

Sample essay on lev vygotskys theory

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Cognitive theory focuses on the advancement of an individual's intellect processes, and the role they play in influencing our interaction with the universe. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian teacher and scholar, believed that the interaction of individuals and social happenings, such as, cultures and different communication methods, did have an impact on the creation of individual understanding.

Vygotsky carried out various studies to prove his belief that social learning was a major factor that promoted cognitive development. He based his studies on three concepts. The first one provided that individual intellect advancement originated from social bases while the second one argued that the mental action got facilitated by tools, signs and language (McLeod, 2007). Vygotsky's third concept explained that the social sources of development and the semiotic mediation would be best studied through hereditary or progressive scrutiny. He stated that newborns possessed abilities that were necessary for cognitive development; or as he referred them as, Elementary Mental Functions. They included the ability to perceive, being keen, as well as, memory. When a child gets exposed to sociocultural events, these elementary functions progress into more advanced mental processes that he called Higher Mental Functions. His view was that the development of mental functions was a factor of culture, through the tools of intellectual adaptation, which differed from one culture to another (McLeod, 2007).

In the theories of cognitive development, language has been found to be a contributing aspect of mental development. Vygotsky perceived language as the basic means of passing information. Aleksandr Potebnya, a linguist,

portrayed language as a vital element as it was not only a means of passing information, but also molded human's entire aspect of reasoning. He based his research on the interrelationship that existed between words and thoughts, and he concluded that they originated from the same place at the same time. Similarly, Vygotsky wrote on the connection between dialogue and reasoning after researching on their origin. His findings indicated that the two were inseparable, but had different genetic origins.

Various learning institutions have adopted Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development. That is because it contains various elements that capable of helping teachers develop the skills and abilities of students. He believed that children were curious and wanted to learn and discover new things. To help tutors achieve this, he explained two concepts; scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development. In his works, he emphasized on the social interactions as a contributing factor to cognitive development. That hypothesis meant that when one child interacted with a more skillful child, they can learn more by trying to understand the instructions provided. Scaffolding is a method of facilitating cognitive development. It targets the enhancement of the social aspects of knowledge acquirement. It acts as guidance for pupils in tackling difficult tasks. Also known as inclusive or collaborative education, it includes sensitive and responsible tutoring and accurate feedback. It is a support system that acknowledges diversity and seeks to help those students at a disadvantage of not being able to reach their potential. Scaffolding focuses more with helping a learner to understand the concept, rather than feed them with knowledge through plain teaching (Hurst, 2014).

It is a structure used in educational learning to aid students in achieving their goals. Once they accomplish a set target, the structure gets eliminated little by little until the learner completely understands the concept. That way, it is easy for the learner to recall what they have learnt for a longer time than through the use of normal teaching. Directive scaffolding refers to an approach where a tutor comes up with demonstrative strategies to teach a specific concept, and guides the learner. Supportive scaffolding occurs when a learner tries to learn a concept on his own or with others, with a little help from the tutor (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2002).

Zone of Proximal Development refers to the array of responsibilities that a child can accomplish under supervision and assistance of a much-skilled person, but cannot do them by themselves. Vygotsky came up with this concept and explained that learning events should be challenging to the learner and that the challenges should advance as the cognitive aspect of the learner advances. The Zone of Proximal Development lies between the actual development level of the learner and the level of potential Development. In the level of potential development, a learner can perform given tasks, but with the guidance of a skilled person. Teaching, at this level, is not advisable because it will not be effective (Hurst, 2014).

The actual development level is where the learner understands some challenges and can tackle them without any assistance. Vygotsky emphasizes on maintaining sensitive guidance at the Zone of Proximal Development because it will enable the student improve their cognitive skills and gradually develop their mental functions. For this reason, learning at this level needs to be assessed on a regular basis. One way of conducting the

assessment is through demonstrating steps of tackling the problem, and observing whether the student can repeat the same. An alternative method is where the teacher solves a problem halfway and leaves the rest for the student to complete. Another way is through pairing a less developed student with a more advanced one so they can both tackle a challenge. Scaffolding assists a learner to tackle challenges within his or her Zone of Proximal Development. It has emotional and cognitive impacts on learners' abilities and knowledge, and also affects their enthusiasm and self-confidence when approaching an assignment.

Cognitive development is a complex process, and teachers should ensure that they use the appropriate skills to guide students in tackling challenges. They should keep in mind that students come from diverse backgrounds, and they all have unique capabilities. It is, therefore, important to study every student individually, analyze their abilities and have different approaches for assisting all of them. There are various methods that a teacher can use to evaluate a class or a group, as well as, an individual's level. The teacher may introduce a topic and outline the expectations at the end of the lesson. Then let the students collaborate by sharing their ideas, and then close the topic by discussing with the class, allowing each student a chance to share (Liu, 2012).

The class can get divided into groups, and then the teacher gives each group a different task to discuss, depending on their capabilities. In smaller groups, students can express their ideas with much ease. At this point, the teacher can assess the understanding of students critically. These two strategies help in enhancing the development of listening skills and encouraging

student participation in finding different solutions to problems. These strategies also assist a tutor in understanding the students in a better way. When the teacher understands the students, the teaching and learning process becomes more interactive. Conducting individual assessments through term tests can also help teachers to know how well a student can perform or think without the help of other students. It also helps identify their actual level of development (Liu, 2012).

References

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