

CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

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The articles posted in this blog reflect the perspective of Dr. Torres. That is, they are based on his culture, education, experience, and research; with a constructivist's perspective; which suggests there are multiple perspectives to every phenomenon, and regardless how unbiased the researcher attempts to be, there will always be some semblance of bias. To understand knowledge, one must understand that knowledge has many different perspectives. That is, the knowledge provided by an article, a subject-matter expert, literature, research, real-world practitioner, and so on is biased based on many elements. Therefore, when reading an article, the reader must understand that the article is one of many perspectives on the subject matter. To further, understand why these different perspectives exist, an understanding of "Constructivism" is appropriate.

Constructivists believe that the process of actively engaging in building new knowledge structures is how new knowledge is created. Constructivist theory holds the belief that learning is a process in which individuals construct their own knowledge through meaningful interactions with the world (Rieber, n.d.). It is the learner's individual perception and interpretation of the world that causes different meanings to arise, and it is this concept that underlies the foundation of constructivist theory.

For one thing, the learning environment must support knowledge construction and multiple perspectives. Whereas traditional systems, such as the one espoused by objectivists, hold that the world is real, constructivists believe that no one world is any more real than any other (Jonassen, 1992). Students must feel empowered to explore the multiple pathways open to them within the constructivist framework, just as instructors must be flexible in evaluating the

different student outcomes and products likely to be present in a constructivist classroom, whether in a traditional classroom or a distance education setting.

In the constructivist paradigm, for learning to be meaningful, learners must set their own goals and construct their own meanings. Thus, if the overall goal is merely to learn, whatever meaning students derive from an activity should be significant and relevant to their success. Furthermore, for learning to be meaningful, constructivists state that instruction must reside in authentic tasks, "those that have real-world relevance and utility, that integrate those tasks across the curriculum, that provide appropriate levels of complexity, and that allow students to select appropriate levels of difficulty or involvement" (Jonassen, 1996, p. 271). Thus, learners should be asked to do things that they would do in the real world rather than perform artificial tasks that the instructor has developed for the sake of performing an exercise. To this end, constructivism allows for different interpretations of knowledge and meaning.