E-Content

B.Ed.

Lev Vygotsky’s Cognitive Development Theory

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Structure

- Introduction
- Socio-Cultural Theory
- Zone of Proximal Development
- Scaffolding
- Educational Implications
- Conclusion
- Check Your Progress
- Suggested Online Resources
- Suggested Readings

Objectives:
Dear students, after going this e-tutorial you should be able to understand

- Role of Vygotsky in cognitive developmental psychology.
- Concepts like zonal proximal development and scaffolding.
- Educational implications of cognitive development theory.
Introduction

Lev Semonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), was a Soviet developmental psychologist. His theories are often compared and contrasted with those of one of his contemporaries, Jean Piaget. Vygotsky's new approach to psychology can be traced to both his Socio-Cultural context. He studied the role of social and cultural factors in the making of human consciousness. His theory of human development emphasizes how an individual’s social and cultural worlds impact development. According to his theory, a child’s social world is guided by language, and children use language to understand and experience their world. Ultimately, the language they hear (and other cultural tools, symbol systems, and practices) becomes internalized and helps them control their behavior. As children get older, they use language to spread cultural values and, as parents, language helps transmit cultural norms to children, a process that continues for generations. For Vygotsky, development and education are inherently social.

Lev Semonovich Vygotsky

(source: https://www.verywellmind.com/lev-vygotsky-biography-2795533)

Lev Vygotsky’s View on Cognitive Development

Socio-Cultural Theory

- Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the beginning of human intelligence in any society or culture.
- The central idea of Vygotsky’s theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a key role in the development of cognition.
• The main distinction between Piaget and Vygotsky were Piaget holds a belief that child would learn through their environment quite independently whereas Vygotsky signifies that the social setting always help in the learning process.

• The theory believed that learning takes place at two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual’s mental structure.

• He believed that every function in the child’s cultural development appears first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological).

More Knowledgeable Other

• The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) is someone who has a better understanding than the learner, with respect to particular task, process or concept.

• The MKO can be a teacher, parents, peers as sometimes, a child’s peers or a parent may be the individuals with more knowledge or experience.

Zone of Proximal Development

• A second aspect of Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD).

• The "zone" is the region of searching for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires assistance and social interface to develop completely.

• The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) defines skills and abilities that are included in the process of development.

• The ZPD is the series of tasks that one cannot yet perform independently, but can achieve with the facilitation of a more competent individual. For example, a child might not be able to reach the handle of the door because of his/her small height, but she can do so while holding her mother’s hand.

• Children are always learning novel things which directly affect the ZPD, the ZPD changes as new proficiencies are obtained.

• The support which is provided by the elder ones or more competent persons to reach the highest level of ZPD is known as scaffolding.
Scaffolding

- Scaffolding can be defined as an arrangement or guidance of a more skilled person which can be provided in many ways such as breaking the assignment down into smaller and easy steps, providing adequate motivation, and providing regular feedback about the progress of active person on that particular work. In the example above, the child’s mother provided assistance to the child where mother worked as a scaffold in that situation.
- Vygotsky also provided the significance to the social interaction of persons with their atmosphere for their most favorable cognitive development.
- Assisted learning takes place in children's zones of proximal development, where they can do new assignments that are within their potentialities only with the help of a teacher's or peer's assistance, as during assisted learning, interactional contexts such as cooperative learning groups, and scaffolding.
- Finally theory of cognitive development reveals that interaction with others is necessary for maximum cognitive development to take place.

Educational implications

- Many schools have traditionally held a transmissionist or instructionist model in which a teacher or lecturer ‘transmits’ information to students.
- In contrast, Vygotsky’s theory promotes learning contexts in which students play a lively role in learning.
- Roles of the teacher and student are therefore shifted, as a teacher should collaborate with his or her students in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students.
- Learning therefore becomes a joint experience for the students and teacher like other theories, this theory also has an impact on the various aspects of individual learning.
- This may be related to curriculum which is studied, teaching learning methods and also on assessment.
- Social constructivism where group activities should be given to students, so that they can learn from one others to help like discoveries, projects and problem solving.
• Assess Childs ZPD to know the level of child, then give him tasks above the ZPD by providing scaffolding.

• Theory asserts that learning takes place through interaction, therefore it is implied that the curricula should be planned in a way which allows interaction between learners and tasks of learning.

• Scaffolding not only creates immediate results, but also inspires the skills that are necessary for independent problem solving in the future.

• Teacher can use cooperative learning techniques for teaching in the class. It is important also to promote group work which promotes maximum social interactions among the learners.

• Most important attribute of learning is assessment. It is important that the assessment methods must take into account the zone of proximal development of the learners.

• The level of doing task by the learner at their own is their level of actual development and what they can do with help of others is their level of potential development.

• Two learners might have the identical level of actual development, but receiving an appropriate help from an adult, one might be able to solve countless problems than the other.

• Assessment methods must target both the level of actual development and the level of potential development.

• Always look for the opportunities to use scaffolding when learners require help.

• Vygotsky believed that in helping learners the skill, peers can perform a very important role.

• Like Piaget, Vygotsky did not believe that strict, standardized tests are best way to assess learning rather; he believed that assessment should focus on shaping the learner’s zone of proximal development.

**Conclusion**

Vygotsky's new approach to psychology can be traced to both his Socio-Cultural context. He studied the role of social and cultural factors in the making of human consciousness. His theory of human development emphasizes how an individual’s social and cultural worlds impact development. According to his theory, a child’s social world is guided by language, and children
use language to understand and experience their world. Ultimately, the language they hear (and other cultural tools, symbol systems, and practices) becomes internalized and helps them control their behavior.

Check Your Progress

1. Describe the socio cultural theory of Vygotsky?
2. Explain scaffolding and zone of proximal development?
3. Discuss the main educational implications of Vygotsky’s theory?

Suggested Online Resources

- www.epgp.inflibnet.ac.in
- https://swayam.gov.in/
- http://cec.nic.in/E-Content/

Suggested Readings


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