

MUS 775

Discussion 6 - Other Learning Theories

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Discuss your understanding and use of the following:

Constructivist Theory – Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, Dewey, Bruner, Montessori) Please read the following article to help you construct your discussion.

[Learning Theory: Constructivist Approach](#)

Objectivism vs Constructivism Educational Approaches

Objectivism focuses on presenting instruction to students with the goal that information is accurately delivered. This is a more passive approach to education, with little to no involvement or interpretation by the learners. Objectivism is the traditional approach to education that is utilized by most schools. Constructivism is at the opposite end of the spectrum than objectivism because it requires much more contemplation, interpretation, and independence of learners. Constructivism focuses on the learning, thinking, and development of the learner with problem solving being the most important component. Students construct their own understanding by analyzing previous and current experiences. While objectivism is a passive educational approach, constructivism is an incredibly active form of learning.

Social Constructivism: Vygotsky

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) is best known for his social constructivism idea of the zone of proximal development which discusses how language and thought are utilized in society. He proposed that children utilize their experiences and social interactions to develop deeper thought (i.e. converting interpersonal processes into intrapersonal ones). Specifically, Vygotsky theorized that children will learn better in a learning environment with a competent teacher to help them through inconsistencies and conceptions using communication rather than in a solo learning environment, which is known as the zone of proximal development.

Social Constructivism: Dewey

American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859–1952) believed that education required a more practical, problem-solving approach dealing with real world problems that have relatability and significance to learners. He contended that the most effective learning occurs in environments where students work together (i.e. social settings) discussing differing opinions,

variables, and solutions. The Fostering Communities of Learners (FCL) is a current effort to bring Dewey's progressive education theory into use in today's classrooms.

Social Constructivism: Bruner

American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1915-2016) argued that the true purpose of education occurs when an adult nurtures a child's thinking and problem-solving skills instead of simply presenting information. He believed children are born with a desire to learn, have a natural curiosity about the world, are active participants in the learning process, and that cognitive development occurs over time through the acquisition of symbols.

Bruner proposed that the most effective way to learn is to follow three modes of representation: enactive (0-1 years old, action-based), iconic (1-6 years old, image-based), and symbolic (7 years and up, language-based). Regardless of age, education should follow this format for the best comprehension and retention.

Bruner was a proponent of constructivism through the discovery learning approach, which relies heavily on students organizing and categorizing information to construct their own knowledge. Bruner believed that, instead of rote learning, teachers should provide information and allow the learners to organize and determine relationships on their own. Discovery learning is aided by the spiral curriculum, where advanced topics are introduced at a basic level, and then re-taught at progressively more advanced levels.

It is worth noting that there are similarities between the theories of Bruner and Vygotsky including the importance of a child's social environment, adults playing an active role in learning, and the scaffolding. Scaffolding is where teachers assist learners to reach a specific goal by narrowing their scope and focusing on the task at hand. This enables greater development by simplifying the task, motivating the child, highlighting task elements or errors, and giving models that can be copied.

McLeod, S. A. (2019, July 11). *Bruner - learning theory in education*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bruner.html>

Social Constructivism: Montessori

Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori (1870-1952) is best known for her contribution to educational philosophy. While her philosophy has some differing views, the school primarily follows the constructivism theory as proposed by Dewey. The teacher's role is to provide an environment in which learners can create their own opinions and questions through exploration and experimentation. Montessori follows the five main principles of constructivist theory:

lessons must be relevant to the child, lessons center on the “less is more” concept, adults see and value their student’s point of view, curriculum tasks are adapted to address students’ suppositions, and the teacher mediates and assesses rather than teaches and tests.

In 1913, Maria Montessori, a proponent of cognitive-development movement, stated that the difference between traditional and Montessori education “lies in the life, vivacity, interest, and joy which the children shows in doing the work and also the facility and precocity with which he learns.” She was also an advocate for repetitive behavior (motor and mental) for cognitive development and environmental play for stimulating mental growth and health. In addition to psychology and biology, Montessori integrated ideas from Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, and Edouard Seguin to make the most well-rounded educational experience.

Instead of lesson plans, the Montessori teacher provides an environment that inspires exploration. Learning is directed inward, which allows the development of independence. Montessori believed that learning in a creative, thought-provoking environment would encourage exploring more deeply, questioning constructs, and retaining knowledge gained.

<https://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2007/07/why-montessori-part-i.html>