

Self-constructed/co-constructed knowledge

By H.J. de Looper

Jean Piaget (in Kamii, 1996) theorized that knowledge is actively constructed by the individual interacting with the environment, not merely transmitted to or absorbed by the learner. Knowledge does not exist independently of the knower, and the individual constructs his own system of knowledge from his own experiences. Piaget believed that we cannot know what is true, or what is "out there" in the external world, only what we accommodate into our own self-constructed knowledge (Kamii & Ewing, 1996). Vygotskian social constructivism emphasizes the social aspects of the theory, suggesting that every function in a child's development appears first "interpsychologically" (between people) and then "intrapsychologically" (inside the child's mind). Thus, teacher and peers take on a more central role in social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky claimed that higher mental functions are always mediated by cultural tools or artifacts. Language, computers, the Internet, and online learning environments can all be considered cultural tools that aid interaction. These do not simply facilitate mental functions, but also shape and transform them.

In the social constructivism is the student the person that learns. Learning is exclusively an activity of the learned. He constructs his knowledge by himself. In the social constructivism the interaction with others (including the teacher) is important: learning will be the best when students cooperate with each other.