**Psychology & Learning Communities**

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**Assignment details**

**2. Compare, contrast and critically evaluate two theories of the learner and/or learning (2000 words, 50% of overall grade).**

This assignment gives you the opportunity to take further your understanding and application of social and educational theories explored during the course. In your answer you might want to take two specific theories of learning or you might want to consider the different perspectives we have explored in relation to how the learner can be understood. Questions you might want to ask of the two perspectives could include: how is the individual learner conceptualised? What weight is given to individual capacity versus collective endeavour? What is the relationship between an individual learner and their environment? What kinds of pedagogy would teachers and schools draw upon were they to adopt one/both of these perspectives?

Assignment 2: *2000 word essaycomparing and contrasting two theories of learning*.

*In your answer you might want to take two specific theories of learning or you might want to consider the different perspectives we have explored in relation to how the learner can be understood.*

Questions you might want to ask of the two perspectives or theoriescould include:

* How is the individual learner/ human subject/ developing person conceptualised?
* What approach does each theory adopt in relation to epistemology or methodology?
* What weight is given to individual capacity versus collective endeavour?
* What is the relationship between an individual and their environment?
* How arelearning/ development &the role of learner conceptualised – active, passive?
* How is the teacher/ educator/ youth-worker/ media educator conceptualised? How would each perspective conceptualise a good teacher/ educator/ youth-worker/ media educator?
* What kinds of pedagogy would teachers, schools, youth organisations or educational media draw upon were they to adopt one/both of these perspectives?
* Where is the place and significance of society, culture, media and politics in each specific theory of learning?

You will notice that the assignment title suggests you can look at various approaches to learning/ development/ childhood. We would like to encourage you to think about the kind of human subject that particular social, psychological and educational theories/ approaches have in mind. So, the ‘cognitiveinformation processor’ will differ markedly from the ‘communities of practice learner’. And if each is understanding the human being differently then you can be sure they will have a different conceptualisation of the learner/ learning/ development.

*The hope is that you are encouraged to take a theory, account for it, develop it, apply it (to learning and/or the learner) and then provide some critical evaluation. As you are asked to look at two theories then comparing and contrasting these can help in your task of providing a critical stance in relation to the theories in question.*

When writing it is useful to keep in mind three key ideas:

**1. Clarify your terms**

You can begin by defining the key terms, concepts and theories/ approaches in your assignment question, or you can define key terms as you go along. Just remember, there *could be more than one* understanding of each term that you use. You will have to explain why you have chosen your particular definitions. Here you should refer to researchers and writers and how they have defined concepts and terms in their work.

**2. Define your focus**

Try to choose a focus for your essay. Early on in the essay signpost for the reader the main arguments of the essay: give them a sense of the journey ahead.

**3. Develop and structure your argument**

Decide what your 'argument' will be. Tell the reader at the beginning what you will argue, then make your case, and summarise in your conclusion what your argument was and how you have supported it. Always ask yourself when writing: ‘what does this sentence/paragraph contribute to my argument?’ Feel free to have sections to your essay. Consider the essay in terms of introduction, main body and conclusions.

**4. Coherence of the essay**

It might sound odd but read aloud what you have written. If you find you are running out of breath then chances are your sentence is too long! If the argument you have written makes little sense when you are speaking it loud, then you probably need to rewrite.

So, to summarise:

There is no set text that you must read (though the session outlines recommend a number of useful places to start) and there is no existing text that will provide you with a ready-made answer to the essay question. It is up to you to choose your focus and select the texts that are relevant to the approach you take.

There is no right or wrong answer. You are being assessed on the quality of your engagement with the question, which means, the level of critical thinking that you can bring to bear within a focused and well-reasoned 2000 word argument.