

# T5303 Assignment 3 Guidelines

This assignment is a formal essay complete with a reference section citing research (if necessary) contrasting two different teaching/learning environments.

The essay will highlight which psychological constructs are being implicitly or explicitly used.

The final part of the essay will involve a critique by yourself as to whether one method has merit over the other (and if so, why) or whether both of them have inherent positive and flawed attributes.

## Background Information

This is really an essay for you to revise a selection of this course. In essence I want you to be able to evaluate a teaching/learning situation for the assumed (implicit) or stated (explicit) psychological theory that is being used in these two situations. You can focus on either the curriculum, pedagogical design, or the assessment phase of a teaching/learning environment (or a combination).

Specifically I'm looking for the following information:

1. An adequate description of two teaching environments. Please see the instructions below to you help you choose the two environments.
2. The ability to recognise the assumed, or specifically stated psychological theories that are being used in each teaching context.
3. The ability to evaluate if you believe that the use of the theory is actually relevant.
4. Make any observation on what other psychological theories could be used.
5. Finally to correctly indicate whenever you've cited or paraphrased a source of information that is not your own.

Although your essay appears 'open', you'll have to work hard to show how the two different teaching/learning contexts use the assumed or explicit theories. The two contexts might be ones that you've personally encountered, either as a teacher, or indeed as a pupil. However, you might also know of other contexts from professional colleagues, or from case studies that you've studied or read up on.

## Instructions

### Choosing your 2 teaching/learning environments

You do not have to be personally familiar with the learning environments, although it normally helps if you are. Here are the guides that I'd like you to use, teaching and learning in:

- Two different topics – such as 'English' and 'History'.
- Two different locations – such as 'History' is taken in the urban vs. the rural context.
- Two different student populations – such as 'History' is taken by children in urban Korea, vs. children in urban Fiji.
- Two different student populations in terms of their intellectual or physical challenges – such as children who are blind vs. sighted children who are studying 'History'.

There are bound to be folks that are keen to go outside of these parameters. Please contact me with your proposal if you are not sure so I can help you to decide if it's a suitable pair.

The one example you should not use is this class; not because this class is above critique or evaluation (it certainly needs to be critiqued and evaluated), but because the potential to get too entangled in the recursive nature of writing about a course, within the same course is too complicated, both for you as a student on this course, and for me as an author of it.

## **What are you going to focus on?**

We've covered a number of psychological theories in this course, all of which I've chosen specifically to have an impact on the educational practice. However, educational practice can be considered across a number of different domains and you may choose to focus on only one of them. Consider then whether it makes sense to focus on the curriculum design (the content of what the children are being taught); or the pedagogy (the way that they are taught), or how they are assessed (how we know if the teaching/learning succeeded or not).

Most of this will be dictated by the teaching/learning examples that you choose.

## **Use Subheadings**

I advise you to use subheadings to help you structure your essay. One of which will require you to focus on describing the teaching/learning contexts.

## **Length of Essay**

The total length, should be between 3,000-4,500 words. That sounds like a lot but it's approximately 6-9 pages, you'll probably be struggling to keep your word count down, whilst still giving enough of an explanation.

## **About plagiarism**

Since you are first year students and since you're not about to embark on a journal publishing career quite yet (in other words that's can still happen but unlikely to be next month), I am not going to ask you to write out formal citations and references. What I will expect you to write though, is to acknowledge every place where you've clearly just copied a source. Copying, or paraphrasing the work and ideas of others is not a sin. Copying it and pretending that you did this by yourself – that is the intellectual 'sin' and it's called plagiarism. Indicate clearly that you've copied this from a source. Try your very best to show somehow where that source came from. Normally the place to show this is in a 'reference' or 'bibliography' section. However, you could also show it in a 'call out box' or in foot-notes on a page.

You should be aware, that I have computer tools that allow me to scan through electronic resources which will hunt down if your text has clearly copied text from another source.

## **Due Date**

Please hand it in by Monday 3rd of May – no extensions possible on this.

# **Assignment Guidelines**

## **Aims of this Assignment**

- To demonstrate your ability to recognise the implicit or explicit theories used in a teaching/learning context.
- To evaluate whether the teaching/learning context is actually a 'good' or 'efficient' use of the theories, and to be able to suggest improvements and/or alternatives.

If you can do this, then you're demonstrating an ability (criterion performance) to think in some ways using a 'psychology' head in the context of teaching & learning.

## Examples of Performance Criteria

The following table provides an idea of the kind of comments that would attract a certain grade, along with an brief explanation as to why this would be so.

Grade	Text written	Comments
E	When the teacher was explaining the concepts behind pulleys and levers in our mechanics class, she was clearly using construction theory, as to topic revolves primarily around construction.	This student has confused talking about a topic which appears to be focussed on physical <i>construction</i> with that of a psychological theory of construction (I suspect the attempt was to actually say 'cognitive learning theory' or 'constructivism'. This is a poor analysis of which theory is being used (it could be any) and it's irrelevant that the teaching topic appears to be about 'construction'. There's no indication that the student actually knows about any of the relevant theory.
D	The teacher was explaining about mechanics and demonstrating to the class how levers and pulleys were being used. This is an example of cognitive learning theory.	Again, there's no demonstrated idea that the student actually knows what the theory is, however, and perhaps by a fluke, the fact that they example said that the teacher was demonstrating levers and pulleys 'could' be taken to mean that the teacher was providing a scaffold on which to explain what is going on.
C	The teacher demonstrated on some levers and pulleys in the class. This physical demonstration suggested that the teacher was trying to build a frame work on the theory of levers and pulleys on which to build subsequent facts. This would be an example of cognitive learning theory.	This student has stated very clearly that they have identified a learning practice and placed it in the correct context of a psychological learning theory.
B	Using simple levers and pulleys, the teacher was able to enable her pupils to make a conceptual schema of the actions of levers and pulleys. That is a cognitive framework of the mechanics of levers and pulleys allowed her to subsequently explore more refined details. This is an example of cognitive learning theory.	Yep, same as 'C' but clearly has read more depth into the theory (use of the word 'schema') and has expressed the idea very well.
A	The teacher, implicitly used cognitive learning theory, when she physically demonstrated the use of simple pulleys and levers in her class. This allowed the children to create a mental frame work (or mental symbolic representation) of simple mechanics in her physics class.	I can't tell you exactly why this is an 'A' piece of writing, other than the student appears to have spent time crafting this sentence to accurately relate the information in as efficient a manner as possible.

## Assignment Assessment

Your assessment is as follows:

Adequately describe two teaching/learning contexts using the guidelines in this assignment	15%
Recognise the correct implicit or explicit psychological theory being used in the teaching learning environment.	25%
Critically evaluate whether the actual tasks are using the theory correctly.	30%
Suggest improvements to how the teaching/learning task can be improved using your knowledge of psychological theory in this teaching/learning environment.	20%
Acknowledge sources of information, ie do NOT plagiarise.	10%

This assignment is worth 15% of your total course marks.