

Intra-relatedness of Child Personal Epistemology and the Role in Theory of Mind Development

ABSTRACT

Child personal epistemology research is uncommon and little is known about the early onset of epistemological awareness. Recent research examining connections between child epistemology and theory of mind propose that the trajectory of epistemological development be expanded to include an initial period of egocentric subjectivity that characterizes epistemological thinking prior to achievement of theory of mind. This is a qualitative pilot investigation of a preschool classroom which focuses on the interactions of children age 3-4 years-old. It uses a systems approach to social constructivist perspective, as a means of elaborating upon the significance of affect, language, and environment in early cognitive development; and how it may lead to a better understanding of subjective egocentrism as a pre-dualistic phase of epistemological development. Relationships between the child-participants and their parents, teachers, and peers are closely observed. The study utilized in-depth interviews, collaborative inquiry, and child-participant focus groups center-around the child's understanding of knowledge and the process of knowing in connection with parent and teacher epistemological beliefs. The findings resulted in a unique and innovative method of tapping these early cognitive constructs; and warrants further investigation of the relationship between child epistemology and theory of mind.