

# Education psychology



## **Education/psychology**

Lev Vygotsky There have been numerous theories proposed regarding how individuals develop and grow, many of which have implications for the teacher and some of which directly address the process of teaching within the theory. While most present helpful information that guide the teacher in how best to instruct his/her students based upon their particular age or developmental levels, the theorist I believe has been most helpful to teachers is Lev Vygotsky. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian psychologist interested in studying child development, eventually founding a new approach to education, today known as a 'social constructivist' approach. This concept is based on the idea that "cultural inheritance is carried in the meanings of artifacts and practices. Resources of knowledge and skill brought to a situation depend upon the past participation of the individual within the culture. Resources are dependent upon culture, also the stage of human development" (Golbfarb, 2000). In discovering how people learn and develop, Vygotsky suggested that children develop and gain control of their thought processes through the use of artifacts, one of the most important being the artifact of language, becoming increasingly able to incorporate their potential into inherent ability through zones of proximal development. This development takes place through various means, one of the most important being creative imitation of others. A second important means through which children develop control over their mental processes is through play and interaction with others. Understanding that a child's understanding of the world around them begins with their ability to articulate the ideas and concepts they are supposed to

be learning is a big step in bringing about effective education. If students are required to sit quietly in their desks and memorize facts and figures all day, they are unlikely to be able to put this information to use outside of the classroom setting. However, if they are given facts and figures and asked to interact with them, learning about them and applying them to numerous activities while discussing this application with their peers and teachers, they are much more likely to both remember the information and be able to apply it to their everyday lives. Bringing in the natural element of play, something children do spontaneously and, as Vygotsky recognized, as a means of learning about the world around them, only serves to heighten their interest in learning more and increases their ability to interact with others. A good example of how this can work can be found in teaching the basic principles of math. While a child can learn that two plus two equals four by memorizing the figures on a paper, it is more effective for them to learn that four chairs at the sand table can be filled with two boys and two girls and that together, they can all build a gigantic sand castle with four turrets even though they only have two turret forms with which to build. The key ingredient in making this connection, though, is talking about it, figuring out how to get four turrets out of two forms and realizing that there are four people at the table. As Vygotsky suggests, this type of interaction is often carried out spontaneously among children who are allowed to explore with some guidance from a teacher. Because it uses natural processes and focuses upon deeper understanding and applicability, I believe Vygotsky's theory is one of the most helpful theories to the teaching profession.

#### Works Cited

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Goldfarb, Mary Ellen. (2000). " The Educational Theory of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934)." Available October 12, 2007 from