

# Constructivism in the classroom education essay



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The aim of this assignment is to provide myself with an opportunity to explore how children learn in my subject or classroom. This work is dedicated to the specific topic called “ Constructivism in classroom”. It consists from different aspects as summarizing and analyzing the information and thoughts, given in different works about this theme. The essay sheds light on the main argument of the definition and determining of terms “ constructivism”, “ motivation for learning”, “ hierarchy of needs” and others. Detailed overview can allow getting the main ideas, advantages and disadvantages of a big amount of thoughts, facts and arguments. In conclusion, the inference let us summarize and sum up all the information we are going to discuss. Our core focus will be on the determining main standpoints of such questions: does theory work in practice, what is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and, at last, what are Vygotsky’s and Burner’s central ideas. I will try to answer these questions through this paper.

In order to explain this theme better, I may reflect on myself as a learner: for example, consider the practices, conditions and opportunities under which I feel learning has been most effective for me. This essay however will not be the completely descriptive of theory, or just practice, but I will try to demonstrate the inextricable links between theory and practice.

## **Motivation for learning**

Talking about motivation, we should mention that it is paramount to student success if to learn it. In order to shed light on this topic our core focus must be on internal and external factors that influence the motivation to learn, taking in account the main principles of the motivation.

The intent of the writing, however, is to be pragmatic in focus. Talking about motivation for learning we ought to learn a lot of conformed to this theme literature in order to understand all the difficulties. However, this definition is not new, each of us, at least, once has heard it. The definition of this term can sound like this: the internal drive directing behavior towards some end. Obviously, motivation helps individuals overcome inertia, which can be defined as a property of matter by which it remains at rest or even in uniform motion in the common straight line unless acted upon by any external force.

To be honest, this forces influence greatly person's behavior; nevertheless, it can be the internal one, which sustains behavior. Having some motivation people work harder, longer and more productively and successful, while those, who are not motivated, work not in all force and become tired quickly.

Adult educators, clearly, are dealing with a group of individuals whose needs and motivations are very diverse. As far as I am concerned, life experience widens the gap between students and creates diversity, which is important in learning.

Frith (2008) has found that there are components of the motivation to learn, they are such: "curiosity, self-efficacy, attitude, need, competence, external motivators" ("Motivation to learn"). First, curiosity, which is explained in this direction: all people are curious, finding new experiences and learning new information, they gain skills and knowledge; the main teachers puzzle is how to nurture student's curiosity and to use curiosity as a motive for learning. Second one can be defined as student's belief in his or her own ability to win

and rich the aim. With another words it can be said the power of positive thinking. There are four possible sources of self-efficacy said Driscoll (1994): “ performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (“ Psychology of learning for instruction”). When a student has any doubt that his or her ability to be successful is low or absent at all, he or she is not motivated to learn. Dividing tasks into chunks and providing students with early success is a method of developing confidence in the students. Vicarious experience is when the learner observes a role model attaining success at a task. Verbal persuasion is often used as others persuade a learner that he or she capable succeeding at a particular task. Next is an attitude. Murphy’s (2009) argued: “ Attitude is an illusive commodity. The attitude of a student toward learning is very much an intrinsic characteristic and is not always demonstrated through behaviors. The positive behaviors exhibited by the student may only occur in the presence of the instructor, and may not be apparent at other times” (“ Motivation to learn”). Talking about need, I must admit how important it is in motivation. Maslow divided all human needs in to five groups (levels). According to this hierarchy lower needs should satisfied at first, in the other way, the higher needs will not be satisfied at all. Lower level - physiological and safety, on the higher level are love and belongings, esteem and self-actualization. Thus, if a kid goes at school hungry or sleepy, he or she will not be able to learn well. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is well described and holds true in today’s world. Physiological needs such as food and water, breathing, sleeping, sex, homeostasis, should be satisfied firstly, with out it next level will not be satisfied at all. These needs are more important than they can seem to be. Next safety needs are personal and financial security,

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health and well-being, at last, safety net against accidents/illness and their adverse impacts. Social needs include family, intimacy, love and friendship. Without these needs, none could live and be happy. Then in the hierarchy go belonging needs and self-actualization (the need for privacy, sense of humor, morality and others). For the reasons given above, we must admit how important Maslow's hierarchy of needs is in contemporary society, as well as previous one. Fact Maslow described in his theory are beyond any doubt, they existed from the beginning of human being. Maslow has just divided and put them in to order to make this information helpful to the humanity.

Competence is an intrinsic motive for learning that is highly related to self-efficacy. Frith (2008) argued, " Success in a subject for some students is not enough. For students who lack a sense of efficacy teachers must not only provide situations where success occurs but also give students opportunities to undertake challenging tasks on their own to prove to themselves that they can achieve"(" Motivation to learn"). An understanding of some skill you are learning is a way to be success in it, with out understanding your chance to learn it will be doomed to lose. It is the intrinsic motivation factor. That is understood. Last elements are external motivators, which can be explained in this way: in intrinsic motivation, the " doing" is the main reason for finishing an activity. Thus, the whole value is placed to the end of the action and process, as well. Reinforcement is another form of an external motivator, however, the value of which is in removing the behavior stops. As I understand, students need some confidence to be proud of their success; it can be also provided rather a self-reward for accomplishing aim they have set. It is completely understood that knowing that your feelings and

knowledge, and even skills are valued helps students to feel confidence and pride, that you can share your ideas. According to McCombs (1996), “ External conditions include: provisions for relevancy, choice, control, challenge, responsibility, competence, personal connection, fun, and support from others in the form of caring, respect and guidance in skill development.”

## **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

To shed light on aspects it may be helpful to make some factors clear.

Intrinsic motivation comes from rewards inherent to a task or activity itself – the enjoyment of a puzzle or the love of playing. Intrinsic motivated students believe that they can reach the aim or a goal, that their knowledge and skills are needed to do the work, when the work is interesting to the student, rather than just rote-learning to achieve good grades, at last, when the learning assists the learner in obtaining valued accomplishments. Talking about the extrinsic motivation it can be explained as a motivation, which comes from outside of the performer. Obviously, money is the most precise example; however, coercion and threat of punishment are as obvious examples as previous. What force and factors can encourage human to win and reach the aim, in spite of interests of others, who are trying to set the same goal as a human? It can be a competitive character of a process. Hence, the crowd, which can support, the praise or award, which waits for a winner, can greatly influence the mind and actions of a human. As far as psychology concerned, extrinsic rewards can lead to over-justification and a subsequent reduction in intrinsic motivation. In one study demonstrating this effect, children who expected to be (and were) rewarded with a ribbon and a gold star for

drawing pictures spent less time playing with the drawing materials in subsequent observations than children who were assigned.

## **Vygotsky's main ideas**

The significance, which Vygotsky's ideas bring in to society, is great. The major topic of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is, obviously, that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition.

Vygotsky (1978) states: " Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." (p57). According to Vygotsky, interactions with parents, community, as well, and peers give kids the opportunity to learn more. For example, collaboration with other children let child to get more information and learn new skills. Being in the group and discussing ideas, expressing thoughts and exchanging experience, children assimilate from other children to progress, to develop their own understanding of concepts and then they individually apply it to the task. It is the fact, which is beyond any doubt. Children learn more sharing their own experience and gaining new knowledge from other kid, who surrounds them. Through the years and centuries, this theory has persisted and developed, so that its significance is great. Vygotsky said, " It is through others that we become ourselves", and these are completely true words. As far as I am concerned, in the learning of language, our first utterances with adults are

for the purpose of communication, however, once mastered they allow “inner speech”, becoming internalized.

Next expression of Vygotsky, which I would like to talk about, sounds as this:

“What a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow”. Let me say, that this expression is as exact and checked as previous. Children gain knowledge from teachers, parents, other child they are talking with, so that this knowledge they use in the future life, out of school or home, becoming more skilled and educated, and accommodated to the life. First, child need to be considerably helped and directed to the right way by the teacher or parent, or even other grown-up. However, time passes and child becomes independent and skilled. This can be very often seen in a class room or the play ground environment where children seek help of the teacher or a more knowledgeable peer to do a task as he might not be able to do it all by himself and once he grasps the concept he continues to do it alone.



## **Egocentric Speech by Piaget**

**Obviously, Piaget and Vygotsky theories of cognitive development everyday life are can be defined as ones characterized by conscious purpose. From reaching for food to designing an experiment, our actions are directed at goals. Piaget (1975) has found “ egocentric speech dies out and is replaced by Social Speech” (“ The child’s conception of the world”). Obviously, Piaget says that egocentric speech in children is predominantly their inner personal talk when they are babies and then it becomes social talk as they grow up. Clearly, he believes egocentric speech dies its natural death, when the child grows up or matures. Piaget, as we know, proposes four stages of development. First is called sensory-motor stage (0-2 years), pre-operational stage (2-7years) concrete operational (7-12 years) and formal operational (12-16 years), which I am sure is significant for a teacher to use.**

While the child becomes more adept at controlling their behavior verbally, it is clear that the need to act physically out the speech act diminishes, as verbal imagery takes its place. Talking about Piaget ideas, the psychology should admit that they made valuable contribution where teacher can adopt the good aspects from both ideologies. Vygotsky (1978), has found that “ the zone of proximal development “ distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (“ Mind in Society”, p. 86).

## **Bruner's basic thoughts**

Bruner's theories are similar to which to the Piaget and Vygotsky theories. His theory is based on constructivism, and thus he believes the shift from extrinsic rewards to intrinsic rewards. Bruner's theory of Instruction includes four stages, as well. We are going to discuss them later. Bruner believes in the predisposition of learning, as we know. In addition, he argued that learning is an active process, and it cannot to be wrong. Bruner explains the "readiness to learn" in such way: schools have wasted a great deal of people's time by postponing the teaching of important areas because they are deemed 'too difficult'. Brumfit (1995) said, "Bruner is one of the most notable contemporary exponents of the view that children's language and learning development takes place through the process of social interaction. [...] Bruner proposed that for language development there needs to be a child component, incorporating an innate propensity for active social interaction and language learning, together with an adult support and help component. The international partner provides a structure of framework which Bruner referred to as scaffolding" ("Language Education in the National Curriculum").

## **Constructivism in a classroom**

According to Matthews (1998), "An important and necessary question in the educational process must be, « How does one establish and evaluate knowledge?" In order to answer this question, we inherently assume that: (1) there is some correspondence between language and reality; (2) our propositions about our observations are logically coherent; and (3) there is a reliable and systematic method of testing our observations. If there is no

reality other than that constructed by language and our narrative lacks internal coherence then the two criteria for verifying any observation have been eliminated and one is left with a relativistic nihilism" (" Let's get real: The fallacy of post modernism").

Constructivism, as far as we know, we can describe with some factors. First, student independence or autonomy and initiative must be accepted and encouraged in the classroom through his or her classmates and teachers. Students' ideas and thoughts should be respected and encouraged in order to help them attain their own intellectual identity. To start solving problems and being responsible for own thoughts and actions, student should be confident that his or her issues and ideas are listened to. Therefore, that student can answer the question correctly.

Next element is that teachers, asking open-ended questions to students, let them to think and respond; reflective thought takes time and is often built on others' ideas and comments. The ways teachers ask questions and the ways students respond will structure the success of student inquiry. In addition, in the constructive classroom thinking on higher level is encouraged. Teacher encourages students to connect and summarize concepts by analyzing, predicting, justifying, and defending their ideas. All we know that the truth appears in the dispute and discussion, so in classroom might be the open conversation, where take part not only students, but teachers as well. Nevertheless, we should remember that only when they feel comfortable enough to express their ideas will meaningful classroom dialogue occur. Such methods helps student to gain new knowledge and become more skilled and educated, and experienced.

Allowing making predictions, teachers give students an opportunity to generate varying hypotheses about natural phenomena. The class uses raw data, primary sources, manipulatives, physical, and interactive materials, which helps students to be well informed. Such approach let student to be involved in real-world possibilities and be helped in generating the abstractions that bind phenomena together.

## **Conclusion**

It can generally be said that talking about motivation and constructivism in classroom, we should mention that it is paramount to student success if to learn it. In this paper, we have shown that there are serious problems with some ways of wrong understandings of teaching, because these theories, which we have discussed in writing, are mainly just theories. However, I am sure, in the future, we will take in account all our fails and problems, and make educational system better, than nowadays. Constructivism is the philosophy of learning from, and reflecting upon ones own experiences. This is where individuals must build their own understandings of the world. Everyone generates his or her own rules, which are used to make sense of ones' own experiences. Hence, learning is the process of altering prototypical minds to accommodate new experiences. The significance, which Vygotsky's ideas, Piaget theory, Burner's basic thoughts and, at last, Maslow's hierarchy of needs bring in to society, is great. Through the years and centuries, these theories has persisted and developed, so that its significance is great.

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the main ideas, advantages and disadvantages of a big amount of thoughts, facts and arguments. In conclusion, the inference let us summarize and sum up all the information we are going to discuss. New approaches in learning children, I believe, will give advantages and privileges in the whole system, and will help children to be adapted to the grown up life better, than now.