



CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH FOR LEARNER CENTRIC CLASSROOM: PROS AND CONS

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ABSTRACT

The latest catchword in educational circle is constructivism which is applied to both learning theory and epistemology. Constructivist approach to learning based on distinctly different epistemic and pedagogical assumptions than classical approaches to instructional design. Here the role of the teacher is as a facilitator who encourage learners to reflect, analyze, design and develop the process of knowledge construction and the learners are active agents who engage in own knowledge construction by integrating new information into their schema. It is mainly attributed to the work Jean Piaget. Constructivist approach contributes tow part one is advantages and second is disadvantages. In learner centred learning teacher guides student in building their own knowledge. Student actively engaged in their learning process and other side constructivist classroom difficult to break the cycle of those who have been thought in a classroom they were expected to solely absorb information. In present paper discusses the conceptual underpinning of constructivist learning approach. This paper gives a brief outline of constructivism.

Keywords- Constructivism learning, Construction, knowledge, learners.

Constructivism is a term that should be used with caution. It is widely used in many disciplines. This entry is about constructivism in education. But even in the more limited area of education, it is obvious that the term constructivism is used with very different meanings. It is used to describe learning and teaching as well as curricula and assessment. It is also used in a more philosophical or epistemological meaning. Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge isn't a thing that can be simply given by the teacher at the front of the room to students in their desks. Rather, knowledge is constructed by learners through an active, mental process of development; learners are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge. Student hypothesizes, predict, manipulate objects, pose questions, research, investigate, imagine, and invent. Constructivist teaching is based on the belief that learning occurs as learners are actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction rather than passively receiving information. Learners are the makers of meaning and knowledge. Constructivist teaching fosters critical thinking and creates motivated and independent learners. Constructivist teaching and learning by looking at the distinctive features of a constructivist programme, the qualities of a constructivist teacher, and the organization of a constructivist classroom. A constructivist teacher and classroom differ from a traditional classroom in a number of ways: the learners are interactive and student-centred; and the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous. Constructivism view that emphasizes the active role of the learners in building understanding

and making sense of information. Probably the most generally accepted principle of constructivism is that what a person knows is not passively received, but actively assembled by the learner (Jonassen, 1991). A second principle is that, the role of learning is to help the individual operate within his or her personal world (Grabe & Grabe, 2001). Rooted in the assumption that all human beings have a deep drive to make sense of the world (Carni, 1987). Based on the idea that learners construct their learning to previous learning, Limón (2001) states that research on conceptual change explored students' prior conceptions overall about scientific phenomena and instructional strategies were developed to promote conceptual change. It was Jean Piaget first who set the foundations in constructivism by stating that knowledge does not have the purpose of producing representations of an independent reality, but rather has an adaptive function (von Glasersfeld, 1996). The cornerstone of his epistemology was that cognitive development was alongside the biological development of an individual. Thus, mental functions were mainly considered as internal. The gap that constructs a "disequilibrium" between adapted and unadapted responses in activating the schemata is regarded as a means for conceptual change (Limón, 2001, Woolfolk, 2001). It is Vygotsky's sociocultural constructivism that asserts that knowledge is constructed through interactions in the social world. It abandons the traditional views, introduces a new range of theoretical departures, and values shared as opposed to individualist value investments (Gergen, 1994). In addition to the above, it provides with learning environments in which group discussion or social negotiation, inquiry, reciprocal teaching, humanistic education, computers, and hypermedia are utilised (Woolfolk, 2001).

In the view of constructivists, pupils should no longer be passive recipients of knowledge supplied by teachers and teachers should no longer be purveyors of knowledge and classroom managers. The role of the learner is conceived as one of building and transforming knowledge. For the learner to construct meaning, he must actively strive to make sense of new experiences and in so doing must relate it to what is already known or believed about the topic. Student develop knowledge through an active construction process, not through the passive reception of information. NCF, 2005 favours the role of student as an active constructor of knowledge, teacher's role as a facilitator, guide and classroom as an atmosphere for active exploration and further states that the teaching and assessment methods should be constructive.

Constructivism in Education & Learning

Constructivism is a more overarching theory, one that can incorporate a number of teaching practices, such as cooperative, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning. Constructivism is basically a theory, Based on observation and scientific study, about how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience, maybe changing what we believe, or maybe discarding the new information as irrelevant. In any case, we are active creators of our own knowledge. To do this, we must ask questions, explore, and assess what we know. In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different teaching practices. In the most general sense, it usually means encouraging students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. Constructivist teachers encourage students to constantly assess how the activity is helping them gain understanding. By questioning themselves and their strategies, students in the constructivist classroom ideally become "expert learners."

Below is a list of different methods of learning. The percentages listed represent the average amount of information that is retained through that particular learning method. Note what method produces the highest retention rate.

1. Lecture = 5%
2. Reading = 10%
3. Audiovisual = 20%
4. Demonstration = 30%
5. Discussion Group = 50%
6. Practice by doing = 75%
7. Teach others / immediate use of learning = 90%

It should also be recognized that a person's prior knowledge may help or hurt the construction of meaning. People's prior knowledge comes from their past experiences, culture, and their environment. Generally prior knowledge is good, but sometimes misconceptions and wrong information can be a hindrance. Sometimes time must be spent correcting prior knowledge before new learning can occur.

Classroom Implications of Constructivist Approaches:

In the constructivist classroom, the focus tends to shift from the teacher to the students. The classroom is no longer a place where the teacher ("expert") pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled. In the constructivist model, the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. In a classroom where constructivist ideology is followed:

- Learning experiences are provided by asking questions with adequate time for higher level thinking.
- The student is the person who creates new understanding for him/herself. The teacher coaches, moderates and suggests, but allows the students room to experiment, ask questions, and try things that don't work. Learning activities require the students' full participation (like hands-on experiments). An important part of the learning process is that students reflect on, and talk about, their activities. Students also help set their own goals and means of assessment.
- Generating abstract concept through the use of primary sources and through manipulative and interactive materials.
- Students control their own learning process, and they lead the way by reflecting on their experiences. This process makes them experts of their own learning. The teacher helps create situations where the students feel safe questioning and reflecting on their own processes, either privately or in group discussions. The teacher should also create activities that lead the student to reflect on his or her prior knowledge and experiences. Talking about what was learned and how it was learned is really important.
- The constructivist classroom relies heavily on collaboration among students. There are many reasons why collaboration contributes to learning. The main reason it is used so much in constructivism is that students learn about learning not only from themselves, but also from their peers. When students review and reflect on their learning processes together, they can pick up strategies and methods from one another.
- The main activity in a constructivist classroom is solving problems. Students use inquiry methods to ask questions, investigate a topic, and use a variety of resources to find solutions and answers. As students explore the topic, they draw conclusions, and, as exploration continues, they revisit those conclusions. Exploration of questions leads to more questions.
- Students have ideas that they may later see were invalid, incorrect, or insufficient to explain new experiences. These ideas are temporary steps in the integration of knowledge. For instance, a child may believe that all trees lose their leaves in the fall, until she visits an evergreen forest. Constructivist teaching takes into account students' current conceptions and builds from there.

Roles of the learner

Constructivist Classroom is a Student-Centred Classroom. The student-centeredness of a constructivist classroom is clearly apparent in a reader response approach to literature. Recognizing the significance of the unique experiences that each reader brings to the reading of a selection of literature, the teacher in a response-centred approach seeks to explore the transaction between the student and the text to promote or extract a meaningful response (Rosenblatt, 1978). This places the student in a central position in the classroom since exploring this transaction seems unlikely to occur unless the teacher is willing to relinquish the traditional position of sole authority, thereby legitimating the unique experiences that all members of the class bring to the reading rather than just those experiences the teacher brings. The resulting perception and effect in the classroom is evident in students' recognition that the discussion is a legitimate one involving questions to which nobody knows the answer. It isn't a treasure hunting game where they are trying to guess what is in their teacher's head, but a process that creates meaning and knowledge. Where the student is perceived as meaning-maker, teacher-centred, text-centred and skills-oriented approaches to literature instruction are replaced by more student-centred approaches where

processes of understanding are emphasized. Constructivist student-centred approach places more focus on students learning than on teachers teaching. A traditional perspective focuses more on teaching. From a constructivist view, knowing occurs by a process of construction by the knower.

Roles of the Teacher

The role of the teacher in constructivist teaching method is, watching, listening, asking questions and having the ability to observe and listen to one's students and their experiences in the classroom. Constructivist teacher offers his or her students options and choices in their work. Rejecting the common practice of telling students what to do, he or she engages their trust and invites them to participate in a constructivist process that allows them to be involved in decisions about their learning. Students actively involved in their own learning are a vital reality in a constructivist classroom. Students may participate in the construction of the curriculum by negotiating the themes that will be the focus of their work along with the selection of literature from a predetermined range of literature. Students may also participate in the design of their assignments, although the parameters for these may be established by their teacher. Finally, students may have some involvement in the way their assignments are evaluated.

Pros & cons of a learner centric approach

Pros & cons of a learner centric approach has been given below-

Pros of Constructivist approach:

Each person in the world builds their own knowledge focuses on student - centred learning-

- Teacher guides students in building their own knowledge. Students actively engaged in their learning process.
- Students learn more, enjoyably and are more likely to retain learning.
- Students learn how to think and understand, it is a transferable skill to other settings.
- Students have ownership of their own learning.
- It applies natural curiosity to real world situations.
- Promotes social and communication skill within a group setting.

Cons of Constructivist approach:

- Teaching from a constructivist perspective is more time consuming and places higher demand of learners as compared to a typical lecture format.
- Lack of teacher preparation for constructivist classroom difficult to break the cycle of those who have been taught in a classroom where they were expected to solely absorb information.
- Constructivism is not the only orientation to learning that you will ever need.
- Summative assessment is conducted at the completion of any particular content or after a certain time it is obvious that it fails to contribute in construction of knowledge and even it cannot address the individual needs. it cannot evaluate the construction of knowledge properly.

Conclusion

Constructivism believes in invention, construction and generation of the knowledge. Constructivism emphasis that every child has his/ her own style of learning. Constructivism is an idea that not every teacher will use, but they not should at least consider it. The idea of building knowledge of prior is a technique that done properly, can enhance the learning of the students dramatically while at the same time making it more interesting due to the fact the teacher does not have repeating the same information over and over.

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