

Pragmatic Constructivism: Factors that Influence Knowledge Construction, learning, Instruction and Assessment

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Steps of the Reflective Session

1. Lead lecture and discussion
2. Small group reflection on the contents of the lead lecture and any supplementary resource on the topic;
3. Critical analysis of pragmatic constructivism with a purpose to broaden understanding o the topic;
4. Preparation of the presentation by each small group;
5. Presentation before the peer groups and the facilitator.
6. Discussion

Insights of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and Freire

Pragmatic constructivism is informed by the insights of :

John Dewey(1902,1956): Knowledge creation by **active participation of individual/reorganisation of experience**/reflection)

Jean Piaget(1972). Knowledge as a **process of inquiry and reasoning/assimilation and accommodation**)

Insights of Vygotsky and Freire

Pragmatic constructivism is informed by the insights of :

Lev Vygotsky(1978): Knowledge construction is explained with the help of *Zone of proximal development* (the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving) and level of potential development (as determined through problem –solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable person/social &cultural context);

Paulo Freire(1994): Problem solving education/knowledge is constructed by involving *critical thinking skills* of individual

Factors that influence knowledge construction, learning, instruction and assessment

1. Purposeful change In environment and reflection of change;
2. Integration of thinking and doing/act;
3. Balance between teacher active role and student –directed learning;
4. Good practice teaching;
5. Ability to interpret students' actions and responses;
6. Ability to interpret students' knowledge, and make modifications when they discover that students have not grasped what they were supposed to.

Change in environment and reflection

The term *pragmatic* refers to a way of knowing that comes out of purposefully changing the environment and then reflecting on this change.

Teacher changes the classroom environment having specific purpose in mind;

Reflection on the knowledge construction and learning with change in environment

Integration of thinking and doing

Genuine knowledge comes neither by thinking about something abstractly nor by acting uncritically, but rather by integrating thinking and doing, by getting the mind to reflect on the act.

Emphasise good constructivist teaching practice

A pragmatic constructivist discourse is one that is grounded in doing, that is, in good constructivist teaching practice. Such a discourse must be informed by the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of good constructivist teachers.

Balance between teacher's active role and student – directed learning

Peterson and Dusing :

A good constructivist classroom is one in which there is a balance between teacher- and student-directed learning, and one that requires teachers to take an active role in the learning process, including formal teaching.

Teacher's ability to interpret student actions and responses

Steffe and D'Ambrosio (1995) assert, constructivist teaching requires teachers to be able to interpret their students' actions and responses, test their interpretations of their students' knowledge, and make modifications when they discover that students have not grasped what they were supposed to.

Analytical ability

The analysis and arrangement of facts which is indispensable to the growth of knowledge and power of explanation;

Focus on teacher capacity building of educators

Pragmatic constructivist discourse is both descriptive and prescriptive, one that can offer some concrete guidance and recommendations for educators.

Further Reading

Kumar, R. & Gupta, V.K.(2009,November). An introduction to cognitive constructivism in education. *Journal of Indian Education*.

Gordon, M. (2009). Toward a pragmatic discourse of constructivism: reflections on lessons from practice. *Educational Studies*, 45, 39 – 58. DOI: [10.1080/00131940802546894](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131940802546894)