by experience (not genetically pre-determined). * Watson believed the only behaviors that should be studied are the "observable" ones. * Individual differences in behavior were based on different experiences in learning. * "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select - doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and the race of his ancestors” (Watson, 1924, p. 104, as cited at [www.simplypsychology.org/classical-conditioning.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/classical-conditioning.html)) |
| Jean Piaget (1896-1980) | Cognitive Development (Genetic Epistemology) | * “If logic itself is created rather than being inborn, it follows that the first task of education is to form reasoning." (Piaget, Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 1) * Children are not “empty vessels to be filled with knowledge”, but rather “active builders of knowledge – little scientist who construct their own theories of the world” (Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 3). * <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/pioneers-our-field-jean-piaget-champion-childrens-ideas/>   Includes four developmental stages:   * 0-2 years: "sensorimotor" - motor development * 3-7 years: "preoperation" - intuitive * 8-11 years: "concrete operational" - logical, but non-abstract * 12-15 years: "formal operations" - abstract thinking |
| Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) | Social Development Theory and ZPD  (Also called the Cultural-Historical Theory) | * In play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself." (Vygotsky, Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 1) * For children, interaction with others is essential for cognitive development. * Vygotsky coined the idea of a "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)." These are skills that children need help with. This is where we get the idea of scaffolding learning. * There are other skills that children can perform on their own. * Child development is the result of interactions between children and their social environment – not just peers, but the objects encountered in their experiences. * Children are active partners in the interactions, using them to construct knowledge, skills, and attitudes. * “A child’s greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become the basic level of real action” (Early Childhood Today, 2000, para. 6). * <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/pioneers-our-field-lev-vygotsky-playing-learn/> |
| Erik Erikson (1902-1994) | Psychosocial Theory of Development | * Erikson's "Eight Stages of Man" shares with us a sequence of conflicts children pass through at different ages. Heavily influenced by the work of Freud. * For Early Childhood Education, the stages include: Trust vs. Mistrust (Hope – 0 to 1.5 years); Autonomy vs. Shame (Will -1.5 to 3 years); Initiative vs. Guilt (Purpose – 3 to 5 years); and Industry vs. Inferiority (Competency – 5 to 12 years). * Successful completion of each stage leads to healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues and/or characteristics. * Failure to complete a given stage results in reduced ability to move to further stages, creating an unhealthy personality and sense of self. * There are opportunities to resolve uncompleted stages. * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html> |
| Carl Rogers (1902-1987) | Experiential Learning | * There are two types of knowledge: academic and experiential. * Experiential knowledge is acquired to meet the desires of the child, usually to complete a real-life task. Example: Learning to ride a bike. * Based on Maslow’s work, however added that in order for a person to grow, an environment that provides them with openness and self-disclosure, acceptance (unconditional positive regard – see Gartrell), and empathy is needed. * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html> |
| B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) | Operant Conditioning *(Behaviorism)* | * Children learn because of changes in behavior. * A stimulus and response cycle exists that conditions a child to react a particular way. * Operant Conditioning – changing the behavior through reinforcement after the desired response. * The three operations included: neutral (those that neither increase or decrease repeated behavior; reinforcers (increase the behavior repetition); and punishers (decrease the repetition of the behavior). * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html> * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html> |
| Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) | Hierarchy of Needs | * Humans are prone to meeting their needs. * There are five levels of needs. The first is the lowest (physical comfort), followed by safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Lower-level needs must be met before a child can move on to satisfy higher-level needs. * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> |
| Jerome Seymour Bruner (1915- ) | Constructivist Theory | * Children actively build knowledge by comparing new ideas or concepts with what they already know (schema or mental models). * These schema include action-based (0 to 1 years of age), image-based (1 to 6 years), and language-based (7 years and up). * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bruner.html> |
| Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) | Ecological Systems Theory | Children live within a system of influences at many levels that are interrelated:   * Microsystem * Mesosystem * Ecosystem * Macrosystem   Bronfenbrenner was one of the founders of the Head Start system in 1965. His basic belief was that children needed interactions with both their parents and a supportive society in order to develop into successful adults.   * <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Urie_Bronfenbrenner> |
| Albert Bandura (1925- ) | Social (Observational) Learning Theory | * Children learn behavior from the environment by watching others. * Conducted the famous “Bobo Doll” study in 1965 * Believed children are more likely to reproduce behaviors that society deems appropriate for their gender – more likely to imitate behavior modeled by people of the same gender. * The people in the child’s environment will respond to children’s behavior in either one of two ways: reinforcement or punishment. * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html> |
| Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) | Stages of Moral Development | There are six stages of development that include:   * Obedience and Punishment * Individualism and Exchange * Good Interpersonal Relationships * Maintaining the Social Order * Social Contract and Individual Rights * Universal Principles   Based on Piaget’s work with storytelling techniques to solve moral dilemmas.   * <https://www.simplypsychology.org/kohlberg.html> |
| Howard Gardner (1943- ) | Multiple Intelligences | * Each child has seven measurable forms of intelligence. * These include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. * <http://multipleintelligencesoasis.org/> |