

Social constructivism

Social constructivism is a theory that considers that knowledge and reality are constructed by individuals in a given social and cultural context. They are the result of our social interactions and the construction of shared meanings. According to this perspective, objective reality does not exist independently of our perception of it, but rather is created by the interaction between individuals and their environment. Social constructivism therefore also questions the notion of objective truth and prefers the concept of a relative truth that is linked to the social and cultural context.

Proponents of social constructivism maintain that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. Meaning and understanding of the world are produced by individuals through their social interactions. Individuals interact and create shared meanings that shape their understanding of reality. Shared meanings are beliefs, norms, values and ideas that are accepted and shared by a group of people.

Social constructivism also stresses the importance of culture and language in the construction of reality. Culture provides a frame of reference for shared meanings, and language enables individuals to communicate and share these meanings. Shared meanings are therefore created and maintained by language and culture.

According to social constructivism, individuals are not passive in the face of reality. Instead, they are active players in the creation and understanding of reality. Individuals cannot be seen as passive receptacles who absorb information, but rather as active participants in the creation of reality.

This theory has important implications for many fields, including the social and communication sciences. It also has implications for the way we understand learning and education. According to social constructivism, learning is an active process of constructing meanings rather than a simple process of transmitting knowledge.

In the field of psychology, social constructivism is closely linked to social cognition theory, which examines how individuals use social information to understand and interpret their environment. Social cognition theory is particularly interested in how individuals perceive and interpret others, and how these perceptions influence their behaviour.

Social constructivism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to theories of social determinism, which held that human behaviour was determined by biological or environmental factors. Social constructivists emphasised the importance of culture, social norms and values in the construction of social reality. The term itself is often associated with the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their book "The Social Construction of Reality" (1966).

According to social constructivism, reality is not an objective, independent entity, but rather a social construct that emerges from interactions and negotiations between individuals. Individuals interact with their social environment, experiences and culture to construct an understanding of reality that is specific to their social and historical context.

Social constructivism also asserts that knowledge is constructed collectively rather than individually. Individuals learn through interaction with others and through the negotiation of meanings and interpretations of reality. This approach focuses on the way in which knowledge is shared, created and reproduced in social interactions, rather than on its possession by isolated individuals.

Social constructivism is influenced by theories of language and communication, which emphasise the central role of language and communication in the construction of social reality. According to this approach, language and communication are essential tools for the creation and reproduction of meanings and interpretations of social reality.

In politics, for example, social constructivists believe that political ideas and beliefs are constructed through social interactions between individuals and groups. Political speeches, debates, demonstrations and election campaigns are all factors that contribute to the construction of political reality.

In science, social constructivists consider that scientific knowledge is constructed through social practices such as experimentation, the publication of scientific articles and scientific conferences. They also stress the importance of cultural and social contexts in the construction of science.

Social constructivists also take a critical view of the media, believing that the media do not reflect objective reality but rather contribute to the construction of social reality through the discourses, images and representations they convey.