


Learning Theories

Lesson 2
Constructivism




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Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:


1. Define the term 'Learning Theories'
2. Explain the basic concepts of constructivism
3. Describe how the constructivist approach could be applied to your presentation of Fit For Life Lifestyle Management material to any given audience



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Constructivism

- "Constructivists believe that all humans have the ability to construct knowledge in their own minds through a process of discovery and problem solving." Forrester and Jantzie (2004)
- Bencze (2004) states that constructivism is the building of knowledge that takes place in individuals' minds through problem solving and discovery.



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Constructivism

- Constructivism calls for understanding of knowledge rather than just memorisation of facts.
- Its sees learners as being active in their acquisition of knowledge rather than just passive vessels
- Learners must connect new information with prior experiences, unless this connection is made, memorised facts and/or information will be quickly forgotten.

- Very different from behaviourist theories in that the constructivist view of teaching is to teach in such a way to produce most learning for the least teaching (Forrester and Jantzie, 2004)



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Characteristics of a Constructivist Classroom

- the learners are actively involved
- the environment is democratic
- the activities are interactive and student centred
- the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous



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Application of the Constructivist Approach

- **Setting a task:** for members of the class / audience. E.g. instead of the presenter listing the health benefits of physical activity, set the class the task of writing in their notes what they think are 5 health benefits of physical activity. This simple task makes the learning more active and makes the class start thinking for themselves



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Application of the Constructivist Approach

- **Groupwork:** Give the group a problem to solve that is related to the topic being discussed. E.g. A short case study about an office worker whose blood pressure is high and stress levels within his/her place of work are also very high. Set the group the task of discussing the changes that could be made to improve the worker's lifestyle and how these changes could be implemented.



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Role of the facilitator/teacher

- To prompt and facilitate discussion
- To guide students by asking questions that will lead students to develop their own conclusions
- Setting tasks and problems to be solved
- Use of mini case studies designed to have students apply their knowledge rather than regurgitate



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Summary

- Emphasis is on application of knowledge rather than regurgitation
- New knowledge should be connected to previously learned material
- Students/audience are actively involved in their own learning rather than passive vessels
- Task work and problem setting encourage active learning



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