

THEORIES RELEVANT TO THE OPEN, DISTANCE AND eLEARNING FIELD OF PRACTICE

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Theories and frameworks play a vital role in research projects including refining the research question and questions, the methodology, methods, data collection and analysis and the conclusions and recommendations put forward.

In order to understand the field of Open, Distance and eLearning (ODEL) research, it is important to familiarize oneself with the prevalent theories and frameworks in the field.

This resource outlines the main theories used in ODeL practice and research. It is the first of a 2-part resource. This resource focuses on the theories relevant to ODeL research and practice. The second resource presents frameworks relevant to ODeL research.



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Theories relevant to ODeL teaching, learning and research

The theories presented in this resource are paired with their key principles and some possible contexts for use.

Theories	Tenets	Application
Behaviourism	Behaviourists ascribe to the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulus and response (S-R); Manipulation of the independent variable (the environment), results in a change in behaviour in the dependent variable (student). Stimulus is a measurable change in the environment. • Classical and operant conditioning; Conditioning in the context of behaviourism, asserts that stimulus and response can be conditioned i.e. learned). • Reward and punishment; Rewards reinforce desired behaviour and punishment discourages undesired behaviour 	With the behaviourist approach used in online-learning contexts, online presentation tools may be used by the teacher to present information to the students. Traditional behaviourist assessment approaches, such as multiple-choice questions, may be designed and delivered via online quizzes such as ClassMarker. Clickers may also be used to elicit multiple-choice responses while initiating competition between students. The quizzes are typically timed to ensure precision and are concluded with congratulatory messaging for reinforcement and the achievement of positive responses from the students.
Cognitivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher mental processes (thinking, Imagining, problem-solving) • Information-processing and computer based metaphors • Makes useful inferences about mental processes that intervene to influence behaviour. 	The conceptualization of students' learning processes is the focus of cognitive theories, which also address the issues of how the mind receives, organizes, stores, and retrieves information. These theories emphasize the importance of practice with corrective feedback, as well as the role of instructional explanations, demonstrations, and illustrative examples. Cognitive theories emphasize the importance of making knowledge meaningful and assisting students in organizing and relating new information to existing knowledge in memory. These methods allow students to contribute to their own learning through their own unique perspectives and experiences. In online learning contexts, suitable tools and applications

		for demonstrations include webinars and slide applications and software like PowerPoint, SlideShare, and Prezi. Using cues, questions, and advance organizers, as well as summarizing.
Cognitive Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the mental functions related to learning. • Learners are actively involved in their learning. • Learning is actively built by the learners as they engage with their environments. • Knowledge is individually constructed. Subjective experiences play a part in knowledge construction. • The acknowledgement of the role social contexts play in enhancing individual learning. • Learning is most effective when it is connected to real-world contexts. 	<p>The instructor's job in cognition is to make sure that students understand new material and assist them in connecting it to what they already know. The cognitive process can be aided by the following methods and resources: metaphors, concept mapping, framing, outlining, and analogies. Visuals can be employed in metaphors to connect two ideas in online situations. It is possible to establish connections between new and old concepts and ideas by using online mind mapping tools.</p> <p>The methods of cognitive constructivism, which are promoted by coaching, mentoring, apprenticeship, and modeling, depend on the student producing the knowledge. Communication and material sharing tools can be utilized for modeling, coaching, apprenticeships, and mentoring in online learning environments. Virtual reality software may be utilized in specific situations if</p>
Social Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students bring unique prior knowledge, experience and beliefs to the learning context. • Knowledge is constructed uniquely and individually, in multiple ways, through a variety of authentic tools, resources, experiences and contexts. • Learning is both an active and reflective process. 	<p>In what is known as scaffolding, the student engages with classmates and teachers to support social constructivist learning. The temporary assistance given to a student in order to guarantee that they finish an assignment is known as scaffolding. This assistance could take the shape of role-playing and the formulation of inquiries for</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning is a developmental process of accommodation, assimilations, or rejection to construct new conceptual structures, meaningful representations, or new mental models.• Social interaction introduces multiple perspectives through reflection, collaboration, negotiation and shared meaning.	various topics. The process by which people watch others, decipher their behavior, and modify their own in response is known as modeling.
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View this short video that summarises how you may apply the learning theories in ODeL contexts.



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