Facilitator Report: Constructivism

Lillian Rawson

Faculty of Education

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Prof: Louise Hall

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Reflection

I've started this facilitator report with a reflection on the presentation. The next section combines my slides and notes that I used during the presentation (the content and process), along with some additional reflection.

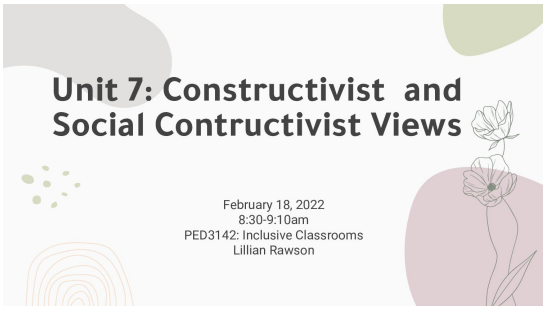
One challenge I had when preparing this presentation was to make sure that the discussion and content would be engaging. Since my colleagues had already done the same readings as I had, it was important for me to make this discussion group something unique. While supported by the lecture and the readings, I wanted to provide additional opportunities for learning and discussion.

Since motivation is affected by perceptions of meaningfulness, I made sure that content would be applicable to our practicum and future work. It is often challenging for teacher candidates to successfully activate prior knowledge in their students. To help us improve, I modeled this throughout the presentation and provided a complete classroom example (the slow reveal graph). I really appreciated how my associate teacher has been teaching me about building on students' existing knowledge, particularly in the math classroom, and I was excited to share this with my colleagues.

One highlight was the (unplanned) expanded discussion of the cartoon. Together, everyone turned the activity into a full "I notice… I wonder" experience. The participation exceeded my expectations, with each member sharing multiple comments and engaging in conversation. This also shows me how important pictures and visuals are to activate students' thoughts and feelings.

One challenge during the presentation was that I had forgotten that uOttawa Zoom accounts close the meeting after 40 minutes. This rushed the last few minutes of our conversation, and I would have liked to spend more time on consolidation.

I struggled to select the right content while preparing the presentation — I had so many ideas and there wouldn't be time for everything! To help make sure the material would meet the needs of the group, I asked frequent questions to assess understanding. When it was clear that my colleagues had a good grasp of the theory described in the readings, I was able to move on to questions about application and reflections about their teaching experiences. I felt that it was important to give team members choices, which also helped me to focus the discussion. For example, I gave them the opportunity to either talk about a final discussion question, or to go through an example activity. By checking in with them, I feel that we were able to have a discussion that focused on the topics and questions that were relevant to our needs.



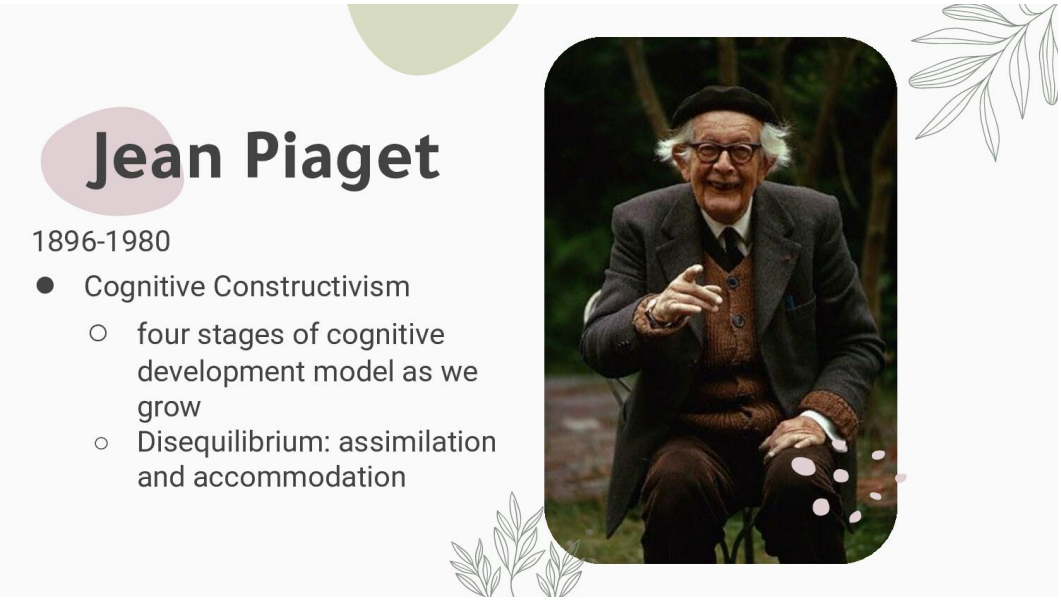
Presentation and notes

Introduction (hook)

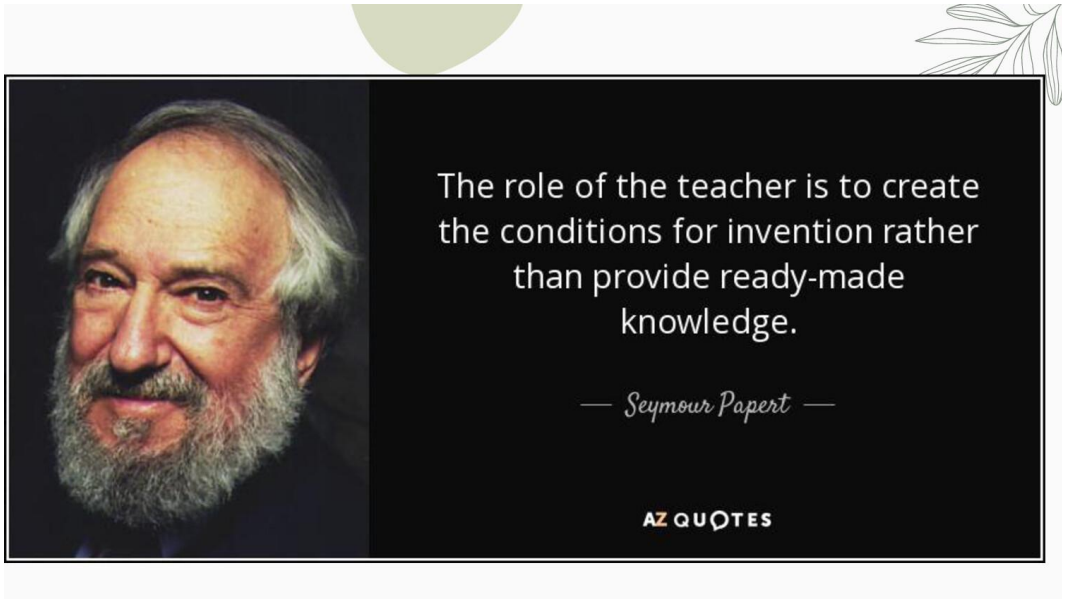
- Cat video: used as an example of how models based on prior knowledge are updated with new information, as constructivist theories describe

Summary of big ideas from the readings

- Psychologists and key theories
  - Piaget **-cognitive constructivism**
    - assimilation: putting new information that fits into an existing framework
      - examples: animals,
    - accommodation: when the schemas or framework needs to be adjusted to fit in new understanding/knowledge
    - <u>resolving new information: everyone does this a different rates and capacities</u>



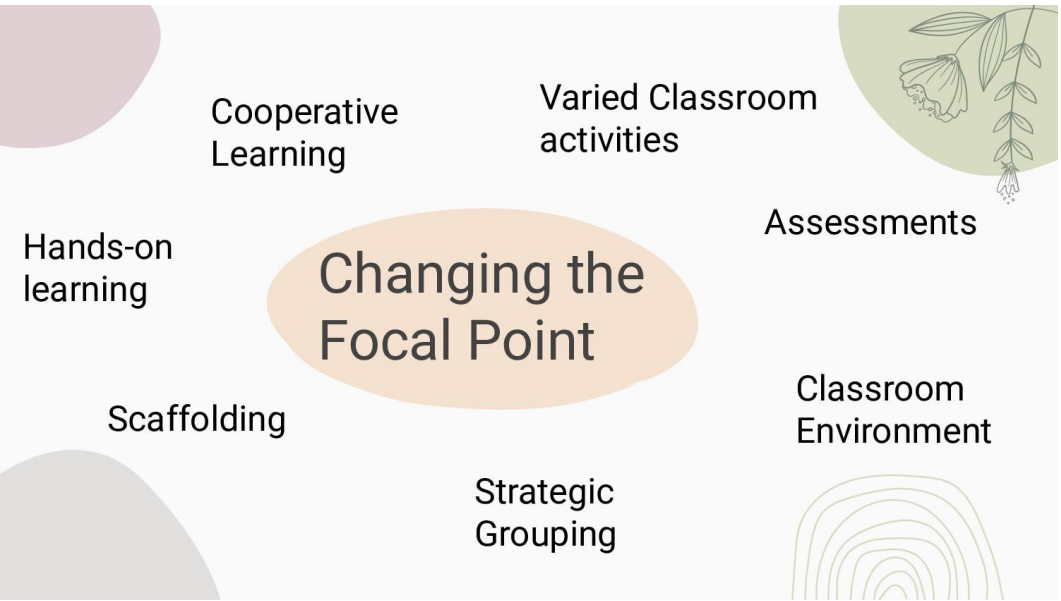
- Vygotsky - **social constructivism**
  - Social interactions during the critical thinking process are integral to learning
  - Students have a lot to offer one another
- zone of proximal development (ZPD): the distance between what a student (apprentice, new employee, etc.) can do on their own, and what they can accomplish with the support of someone more knowledgeable about the activity



Constructivism in the classroom.

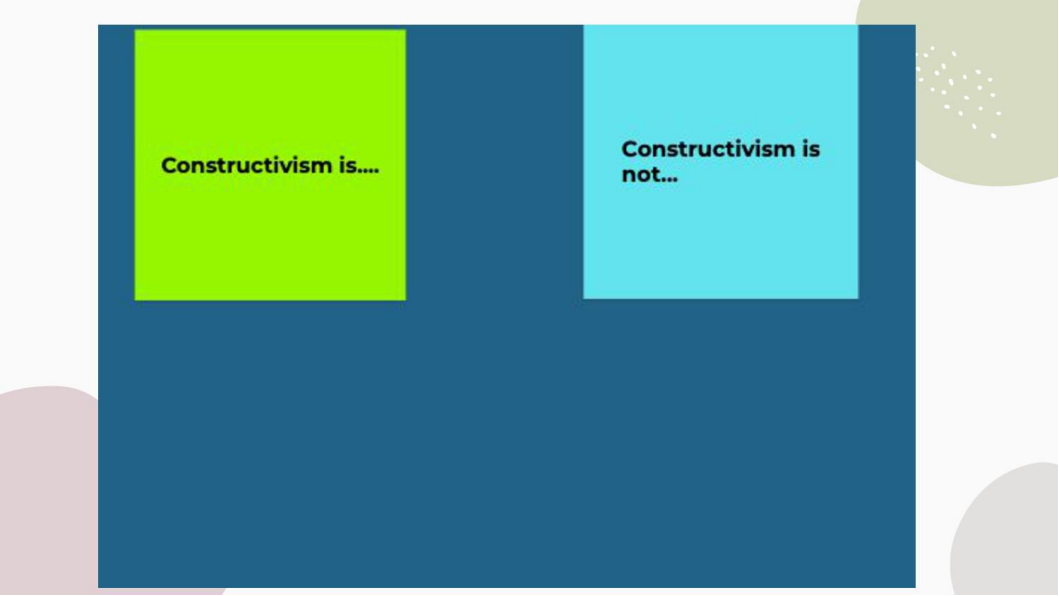
- Activity: Discuss the cartoon together with the group. Ask: What do you notice? What do you wonder?

- Constructivism: a child-centered educational philosophy
- Traditional classrooms: memorizing, drills, and performance scores

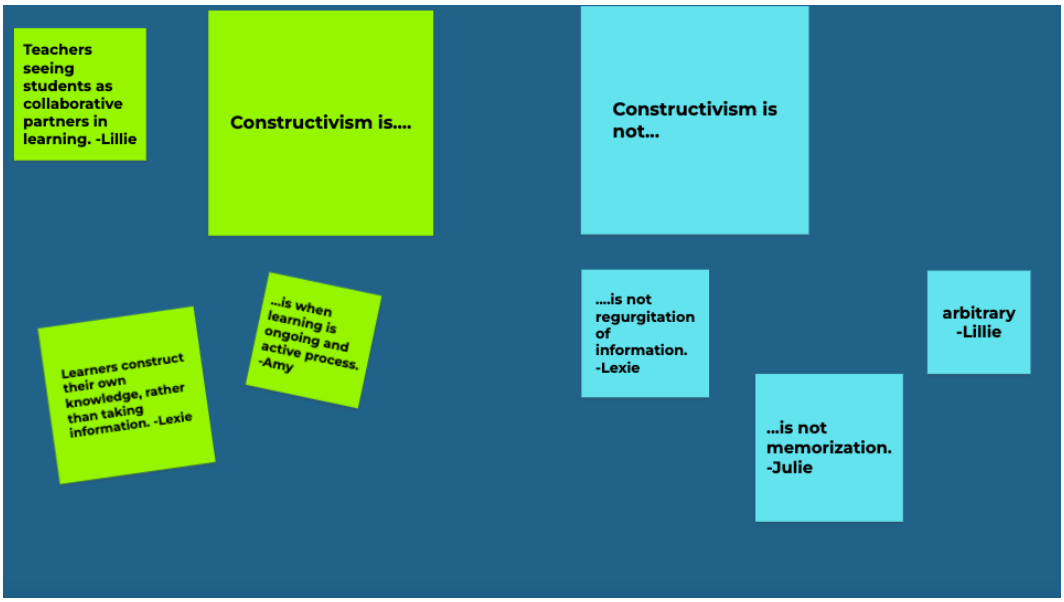


- PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: How to Construct Your Classroom With Constructivism

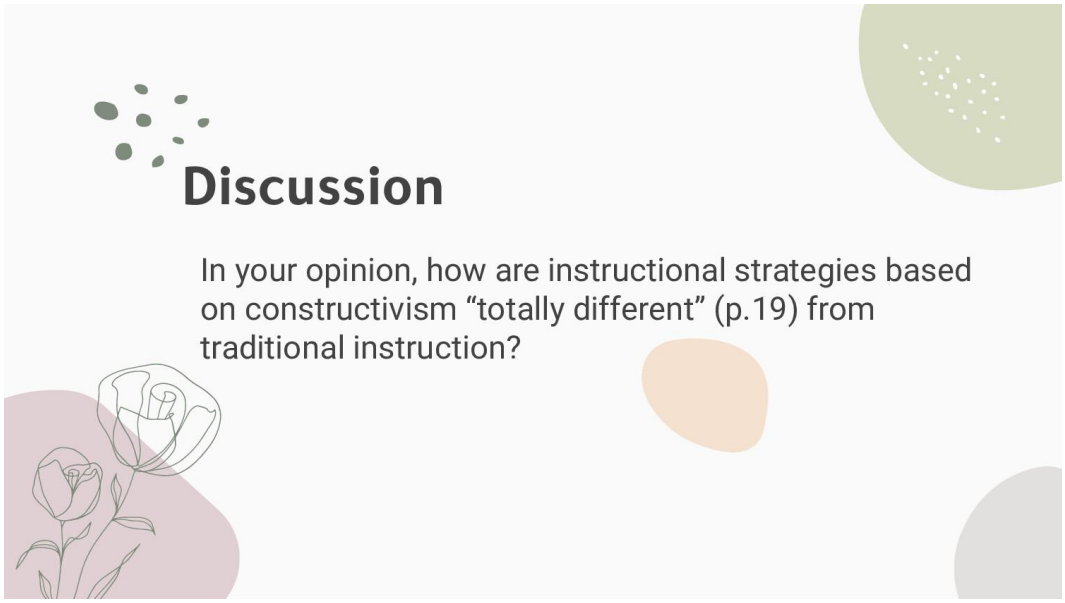
- Activity: jam board about what constructivism is and is not.
  Activity slide before group participation:



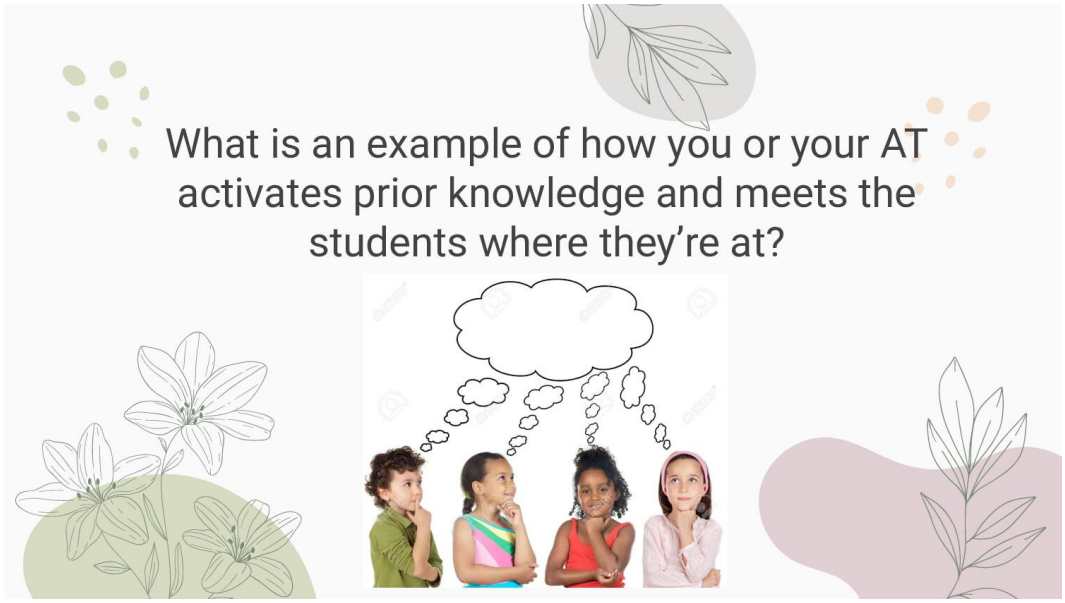
- Jam board with everyone's contributions (after discussion):



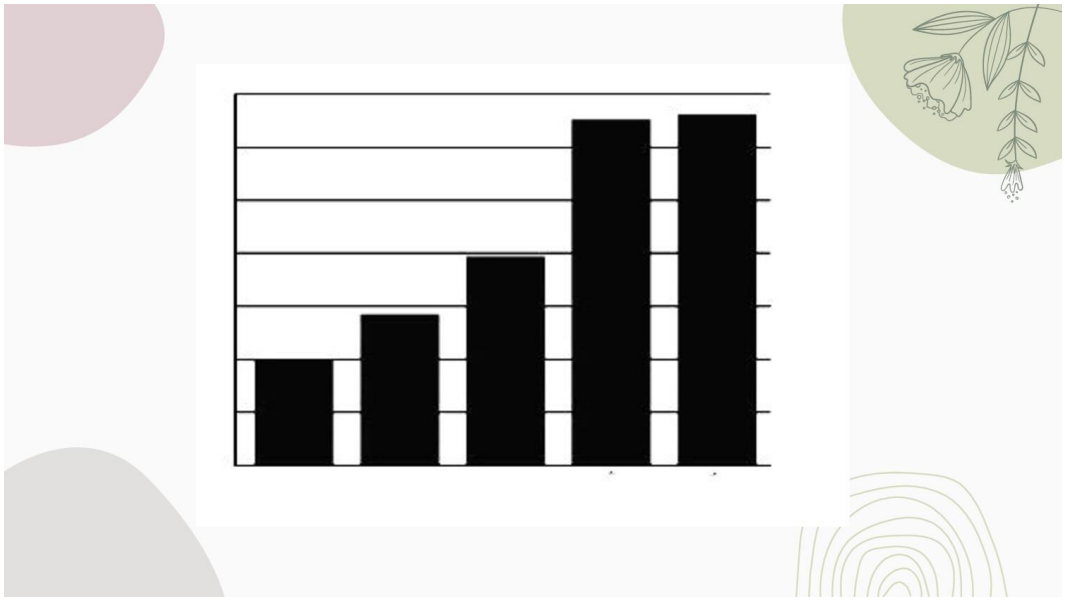
- Discussion question:



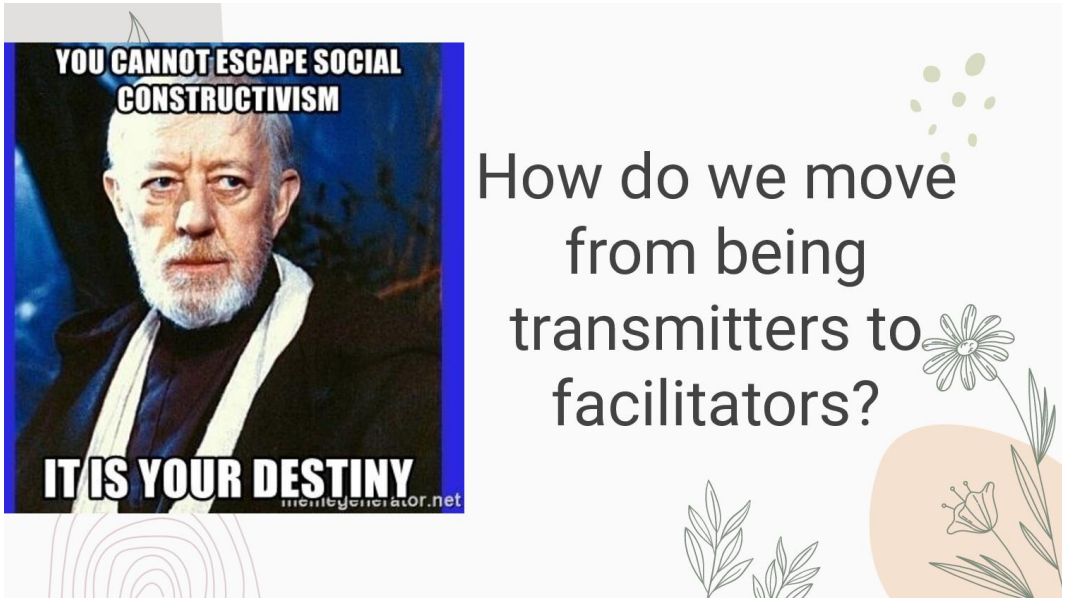
- Discussion question relating to practicum experience:

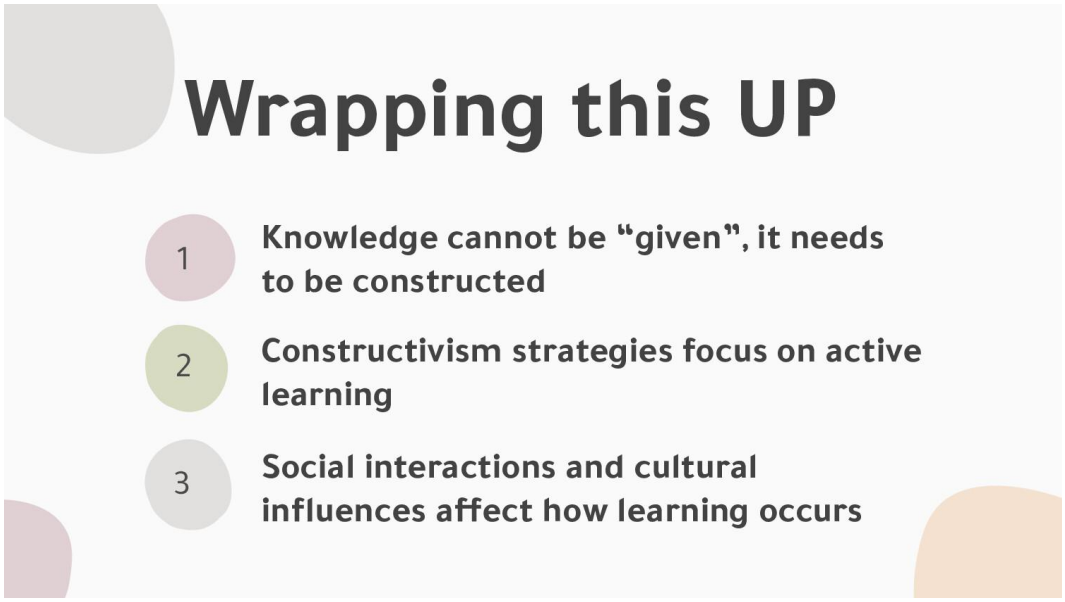


- Example of constructivist approach in action. Classroom activity: data talk (I modeled this for the group). A slow-reveal graph that activates prior knowledge and invites students to investigate and engage with the concepts as they construct their understanding. Each slide reveals more information, providing multiple entry points and building to the comprehensive idea.
  https://slowrevealgraphs.com/2021/11/29/most-eaten-cereals-in-the-us-per-week-2018/



- Closing question:




Wrapping this UP
1
Knowledge cannot be "given", it needs to be constructed
2
Constructivism strategies focus on active learning
3
Social interactions and cultural influences affect how learning occurs