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Learning and Teaching Theory Courses

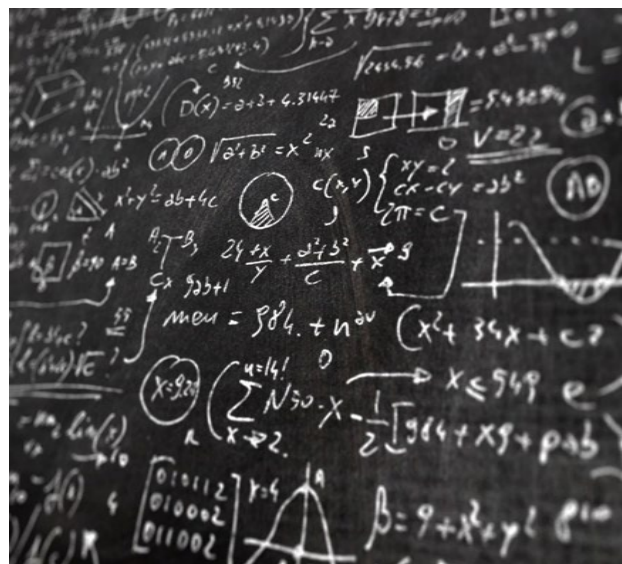
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Learning theory is a fundamental area of study that helps students understand how knowledge is acquired, processed, and retained. It provides a framework for improving study habits, enhancing teaching methods, and ultimately achieving better academic performance. By understanding learning theories, students can become more effective learners and take control of their educational journey (Schunk, 2020).

At its core, learning theory explains how people learn through different perspectives. The three main approaches are behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Behaviourism focuses on observable behaviours and emphasises learning through repetition, reinforcement, and rewards. For example, practising past exam questions repeatedly can strengthen understanding through habit formation. Cognitivism, on the other hand, looks at how the brain processes information. It highlights the importance of memory, thinking, and problem-solving, encouraging students to organise information, use mind maps, and apply critical thinking skills. Constructivism suggests that learners actively build their own understanding based on experiences. Group discussions, real-life applications, and project-based learning are key strategies under this theory (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020; Bada & Olusegun, 2021).

Understanding these theories helps students identify the most suitable learning strategies for themselves. Some students learn better through repetition and drills, while others benefit from visual aids or hands-on experiences. By recognising their preferred learning style, students can tailor their study methods to improve comprehension and retention. Additionally, learning theory emphasises the significance of motivation and environment in the learning process. Intrinsic motivation—learning driven by personal interest—often leads to deeper understanding compared to extrinsic motivation (Lim & Morris, 2023). Moreover, strategies such as spaced practice and active recall significantly improve long-term memory retention (Dunlosky & Rawson, 2021).



Teaching theory-based subjects presents a unique set of challenges for both educators and students. Theory subjects often involve abstract concepts and high cognitive demand, which can make learning less engaging. One of the main problems is the abstract nature of content, making it difficult for students to relate concepts to real-life applications. Another significant issue is student disengagement and lack of interest. Research shows that active learning strategies significantly improve engagement and participation among students (Bond et al., 2020). In the Malaysian context, incorporating interactive teaching methods such as presentations and collaborative learning has been shown to enhance motivation and classroom participation. Similarly, recent studies highlight that student-centred approaches and interaction play a crucial role in improving engagement in higher education (Aziz et al., 2024).

Over-reliance on memorisation is also a major concern. Surface-level learning may help in exams but does not promote critical thinking or long-term retention. Students may quickly forget what they have learned after assessments. Furthermore, there is often a gap between theory and practice, reducing students' willingness to engage deeply with the subject. Diversity of learning styles among students contributes to the difficulty in learning theory. Some learners prefer visual or hands-on approaches,



while theory subjects are often delivered through traditional lectures. Research in Malaysian higher education shows that interactive and collaborative learning environments significantly enhance student engagement and performance. Additionally, student engagement has been strongly linked to improved academic performance and learning outcomes in both traditional and digital environments (Wang, 2026).

In conclusion, learning theory is not just a theoretical subject but a practical tool for academic success. By understanding how learning occurs and applying appropriate strategies, students can become more efficient, confident, and independent learners. Teaching theory subjects is challenging due to their abstract nature and reliance on memorisation. However, with effective teaching strategies and active learning approaches, these challenges can be minimised, enabling students to better understand and appreciate theoretical knowledge.

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