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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and communication theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the world that are developed jointly by individuals. the roots of individuals' knowledge are found in their interactions with their surroundings and other people before their knowledge is internalized. Social constructivists believes that the process of sharing individual perspectives-called collaborative elaboration, results in learners constructing understanding together and this construction cannot be possible alone within individuals. Vygotsky (1978) believes that learning is a continual movement from the current intellectual level to a higher level which more closely approximates the learner's potential. This movement occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a result of social interaction. This paper brings out the views of social constructivism on instructional methods and pesrpectives of teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and communication theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the world that are developed jointly by individuals. This theory assumes that understanding, significance, and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings. The most important elements in this theory are (a) the assumption that human beings rationalize their experience by creating a model of the social world and the way that it functions and, (b) the belief in language as the most essential system through which humans construct reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

Vygotsky (1978) states that cognitive growth occurs first on a social level, and then it can occur within the individual. To make sense of others and construct knowledge on such a social level allow learners to relate themselves to circumstances. (Roth, 2000).Roth also states that the roots of individuals' knowledge are found in their interactions with their surroundings and other people before their knowledge is internalized. According to Derry (1999) and McMahon (1997), culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and knowledge construction based on this understanding are emphasized in social constructivism.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social construction is the process in that people and groups interacting in a social system create, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other's actions, and that these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be institutionalized. In the process, meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people's conceptions (and beliefs) of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman 1966).

Social constructivism is a learning theory that highlights the significance of social interactions and the role of culture in creating knowledge. Social constructivism considers learning as an active process (Lev Vygotsky 1978).

Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; Mc Mohan, 1997).

Social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (McKinley, J. 2015).

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The following are the general principles of social constructivism;

- **Group learning:** effective learning is promoted by constructing knowledge in groups.
- **Sharing ideas:** knowledge is constructed through social interaction and by sharing ideas rather than an individual experiences.
- **Pre existing knowledge:** Learners' ability to learn relies to a large extent on what he/she already knows and understands, and the acquisition of knowledge should be an individually tailored process of construction.
- **Real world practical learning:** supports the learner by providing guidance for real-life experiences. Students work together to understand reality in learning situation.
- **Guide on the side :** Teacher is a guide, facilitator and co-explorer encourage learners to question, challenge, and formulate their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions
- **Situated learning:** Knowledge is constructed socially, through everyone has different social experiences resulting in multiple realities.
- **Interactive learning:** individuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe and the ideas, events and activities with they come in contact.
- **Student centered:** Social constructivism emphasis each student's interests, abilities and learning style. The learners take an active part in deciding what they learn, how they learn and how they can evaluate what they have learnt.
- **Authentic:** Meaningful learning occurs in the real world related authentic tasks and by means of interaction and collaboration between experts and peers.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM VIEWS ON LEARNING

According to Social constructivist approach, learning occurs ideally not to solve certain and open with a complex when students encounter with real world problems. When students encounter with a common aim, they study concertedly for conclusion and they take common responsibility on key decision. Teacher's role orientates learners to solve these problems for exploring more than one direction. Such a role is contrast with instruction situation directly from true solution by students (Gruba and Sndergaard, 2001).

Jaworski, (1994) Ve Ernest, (1995akt: Woo and Reeves, 2007) features of social constructivist approach: 1)Active construction of knowledge based on experience with and previous knowledge of the physical and social worlds, 2) Emphasis on the need for the ZPD, 3) Emphasis on the influence of human culture and the socio-cultural context, 4)Recognition of the social construction of knowledge through dialogue and negotiation, 5) Emphasis on the inter subjective construction of knowledge and 6)Multiple interpretations of knowledge and as summaries.

The implementation of social constructivist approach (applications): 1) Peer communication with more skilled students, 2) Enculturation of students into the community of the particular academic discipline or profession, 3) Usage of suitable and authentic tasks, 4) Multiple point of views are seen valuable, 5) Solution of problems related with real world, 6) Cooperative during learning process and 7)Opportunity for students to publicly share their work, revise their work based in social critiques, and reflect on what they have learned with others.

In social constructivist approach, solving problem of learners, analysis, syntheses, critical thinking are important to have high level knowledge and skills (Murphy, 1997). Many educators are more efficient when teaching learning situation occurs in social constructivist approach.

PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The following are the characteristics of social constructivist teaching and learning :

i. Goals and objectives are derived by the student or in negotiation with the teacher or system.
ii. Teachers serve in the role of guides, monitors, coaches, tutors and facilitators.
iii. Activities, opportunities, tools and environments are provided to encourage metacognition, self-analysis -regulation, -reflection & -awareness.
iv. The student plays a central role in mediating and controlling learning.
v. Learning situations, environments, skills, content and tasks are relevant, realistic, authentic and represent the natural complexities of the 'real world'.
vi. Primary sources of data are used in order to ensure authenticity and real-world complexity.
vii. Knowledge construction and not reproduction is emphasized.
viii. This construction takes place in individual contexts and through social negotiation, collaboration and experience.
ix. The learner's previous knowledge constructions, beliefs and attitudes are considered in the knowledge construction process.
x. Problem-solving, higher-order thinking skills and deep understanding are emphasized.
xi. Errors provide the opportunity for insight into students' previous knowledge constructions.
xii. Exploration is a favored approach in order to encourage students to seek knowledge independently and to manage the pursuit of their goals.
xiii. Learners are provided with the opportunity for apprenticeship learning in which there is an increasing complexity of tasks, skills and knowledge acquisition.
xiv. Knowledge complexity is reflected in an emphasis on conceptual interrelatedness and interdisciplinary learning.
xv. Collaborative and cooperative learning are favored in order to expose the learner to alternative viewpoints.
xvi. Scaffolding is facilitated to help students perform just beyond the limits of their ability.
xvii. Assessment is authentic and interwoven with teaching.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS BASED ON SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM APPROACH

Instructional models based on the social constructivist perspective stress the need for collaboration among learners and with practitioners in the society (Lave & Wenger, 1991; McMahon, 1997). Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that a society's practical knowledge is situated in relations among practitioners, their practice, and the social organization and political economy of communities of practice. For this reason, learning should involve such knowledge and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Gredler, 1997).

Social constructivist approaches can include reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction and other methods that involve learning with others (Shunk, 2000).

a) Reciprocal Teaching

Where a teacher and 2 to 4 students form a collaborative group and take turns leading dialogues on a topic. Within the dialogues, group members apply four cognitive strategies:

- Questioning
- Summarizing
- Clarifying
- Predicting

This creates a ZPD in which students gradually assume more responsibility for the material and through collaboration, forge group expectations for high-level thinking, and acquire skills vital for learning and success in everyday life.

b) Cooperative Learning

More expert peers can also encourage children's development along as long as they adjust the help they provide to fit the less mature child's ZPD.

c) Situated Learning

Situated learning proponents argue that knowledge cannot be taught in an abstract manner, and that to be useful, it must be situated in a relevant or "authentic" context.

d) Anchored Instruction

The anchored instruction approach is an attempt to help students become more actively engaged in learning by situating or anchoring instruction around an interesting topic. The learning environments are designed to provoke the kinds of thoughtful engagement that helps students develop effective thinking skills and attitudes that contribute to effective problem solving and critical thinking. Anchored instruction emphasizes the need to provide students with opportunities to think about and work on problems and emphasizes group or collaborative problem solving.

e) Other instructional methods

- Encourage team working and collaboration
- Promote discussion or debates
- Set up study groups for peer learning
- Allocate a small proportion of grades for peer assessment and train students in the process and criteria
- Show students models of good practice in essay writing and project work
- Be aware of our own role as a model of 'the way things are done...'be explicit about our professional values and the ethical dimensions of our subject

CONCLUSION

Social constructivism encourages the learner's own version of the truth that is influenced by his or her background, culture or knowledge of world. Social constructivism which assumes that cognitive growth first occurs on a social level and later individual level, emphasizes the role of ZPD (Zone of proximal development).The learner's background also helps to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process. Social constructivist teaching approaches emphasize reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction, and other methods that involve learning with others. Instructional models based on the social constructivist perspectives highlight the need for collaboration among learners and with practitioners in the society.

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