

Analysis of Humanist Learning Methods

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“Humanist theories consider learning from the perspective of the human potential for growth” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 281). “Humanism emphasizes that perceptions are centered in experience, and it also emphasizes the freedom and responsibility to become what one is capable of becoming” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 282). The objectives of this paper are to consider the contributions of Maslow and Rogers, the influences of humanism in higher education, how humanism is exhibited in CrossFit, self-actualization’s connection to motivation, and how humanist learning methods may be applied to instructional design.

Abraham Maslow (1970), “considered the founder of humanistic psychology, proposed a theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs” (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 282). Maslow’s theory included the idea of self-actualization, which is considered “a person’s desire to become all that he or she is capable of becoming... and is the goal of learning” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 282). Carl Rogers was “another major figure writing from the humanist orientation... Rogers is concerned with significant learning that leads to personal growth and development” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 283).

Two types of learning that are associated with humanism are self-directed learning and transformational learning. Garrison (2003) asserts, “The asynchronous and virtual nature of online learning calls on learners to be self-directed and to take responsibility for their learning. That is, to assume greater control of monitoring and managing the cognitive and contextual aspects of their learning.” Garrison (2003) also states, “Monitoring is the assessment of feedback in formation, while managing has to do with taking control of learning tasks and activities. Initiating interest and maintaining effort are essential elements in self-direction and effective learning.” Transformational learning is about “dramatic, fundamental change in the

way we see ourselves and the world in which we live ... The mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and reflection are common components of this approach” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 130). Cranton (2002) “suggests using reflective journals in which students reflect on various incidents in their lives to foster the critical reflection that promotes transformative learning” (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 146).

Rogers (1983) describes characteristics associated student-centered learning: personal involvement, self-initiated, pervasive, evaluated by the learner, and essence of meaning (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 283). These characteristics align with my CrossFit experience. When I began six months ago, I initially felt incapable of “doing CrossFit”; however, the coaches presented scalable ways to do all the exercises. CrossFit is one of the most challenging activities I have ever done and one of the most rewarding. I must be self-motivated – no one is forcing me to go. By consistently pushing myself, I am growing stronger physically, mentally, and emotionally, which further motivates me to try new and more challenging activities.

In their discussion of self-actualization, Merriam et al. (2007) state, “The motivation to learn is intrinsic; it emanates from the learner” (p. 282). Cherry (2017) shares, “people possess an actualizing tendency that keep them striving to improve themselves. It is this desire to fulfill our potential that keeps us striving, reaching, and trying to meet our goals and become better than what we once were.”

Regarding applying humanist learning methods in instructional design, Pappas (2016) advises, “By offering online learners new problem-solving approaches and ideas, as well as challenging their assumptions, you are enacting a positive change in their mental schemes... Give your online learners time to reflect, ask thought-provoking questions, and encourage them to analyze their beliefs in order to gauge their validity.”

## References

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