Applying Constructivism in Vocational and Career Education

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by

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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—interpreting the literature in the ERIC database. This paper should be of interest to career and vocational-technical educators and graduate students.

ERIC/ACVE would like to thank Bettina Lankard Brown for her work in preparing this paper. Ms. Brown, a Program Associate at the Center on Education and Training for Employment, is the career education specialist for ERIC/ACVE. She has more than 25 years of experience in writing and designing curriculum products and instructional materials, including multimedia.

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Executive Summary

Constructivism is the theory that people learn by constructing meaning through interpretive interactions with the social environment. Constructivist perspectives are a growing influence among educators seeking to help students connect learning with life experiences, making constructivism highly relevant to vocational and career educators.

This compilation is intended to guide practitioners in using constructivist principles by—

- Describing its attributes as a philosophy and a model for practice
- Explaining assumptions, including its connection with authentic pedagogy, correlation with brain-based learning, and implications for a new teaching paradigm
- Illustrating applications in career and vocational education
- Exploring how technologies such as the Internet facilitate constructivist learning

Each section includes definition of terms and questions to guide reflection and discussion. The largest section of the paper outlines classroom activities that reflect constructivist principles. Activities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are provided.

Information on constructivism in vocational and career education may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors: Career Education, Cognitive Psychology, *Constructivism (Learning), *Integrated Curriculum, *Learning Activities, *Learning Processes, Problem Solving, Teaching Methods, Vocational Education, and the identifiers Authentic Assessment and *Contextual Learning. Asterisks indicate terms that are particularly relevant.