



4.8 Teaching and learning concept: Constructivist and social-constructivists

A constructivist teaching/learning concept assumes that learning is based not on the transmission of knowledge by an external agent but instead on processes of organization occurring inside the brain. These processes are seen as the active production of reality by means of construction and interpretation. Reality is a process – one which all individuals, through their actions or interpretational activity, subject to dynamic change. From this viewpoint, the results of a learning process can be directed from the outside only to a limited degree. The implication for teachers is that their role is not so much that of guide and instructor as that of moderator and shaper of a learning environment which is as enabling as possible. Learning, in this view, is always embedded in a specific situation and is greatly influenced by what learners bring with them to a situation.

The social-constructivist theory is an extension of the constructivist concept. Social-constructivist approaches emphasize that people's constructing and interpretative activities are never restricted to a single individual in a closed system per se since the production of reality is always embedded in a matrix of social relationships. Therefore a social-constructivist teaching/learning approach pays particular attention to the ways in which power relationships and standards influence the learning processes of individuals.

In the social-constructivist view, the example of the introductory lecture at the Honegger event discussed in the preceding texts could be seen as involving learning processes apart from the intended instructive transfer of knowledge via the lecture. For instance, from their interactions with one another, audience members are learning how to behave in a concert hall or during a lecture (suppressing coughs, sitting still...). Or they are "practicing" ways to express socially acceptable appreciation or criticism in the given context (audience interested in concerts and films, concert hall). Or they may be learning methods of social punishment, ostracism, if a member of the group fails to live up to social expectations, if, for instance, someone grumbles loudly about the lecturer or starts dancing on the buffet table, enthusiastically singing the melodies from the pieces just performed.