# Chapter 1
# An Overview of Learning and Teaching From the Past to the Present:
## New Learning and Teaching Paradigms in the 21st Century

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## ABSTRACT

*Just like any other area in the world, which is quickly changing and converting in line with the scientific and technological developments, the models, approaches, and paradigms set forth as elements of learning and teaching have also undergone alterations and transformations from past to present. While the learning-teaching theories and approaches in the last century, which are based on perennialist and essentialist education philosophies and positivism paradigm, were deeming the learners as passive receivers of external stimuli and focused on the observable and measurable behaviors, the learning-teaching theories and approaches in our century, which are developed around the progressivism and re-constructionism philosophies and post-positivism paradigm, have an understanding that allocates the responsibility to the learner and adopts a lifelong learning by doing and experiencing. In this chapter, a general outlook on the learning and teaching theories and approaches will be briefly carried out.*

## INTRODUCTION

Change is an inevitable reality of life. Countries, cultures, ways of thinking and producing, relations and the nature change consistently. The human beings themselves live a lifetime by undergoing changes from birth till death (Erdoğan, 2012). English physicist and philosopher David Bohm explains this case with his following words: "In the nature, nothing exists stably. Everything is consistently under a transformation, movement and change" (Woods & Grant, 1995, p. 15). As a natural result of that, an alteration and transformation based on information occurs along the world, by the combined effects of social, economic, and technological developments. The change includes new policies, new behaviors, new patterns, new methodologies and new products based on newly generated ideas (Kanter, 1992). It is not possible to consider the education system separately from the developments, change and transformations in other areas (Özden, 2005). In other words, the dominant paradigm of the time gives shapes to education and education system should undergo changes in accordance with the needs and developments of the time (Orakcı, Durnalı, & Özkan, 2018). In this respect, just like the ones set forth in any area, the hypotheses, models and approaches established for learning and teaching have also undergone alterations and transformations.

The learning and teaching hypotheses from past to present have been influenced by philosophic movements and philosophies of education. As a matter of fact, it is stated that the philosophy of education is a way of discipline or thinking which directs the education by views on education (Brauner & Burns, 1982). The educational philosophy of perennialism, which is built on idealism and realism upholds that the individuals have to be educated according to the moral values, universal principles and traditions. Since the reality is universal and unchangeable as per this philosophy, it sticks for the idea that the educational systems have to be so. In this respect, the aims of education are explained as enabling the individuals to use their minds consistently and making them achieve to the absolute truth by this way, rendering them comply with the universal reality and making them free and happy (Gutek, 2014; Sönmez, 2008; Arends, Winitzky & Tannenbaum 2001). On the other hand, the educational philosophy of essentialism, which is also based on idealism and realism, aims to build the education on the unchanged basis of the human nature, its essence. This philosophy argues that the sciences, arts and skills which had been beneficial in the past, need to be transferred to the future, too. According to this philosophy, human mind is assumed as a blank slate and it is aimed that the newborn babies with no information shall be transformed into virtuous individuals and adapted to the society, by transferring them the information, arts and skills of the past (Cevizci, 2016; Gutek, 2014; Sönmez, 2008). The learning-teaching approaches, arising from these educational philosophies that reflect the traditional education understanding, aim to gain the content (subject, scope) to the individual and make them learn the content information by heart. Moreover, the interests, needs and expectations of the individuals are disregarded. The teacher is esteemed as the sole authority of the process, a teacher centered learning approach is adopted and the emotions and ideas of the learners are ignored. The learning-teaching process is designed independently from the real world and the aim of education is regarded as a preparation for life.

Together with the quick development of information and communication technologies, a great changing process has occurred in the world and this alteration and transformation deeply affects the education systems, teaching-learning hypotheses and approaches (Chan & Elliott, 2004). Being based on pragmatism, the progressive and reconstructionist education philosophies set forth by John Dewey (1859), reject the unchangeable universal principles opinion and argues that everything lives thorough a change continuously. John Dewey puts the change in the center of education and maintains that rather

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