

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING PROJECT**

In this article, we describe theoretical framework for a learning and teaching project that uses a multi-user, virtual environment to immerse students in educational tasks. The project combines strategies used in commercial gaming environments with lessons from educational research on learning and motivation. It allows users to travel to virtual places to perform educational activities, talk with other users and mentors, and build virtual personae

The theoretical framework for the project, while informed by the disparate backgrounds and commitments of the researchers, may be traced to a large extent to the early twentieth century writings of Vygotsky, whose pioneering work continues to inform even such current theoretical discussions as activity theory, sociocultural constructivism, distributed cognition, and situated learning. So sweeping is his influence, and so diverse are applications of his work, that many scientists outline the aspects of Vygotsky's thought as it frames their research.

Many writers have identified central components of Vygotsky's work: Wertsch (1985), for example, describes three core themes to Vygotsky's theoretical framework, including his developmental model and his emphasis on social processes and on the mediating tools and signs. In works of scientists we find five similar themes derived from Vygotsky: human development, social constructivism, Marxist activity, children's play, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

A core tenet of Vygotsky's thought, that the development of cognition depends on social interaction, brings together three of these themes, namely human development, social constructivism, and the ZPD. For Vygotsky (1981), development is "the conversion of social relations into mental functions," an understanding of human development unequivocally social in orientation.

Indeed, Vygotsky not only defines development in social terms but, in contrast to such developmental psychologists as Piaget who regard learning as dependent on development, asserts the primacy of learning, which itself provokes developmental processes.

Characteristic of sociocultural constructivism, the assertion that human cognition and development have their roots in social activity has as its basis Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD, or "the discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance". That is, achievement within the ZPD depends upon social interaction, such as guidance and collaboration.

In addition to these themes in Vygotsky's work, a learning and teaching project drew upon two more, Marxist activity and children's play. From the Marxist perspective, human thought and behavior transpire within a social context, and for Vygotsky, this social context provides the key to development: the use of language as a tool.

Such an emphasis on tools supports the Marxian position that socially organized labor activity, which is founded on the use of technical tools, is the basic condition of human existence. Indeed, Lave (1988) makes a similar argument, noting that "cognition is constituted in dialectical relations among people acting, the contexts of their activity, and the activity itself".

In addition to the forgoing themes, a learning and teaching project reflects a less widely discussed concern of Vygotsky's, that of play. Consistent with the framework established above is Vygotsky's novel stance toward play: The old adage that child's play is imagination in action must be reversed: we can say that imagination in adolescents and school children is play without action.

Vygotsky considers dramatic play to be a "leading activity" in the development of children and argues that "the influence of play on a child's development is enormous ... It is a novel form of behavior liberating the child from constraints". In this way, play becomes a scaffolding activity that expands the

child's ZPD, engaging issues and debates that are not confronted directly through participation in society or even through the normal curriculum of schools.

Through considering these different conceptions, scientists brought a critical perspective to their discussion of play and came to recognize the need for not just engagement but reflection. Such an understanding of play, founded on Vygotsky and supported by the work of Winnicott, Schön and others, scientists call «critical engagement».

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### **THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN OUR WORLD**

The theme of my work is the realization of the principle of equality of sexes in the Russian legislation. Today this theme is rather actual as Russia goes on a way of construction of law state which is based on the constitutional principles, one of which is the principle of equality.

In my work such questions as the history of the development of social - legal idea on the given principle, the concept of the principle of equality are mentioned. During my work the analysis of normative legal documents was made. Actually that given principle is fixed in the legislation but as my work shows it is realized and practiced differently.

Studying foreign literature, it is possible to draw a conclusion that in practice people are exposed to discrimination. Especially it concerns the feminine gender. Traditionally women practically had no equal rights in comparison with men. But the history shows, that owing to such movements as "feminism" and «suffrage movement» women have achieved equality. The women's issue takes the roots since early times. The theme of an equality of sexes interested different minds and different centuries.

Here is a good example of women struggle for their right as seen in American movies.