

Theory Paper

When looking into education there is a lot of small pieces that make the big puzzle. One of the pieces of education is psychology and how a human works. When I think about educational psychology, learning theories are one of the most talked about things that comes to mind. There are many types of learning theories, but the one that captivates my attention the most is constructivism. I want to be able to educate others on what exactly constructivism is, how theorists have used it, and also what things can be learned from constructivism.

To start out it would be best to define what constructivism is. Constructivism is a perspective that proposes that learners build their own knowledge for experiences (Ormrod G-1). This reminds me of the saying monkey see, monkey do. I personally am a hand on learner and learn from seeing things rather than just reading or listening to them. At a young age I believe that some children have this same look on education. A great example of this is while I was doing field experience about a month ago, there was a little girl in my Kindergarten class that was still unsure of how to write her alphabet. When we were practicing some of our letters she would struggle to know how to write the letter we were talking about. However, once she would look at her neighbor's paper and see how they wrote it or watch me write it on the board she would instantly know what to do. She is one of the students who learn better when she visual sees what she is supposed to do. We could consider the girl to have the constructivism learning.

There are two type of Constructivism: individual- constructivism and social constructivism. Individual constructivism is how an individual creates knowledge with their interactions with the environment (Ormrod 19). Some examples of individual constructivism would be how a child can learn from Mother Nature. When it rains children like to run through

puddles, when they do not wear the right shoes their socks get wet. The next time that child goes outside to run through puddles; they will remember to wear different shoes. The puddles come from Mother Nature and the child learned that some shoes are not good to run through puddles in. The second type of constructivism is social constructivism. Social constructivism is working together because it is said that two or more people will gain an understanding than anyone could gain alone (Ormrod 19). In the hours that I have been in the classroom I noticed that teachers like to do more group activities than they do individual. I have always believed that two heads are better than one when it comes to brainstorming. The teachers that use the group method to help improve the knowledge of the students are using social constructivism.

Before I get into how the theorists used constructivism I would like to share some ways that I would personally use it within my classroom. When I was growing up one thing that I really enjoyed is when we would split up into groups and go to different stations. This would bring in the social constructivism part of learning. The stations also helps to keep students on task I think, when a group cannot figure out the answer it will push them to try harder because no other group is doing what they are. A way that I would like to incorporate individual constructivism into my classroom is through the use of class pets. By bringing pets into the classroom and letting the students be able to watch how they grow and what they do on a daily basis gets their minds going. After the students have come up with some questions and possibilities on why a certain animal eats like they do or sleeps like they do, the environment part comes into play. Other ways to bring the environment into the classroom for individual constructivism is to have the students do an activity on what they have learned to do in the different seasons. They could give other students tips like: don't eat yellow snow, always wear socks with you snow boots, remember to wear sunscreen, and bees like flowers. For little kids on

the elementary level these are really important to them. It is an amazing thing to watch how quickly they can pick up on things at a young age. By the age of one and a half I have heard a young boy be able to tell his dad how cows and pigs sleep. That boy is already learning through individual constructivism before going to school.

There are many theorists that have come up with theories on how constructivism works. Some of those theorists include: Jean Piaget, John Bransford, Carl Bereiter, Marlene Scardamalia, and Giyoo Hatano (Ormrod 19). Another theorist that is similar to the learning's of Piaget is Lev Vygotsky.

Piaget and Vygotsky follow the believing that social interaction is critical in learning. Piaget believes that when children share ideas it helps them and other children realize that different people can have different ideas on things (Ormrod 140). When a child takes in information that they learn from others and lets it relate to what he or she may have already known it is called internalization (Ormrod 141). As a child I would always do something that my brother or sister would do, but the output was never the same. When my brother put legos together they would actually build something, but when I tried it was just a blob of legos. Until my brother showed me what I was doing wrong I never understood why I could not get it. I then would watch my brother closely and would internalize what he was doing. I can now build cars and buildings just like him. Another thing that children do that Vygotsky talks about is self talk, or the process a child performs when they talk to oneself as a guide to a solution (Ormrod 141). Sometimes you will hear a little saying a shoe tying rhyme as he tries to tie his shoe, this would be an example of how a child may use self-talk. The last thing that Vygotsky talks about with learning is inner speech, this is similar to self talk but instead of the child talking aloud they are talking to themselves in their mind (Ormrod 141).

During the developmental process of the brain children can still learn about things. Children will learn well into adulthood about different things in their environment (Ormrod 138). Children are said to have a natural ability to organize their experiences. They refer to how they organize as schemes (Ormrod 139). Children also have the natural ability to make sense of what is going on around them and adapt to their environment. They can do these in two different ways, assimilation or by accommodation (Ormrod 139). The first is assimilation which is using things a child already knows to relate to a new event. Accommodation is having the child deal with a new situation or object (Ormrod 139). There are many ways that teachers can help children learn, especially through assimilation. Teachers in the elementary level have the best opportunity to use assimilation, since they are the ones teaching all the subjects to their class. Assimilation is like using connections to relate subjects together. A teacher can always talk about adding populations of countries in a continent to connect math and geography. That is one of many examples to pull a child's prior knowledge to a new subject.

Though constructivism seems like it could be a confusing thing to understand at first, a teacher cannot let the fact of not knowing what it is step in the way from teaching with it. The ways I was taught as a child followed closely to the ways of constructivism. I have no complaints and believe I have a strong education behind me, so therefore I will use the processes of constructivism learning in my classroom. Children come into school using inner speech, self talk, and schemes, they just do not realize yet that they are using them. To watch a child achieve a new concept or understanding for the first time really makes a person feel as if they have really accomplished something great in their life. That same feeling was felt by the theorists of constructivism.

Works Cited

Ormrod, J. E. (2006). *Essentials of Educational Psychology*. Upper Sadle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.