Constructivism

Constructivism suggests that learning requires being active and constructing your own knowledge rather than just being given or delivered knowledge. The learner brings past experiences and their personal culture and history to any learning situation. Each person will have a different interpretation and construction of the knowledge process.

Vygotsky’s (1978) theory is one of the foundations of constructivism. It asserts three major themes.

Group 1) Social interaction

Theme 1. Social interaction is very important in development. Social learning precedes development “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then inside the child” (Vygotsky, 1978 page 57).

This theme suggests learning is a social activity and it is easier to perform with others and in groups.

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Group 2) More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Theme 2. The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is normally the teacher, or an older adult, but the MKO could also be a peer, a younger person, or even information from the internet.

This theme shows that it is important to have others who understand the ideas to help us learn. Learning is made much easier with the guidance of a MKO (who, again, does not have to be the teacher).

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Group 3) Zone of Proximal Development

Theme 3. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the space between a learner’s ability to perform a task *with help and/or with peers* and their ability to *solve the problem alone*. According to Vygotzky, learning occurs in the ZPD.

This theme suggests that the best learning occurs just beyond what we can learn on our own, but is still within what we can do with the help of others or teachers.