

Is there evidence of learning theories influencing the development of the Ontario and New Zealand curricula?

Conference abstract

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Purpose

This work explored whether learning theories have informed the development of curricula in Ontario (Canada) and New Zealand by addressing the following questions:

- (1) Is there evidence of learning theory being used in national curriculum development?
- (2) How is learning theory used in national curriculum development?
- (3) How should learning theory be used in national curriculum development?

Background

Learning theories explain how learning happens and how educators can facilitate learning outcomes. They offer applications (e.g., teaching strategies) that can be emphasised in the curriculum (Saylor, 2010). Learning theory and educational practice should complement each other, but they have not been linked as closely as might be expected (Schunk, 2013). To bridge the gap between theory and practice, curriculum documents should demonstrate how learning theories have influenced their development.

Methods

A literature review was conducted to investigate curriculum development in two jurisdictions, which have recently reviewed their curricula: Ontario and New Zealand. Various sources were inspected, including ERIC, JStor, Google Scholar and governmental websites. Articles were included if they referred to learning theories and/or curriculum (re)development and were analysed by two researchers using MAXQDA.

Conclusions

Evidence of learning theories being used in curriculum development was found, but there was a lack of information on how learning theories have been used or how learning theories should be used to inform curriculum development. However, the review focused solely on the written curriculum and did not delve into the processes and decision-making that curriculum designers may engage in during curriculum development.

References

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