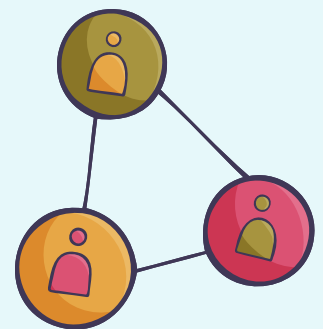# Constructivism

A theory which states that learning is an active constructive process rather than a passively acquired one. The learners act as knowledge constructors with the help of the educator which we may call "more knowledgeable on (MKO)" or more skillful peers at certain stages of the learning process until they master the required skill or objective. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a pioneer Russian psychologist, introduced that idea and called it the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is the zone where the task is just beyond the learners' capabilities but to reach it, learners need more challenging activities and guidance from a MKO to promote the maximum cognitive growth and help them reach the ZPD. Therefore, learning objectives should be student-centred including verbs about reasoning, reflection in addition to activities that encourage intrinsic motivation, problem solving and experiential learning

Social Constructivism is a variety of constructivism that stresses on the importance of social interactions and cooperative learning thus the importance of language in connection in order to achieve the learning goals and apply the constructivist ideas.

The 3 main components to assisst a learner reach the ZPD:

The presence of a MKO with skills beyond of the learners'

Social interactions with skillful tutors and peers, which is called **Social Constructivism**
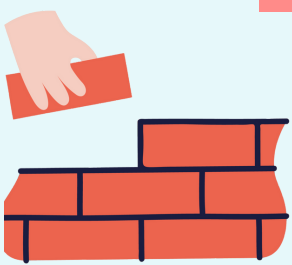
Scaffolding '[Scaffolding] refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring' (Bruner, 1978, p. 19). This involves helpful, structured interaction with MKO

Strengths

1. Gives the learners the value of ownership of what they learn and the knowledge they build up
2. Enhances the cognitive and self learning skills of the learners as well as the problem solving and critical thinking
3. Encourages students to learn and have intrinsic motivation towards learning
4. Creates social learning environment that is essential in constructing knowledge

Limitations

1. Lack of structure which may lead to a chaotic learning environment if the educator is not a skillful constructivist guide
2. Discards traditional grading and structure which may frustrate some students who learn better in a structured way so they may fall behind others and confuse the measurement and assessment system
3. Learners ho find difficulty in connecting information and building up knowledge may feel frustrated and confused
4. It needs a small number of learners to achieve the quality required which is not easy to apply

Instructional Design Implications

Instructional Design is a way that helps learners in their continuous learning journey and since it is concerned with adult learners, we cannot ignore the prior knowledge and experiences they have. They are learners who are aware of what they need to learn. Instructional design works on certain goals and objectives and a main aspect in the design is the audience, thus constructivism principles are relevant and important to make use of in this area.