
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

According to the theory of social constructivism social worlds develop out of individual's interactions with their cultural society. Social constructivism teaches that all knowledge develops as a result of social interaction and use of language.

It is a sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others.

VYGOTSKY THEORY

Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural learning highlights the role of social and cultural interactions play in the learning process. Vygotsky's theory states that knowledge is co-constructed and that individuals learn from one another. It is called a social constructivist theory because in Vygotsky's opinion the learner must be engaged in the learning process. Learning happens with the assistance of other people, thus contributing the social aspect of the theory. A fundamental aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development. This is a "range of tasks that are too difficult for an individual to master alone, but can be mastered with the assistance or guidance of adults or more-skilled peers (Vygotsky, 1962)." Another part of this theory is scaffolding, which is giving the learner the right amount of assistance at the right time. If the learner can perform a task with some assistance, then he or she is closer to mastering it. This theory is relevant to healthy adolescent development because if students work in pairs, they are interacting with people and therefore can learn different academic ideas from one another. This theory shows that students learn from each other; they can assist one another and co-construct knowledge.

This theory can be applied in the classroom in several ways. The students can be grouped such that the students who understand the content work with the students who do not. For example, if a student did not understand factoring, a method to find the zero or zeros of an equation, I could have another student explain the concept to them. The more knowledgeable peer might use different language than I did as a teacher. The student's phrasing might make more sense to the other student. The more knowledgeable student would also learn something, perhaps a deeper understanding of the content or a way to explain the concept that they had not thought of before. Students of different readiness levels will work together in groups when they do discovery activities, such as problem-based learning activities. The groups would consist of at least three students and they would be given a problem that would challenge them all, and as a group they would have to solve the problem. I would set up the activity such that it allows for everyone to contribute some ideas as to how to solve the problem before any method is attempted.