

*Learning theories for everyday teaching*  
C. Thompson and L. Spenceley  
London , Sage, 2020, 160 pages  
ISBN 9781526469809 (pbk), £17.51  
Also available in hardback and ebook format

*Reviewed by Paula Beesley*

*Learning Theories for Everyday Teaching* is a book aimed at student teachers and newly qualified teachers. The book is well written in an easily accessible manner, but that does not stop it from developing depth of ideas as the book progresses. It utilises an engaging approach, with hand drawn cartoons to provide visual understanding. The case study narrative journals provide an excellent illustrative model of explanation and the associated activities develop the reader's understanding. However, the teacher focus should not put off the professional from a social work, social care or allied health profession background.

The first three chapters consider the understanding that is required by the teacher before entering a classroom. The first chapter looks at the philosophy that underpins why we apply theory to practice and begins by helpfully setting out what is meant by theory. The second chapter introduces a discussion about classroom environments. It highlights the importance of a safe and conducive physical environment and then focuses on the concept that attitude changes the learning energy within the room. The third chapter focuses on the importance of planning to the effectiveness of teaching. It explains the importance of Schemes of Work (SOW) and how to best develop them, and the preparation of teaching resources. Nevertheless, it reminds the reader that planning should be accompanied by responsive teaching on occasions. It outlines the importance of understanding the teaching curriculum: what needs to be covered and how learning occurs.

The following three chapters consider the principles of engaging the student within the classroom. The fourth chapter is entitled 'motivating learners', and presents a summary of the learning theorists, including behaviourists, cognitivists and humanists. It is here that we begin to see a depth of theoretical discussion develop, as though the authors wanted to *ease* the reader into the more complex issues. Interestingly, it reflects on those teachers who have lost their motivation or feel that they are

becoming ineffective, by promoting a positive attitude and self-care.

The fifth chapter introduces constructivism. Whilst often seen as an andrological principle, self-directed learning supports longer-term educational growth and maturity. The theories behind constructivism are outlined and then positive ideas to develop constructivist teaching are suggested. The sixth chapter develops the idea of learning with others and outlines social learning theory and experiential learning. The chapter moves on to collaborative learning and group learning. Whilst each of the chapters until this point have been a stand-alone discussion, from here the book starts to integrate them. Chapter seven considers the co-construction of learning. It returns to the themes of a safe learning environment, student motivation and self-directed learning and develops the humanist perspective. Furthermore, the chapter promotes the important topic of students evaluating their own learning through reflective practice. Chapter eight argues that an understanding of all the thus discussed areas is important, but that no one area should be seen in isolation. It argues that students are individuals within a homogenous classroom and that both inclusion and differentiation should be facilitated by the teacher, and that this may have to be done by utilising a range of strategies.

The final two chapters turn to the teacher's own development. Chapter nine asks the reader to consider innovative, creative and flexible teaching styles that respond to the needs of the curriculum and group to be taught and for the teacher to be reflective to develop their teaching skills. Finally, chapter ten considers the issue of the teacher's resilience, an important factor in a challenging profession. It provides an outline of what resilience is and how to develop it.

In summary, this book has the potential to become a must-have guide for student teachers as it covers each of the relevant areas that they will need to develop as they enter a classroom for the first time. It is a well-presented and well-written book that is accessible for the reader. However, the underpinning theoretical discussions are applicable to all professions where a practice learning placement occurs. Whilst the examples are teaching related, the advice is still very relevant to educators in health and social care. This is achieved because rather than a practical guide, it follows its own advice from chapter five and takes a constructivist approach that requires the reader to understand their role including the theory that underpins it. It is this approach that is

the book's strength as it requires the reader to develop their knowledge *and* skills, which will inevitably stand them in good stead.

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