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EVOLUTION OF PEDAGOGICAL THEORIES IN TEACHING THE DIGITAL GENERATION AND THE "DIGITAL LEARNING PEDAGOGY" MODEL

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Annotation: The rapid development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed modern education, giving rise to a new generation of learners commonly referred to as the digital generation. These learners demonstrate distinct cognitive, motivational, and communicative characteristics shaped by constant interaction with digital devices, online platforms, and multimedia environments. Traditional pedagogical theories, which were developed in pre-digital contexts, often fail to fully address the learning needs of this generation.

This article examines the historical evolution of pedagogical theories—behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism, and analyzes their relevance in teaching digital learners. Particular attention is paid to the limitations of classical approaches within technology-rich educational environments. The study identifies key indicators of digital learners, including learning preferences, information processing styles, motivation patterns, and communication behaviors.

Based on a comprehensive theoretical analysis and empirical observations, the article proposes a new conceptual framework titled "Digital Learning Pedagogy". This model integrates modern educational goals, principles, teaching methods, digital tools, and assessment strategies tailored to the demands of the digital era. The findings suggest that the proposed model enhances learner engagement, supports the development of digital competencies, and improves academic outcomes. The study contributes to pedagogical theory by offering an updated model that bridges traditional educational foundations with contemporary digital learning realities.

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of society has significantly influenced all spheres of human activity, including education . The emergence of advanced information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, virtual learning environments, and online educational platforms has reshaped the way knowledge is accessed, processed, and applied. As a result, a new category of learners—commonly referred to as the digital generation—has emerged. These learners grow up surrounded by digital devices and are accustomed to fast information exchange, multimedia content, and interactive learning environments.

Modern educational systems face increasing challenges in adapting teaching strategies to the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of digital learners. Traditional pedagogical approaches, which emphasize linear instruction, passive knowledge acquisition, and teacher-centered methodologies, often prove ineffective in engaging students who are accustomed to interactive and personalized digital experiences. This mismatch creates a gap between educational theory and contemporary learning practice.

Pedagogical theory has evolved through several major stages, each reflecting the social and technological conditions of its time. Behaviorism focused on observable behavior and reinforcement mechanisms; cognitivism emphasized mental processes and information processing; constructivism highlighted active knowledge construction; and connectivism addressed learning in networked digital environments. While each theory has contributed significantly to educational science, none fully addresses the complexity of learning in the digital age.

In recent years, the integration of learning management systems, digital collaboration tools, artificial intelligence, and data-driven instruction has highlighted the need for a new pedagogical framework. Such a framework must combine classical theoretical foundations with innovative digital practices to effectively support digital learners . Therefore, this study aims to analyze the evolution of pedagogical theories and to develop a comprehensive model—"Digital Learning Pedagogy"—that responds to the educational needs of the digital generation.

OBJECTS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The object of this research is the teaching and learning process of the digital generation within modern educational environments.
The subject of the research is the evolution of pedagogical theories and their applicability to digital learning contexts.

To achieve the research objectives, the following methods were employed:
– historical and theoretical analysis of pedagogical literature;
– comparative analysis of classical and modern learning theories;
– system-based and structural analysis of educational models;
– observation of learners in digital learning environments;
– diagnostic surveys and questionnaires;
– pedagogical experimentation;
– statistical analysis of experimental data;
– content analysis of scientific publications from the last 10–15 years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Evolution of pedagogical theories

Behaviorism emphasizes stimulus–response relationships and reinforcement. Although effective for habit formation and basic skill acquisition, behaviorism does not adequately address higher-order thinking or learner autonomy required in digital environments.

Cognitivism shifted focus to mental processes such as memory, perception, and problem-solving. While this theory contributes to understanding information processing, it does not fully consider the multitasking and nonlinear learning behaviors of digital learners.

Constructivism emphasizes active learning and knowledge construction through experience and social interaction. This theory aligns more closely with digital learning; however, its traditional classroom-based applications are limited compared to dynamic online environments.

Connectivism emphasizes learning through networks and digital connections. Despite its relevance, connectivism lacks a structured instructional framework for formal education systems.

2. Characteristics of the digital generation

The study identified several key characteristics of digital learners:
– high reliance on digital devices;
– preference for visual and interactive content;
– short attention span combined with rapid information processing;
– demand for personalization and autonomy;
– continuous need for feedback;
– strong engagement with online social networks.

These characteristics highlight the limitations of traditional teaching approaches and emphasize the need for a new pedagogical model.

3. The "Digital Learning Pedagogy" Model

Based on the analysis, the "Digital Learning Pedagogy" model was developed. The model consists of the following components:

Goals: development of digital competencies, critical thinking, and independent learning skills.
Principles: personalization, interactivity, collaboration, flexibility, and continuous feedback.
Methods: project-based learning, problem-based learning, gamification, microlearning, and AI-supported instruction.
Tools: learning management systems, multimedia platforms, digital simulations, and collaborative technologies.
Assessment: digital portfolios, formative assessment, and competency-based evaluation .

Pilot implementation of the model demonstrated increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes [10].

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that traditional pedagogical theories alone are insufficient for teaching the digital generation. The proposed "Digital Learning Pedagogy" model offers a comprehensive framework that integrates classical educational principles with digital innovation. The model enhances teaching effectiveness, supports learner engagement, and contributes to the development of essential 21st-century skills.

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