



METHODS USED IN CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated principles of constructivism and several implications of constructivism for teaching and learning were received. The study, therefore, concluded that teacher needs to reflect on their practice in order to apply these ideas to their work and that constructivist teachers need to reflect on their practice in order to apply these ideas to their work and that constructivist teachers encourage students to constantly assess how the activity is helping them gain understanding.

KEYWORDS: *constructivism, apprenticeship, embrace, heterogeneous students, metacognition, authentic tasks, constructivist assessment*

DISCUSSION

The basic premise of constructivist theories is that people create their own meaning through experience. Constructivism has its roots in the cognitive theories of Piaget and Vygotsky and embraces several aspects of both of those theories. From Piaget we get active learning, schemes, assimilation and accommodation, etc. From Vygotsky we get social constructivism, group work, apprenticeship, etc. Constructivism embraces a “top-down” rather than a “bottom-up” instructional methodology. This means that, rather than teach all of the details that lead to a main idea, students discover the main idea and then derive the detail. [3,34-41]

Scholars and philosophers such as Dewey (1916), Piaget (1973), and Vygotsky (1978) had different perspectives and ideas on constructivism although they were arguing mainly around the same epistemology and ontology. In other words, the

scholars interpreted the same concept from their different angles, experiences, minds, and world. In other words, constructivism is in the mind of knowers where they construct a reality, or interpret it, relying on their experiences, and how they deal with how they are constructed. Experience is also important in constructivism. In that regard, knowledge is the life itself and it is the learners’ experiences, not something abstracts out there independent from the learner. Therefore, teaching and learning processes should be related to the real practical world. Further, even the classrooms are designed and formed in a way where not only the teacher talks, but the students ask critical questions, share ideas and experiences, and exchange knowledge interactively[1,40-44].

In constructivism, students are encouraged to learn main ideas on their own through discovery learning. Examples include learning about compound words by playing with word strips, learning about



addition and subtraction through the use of manipulatives, or learning about capacity through experimentation with different sizes of objects. Personal theories, or students' own ideas about how things work, play a large role in constructivism as we attempt to provide activities that clarify and correct misconceptions. Additional constructivist strategies include presenting others' viewpoints, promoting dialogue, and emphasizing conceptual understanding rather than rote learning.

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- A major theme in the theoretical framework of Bruner is that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge.
- The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so.
- Cognitive structure (i.e., schema, mental models) provides meaning and organization to experiences and allows the individual to "go beyond the information given".[4,86-114]

Bruner (1966) states that a theory of instruction should address four major aspects:

- (1) Predisposition towards learning;
- (2) The ways in which a body of knowledge can be structured so that it can be most readily grasped by the learner;
- (3) the most effective sequences in which to present material;
- (4) Good methods for structuring knowledge should result in simplifying, generating new propositions, and increasing the manipulation of information.

Merill (1991) outlined the following assumptions of Constructivists theory:

- 1) Learning is a personal interpretation of the world.
- 2) Learning is an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience.
- 3) Learning should be situated in realistic setting; testing should be integrated with the task and not a separate activity.

4) Conceptual growth comes from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives and the changing of our internal representation through collaborative learning. [2,45-53]

PRACTICE

- The instructor should encourage students to discover principles by themselves.
- The instructor and student should engage in an active dialog (i.e., Socratic learning, inquiry approach).
- Curriculum should be organized in a spiral manner so that the student continually builds upon what s/he has already learned.
- The task of the instructor is to translate information to be learned into a format appropriate to the learner's current state of understanding. (e.g. graphic organizers)
- The major difference is that he sees subsumption as the reorganization of existing cognitive structures rather than the development of new cognitive structures, as suggested by the constructivists [2,45-53].

Tam (2000) lists the following four basic characteristics of constructivist learning environments, which must be considered when implementing constructivist instructional strategies:

1. Knowledge will be shared between teachers and students.
2. Teachers and students will share authority.
3. The teacher's role is one of a facilitator or guide.
4. Learning groups will consist of small numbers of heterogeneous students.

Honebein (1996) summarizes what he describes as the seven pedagogical goals of constructivist learning environments as:

1. To provide experience with the knowledge construction process (students determine how they will learn).
2. To provide experience in and appreciation for multiple perspectives (evaluation of alternative solutions).
3. To embed learning in realistic contexts (authentic tasks).
4. To encourage ownership and a voice in the learning process (students centered learning).
5. To embed learning in social experience (collaboration).
6. To encourage the use of multiple modes of representation, (video, audio text etc).
7. To encourage awareness of the knowledge construction process (reflection, metacognition)[4,86-114].



Children learn more, and enjoy learning more they are actively involved, rather than passive listeners. Education works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding, rather than on rote memorization. Constructivism concentrates on learning how to think and understand. Constructivist learning is transferable. In constructivist classrooms, students create organizing principles that they can take with them to other learning settings.

Constructivism gives students ownership of what they learn, since learning is based on student's questions and explorations, and often the students have a hand in designing the assessments as well. Constructivist assessment engages the student's initiatives and personal investments in their journals, research reports, physical models, and artistic representations. Engaging the creative instincts develops students' abilities to express knowledge through a variety of ways. Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a classroom environment that emphasizes collaboration and exchanges of ideas. Students must learn how to articulate their ideas clearly as well as to collaborate on tasks effectively by sharing in groups projects. Students must therefore exchange ideas and so must learn to "negotiate" with others and to evaluate their contributions in a socially acceptable manner. This is essential to success in the real world, since they will always be exposed to a variety of experiences in which they will have to cooperate and navigate among the ideas of others.

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