

Constructivism : A Sparkling Approach

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ABSTRACT : *Teaching and learning is an infinite process. The process takes change by the time as according to the need of learner himself and societal needs. Now-a-days there is a vogue of using experiences in learning. The approach which is related to using experiences and correlate them with ones daily life is known as constructivism. Constructivist learning is based on students' active participation in problem solving and critical thinking. It is affected by many school of ideas like Pragmatism, Existentialism and Reconstructionism with minor differences. It is a natural process of teaching and learning where teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment all revolves round the reality. It affects learners, social, psychological and emotional aspects to full extent. It is helpful in learning without burden. The purpose of this approach is to learn and teach happily and practically.*

KEYWORDS : *Learning without burden, Existence of individuality and Constructivism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is the reality of the world that it changes. As the world changes all the process of education also changed. It is the education through which we can know the world in real terms. Changes affects the epistemology, metaphysics and logics of learning. The materialistic development of world bring changes in all spheres of life. When we go through in the history of Indian Education we can understand that in the Vedic, Buddhist and Medieval period the teacher was at the centre point. All the decisions related to teaching and learning was taken by the teacher. In the reign of British things turned to change. Now this pious profession takes a face of occupation. At this time slightly materialism pierced this profession. After Independence various committees were organized to enhance the quality of education. Many approaches applied in teaching – learning. For instance Montessori, Kindergarten and Project Method were famous among them. In the 21st century the era of globalization again changed this world. As a result the educational process also changed as according to that. This leaves some positive and negative effects on education. Explosion of knowledge with inappropriate attitude of learning make learning uneasy and a burden. Various kinds of recommendations have been given by experts to make learning easy and mentally healthy. Now in this series everyone focusing on use of experiences of learners by the learners themselves and the theory which unfold itself all the process of how to utilize experiences of learner is known as Constructivism.

Constructivism is a theory focused on basically teaching and learning process. It is based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. It says that learner construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences.

When learners grasp something new they have to reconcile it with their previous ideas, experiences and knowledge may be changing what they believe or may be discarding the new information as irrelevant. In any case learners are active creators of their own knowledge. Constructivism is the label which defines learning falls between cognitive and humanistic views. Like behaviourism it does not treat mind as a black box but it emphasizes the activity of mind in the process of assimilation and accommodation.

Influence on Constructivism

There are audacious views of three proponents upon constructivism as follows :

- 1- John Dewey
- 2- Jean Piaget
- 3- Von Glen Vygotsky

John Dewey emphasized the place of experiences in learning. Next one is Jean Piaget who gave two terms assimilation and accommodation in learning process. He was the psychologist having view that children's minds were not hollow boxes but actively processed the material with which they ere presented and the last one who influenced this approach is Von Glen Vygotslay. Vygotslay gave theory of the ' Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). Simply he was in favour of stretching the experiences of learner.

Except above three there are also other educationists and psychologists who influenced constructivism but these three are the torch bearers of constructivism.

Difference of Constructivism among Pragmatism, Exstentialism And Re-constructionism

This is much influenced by Pragmatism, Existentialism and Re-constructionism but there are slightly difference which cited followingly:-

3.1 Pragmatism :- John Dewey is the main proponent of Pragmatism. He audaciously favours experiences in education. This philosophy believes that values and truth are changeable as the human experiences changed. Pragmatists believe a reasonable and logical way of doing things or of thinking about problems that is based in dealing with specific situations instead of on ideas and theories. Meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical bearings that the function of thought is to guide action and that truth is pre-eminently to be tested by the practical consequences of belief.

Constructivism is richly affected by pragmatism but the pragmatists reject pre-determined ideas and values where as constructivists focused on pre-determined existed ideas. Constructivists are in favour of extension of pre-existed ideas. Pragmatists neglects the spiritual values where as constructivists believes it as a source of happiness of soul.

3.2 Existentialism :- Existentialists believe in “existence precedes essence”. Existentialism focuses on essence. It is infinitely harder to define the essence of a person specially the essence of one individual versus the essence of another. People change over time and despite those changes maintain they are the same person. A person can choose to be an artist and be remarkably bad at it but existentialism says they didn't lack the essence of an artist. They just choose for their own essence to be that of an artist; albeit a bad one. Another person could have the capacity and talent to be a brilliant artist but instead chooses to never do art.

In this way we can say that existentialists focus on essence of an individual where as constructivists focus on the experiences of an individual. So there is a difference of experience and essence in both the philosophies. An individual gains experiences consciously but his essence is something inherited since birth. An individual's essence is helpful in selection of subjects or occupations but experiences can make successful in that particular chosen area.

3.3 Reconstructionism :- Reconstructionism regards school as a vanguard. It also believes in experiential learning. It can be considered as a sub category of pragmatism. It is in favour of projects method. Projects should be related to social problems. Their purpose is that learners have to think about local, national and international issues.

In constructivism projects are held to incorporate learners potential and experiences and through projects the purpose is of enhancement and exposure of individuals experiences. But in reconstructionism the purpose is to solve social issues and make learners aware of the social issues and use individual experiences to solve social problems in different ways.

II. CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE CLASSROOM

Constructivism works a lot for active learning. Constructivists put the learner at the centre point. Here the role of teacher and curriculum is not less important as teachers and curriculum are helpful for the expansion of experiences and connecting the new experiences with the prior ones. In the constructivist classroom three main activities are done :-

- a- Exposure of new experiences
- b- Expansion of experiences
- c- Connection of new experiences with prior ones.

In the constructivist classrooms all these three activities perform in their full zone. Constructivist classrooms incorporate a learning process wherein the student gains their own conclusions through the creative aid of the teacher as a facilitator. The best way to plan teacher worksheets, lesson – plans and study skills for students is to create a curriculum which allows each student to solve problems while the teacher monitors and flexibility guides the students to the correct answer. By encouragement of critical thinking learners themselves explore their information with the discussions and interactions to other students instead of relying passively on others information. Hands – on activities are the best for the classroom application of constructivism critical thinking and learning. Through details of constructivist teacher, student, curriculum and assessment constructivist classroom can easily be understood.

4.1 Teacher In The Constructivist Classroom : In constructivist classroom teacher plays a role of “guide on the side”. Teachers' play a role of facilitator in constructivist classroom. Classrooms are being seen as places where ‘inquiry and co – construction as well as other forms of student centred, discourse – based interactions dominate’. (Holt – Reynolds 2000, p. 21)

Teacher's first attempt should be to give time to students to reflect their learning and what they're doing and critical thinking about what it is they're doing and saying. For the enhancement of confidence teacher should create small groups of learners in which learners were encouraged to get in touch with their own thinking and share what they were thinking. Teacher should be alert for keen observation of students so that he may be get familiar with each child and their learning progress. Careful observation provides appropriate learning assistance. Teachers should be more patient with the students, giving them time to say what they wanted to say. Even when they were not sure what was meant, their responses should encouraged by the teachers. The teachers also used no blame to give students a second chance to respond more appropriately. In such situation child accept the responsibility for what he had done. Teachers need to teach students more about the learning process and enable students to get to know themselves as learners. This is the role of reflection.

A constructivist teacher will begin a lesson by asking students to recall what they already know about the subject. Then they will involve students in an activity that will make them beyond what they currently know. Teachers' guidance is an essential dimension of constructivist classroom.

4.2 Student In The Constructivist Classroom : A very famous quote by Carl Sagan (1934 – 1966) “When you make the finding yourself - even if you're the last person on earth to see the light you'll never forget it.” as it is known that constructivism is a student centered approach where teachers transfer knowledge to students regarding techniques and strategies and students are expected to develop those skills through practice and experience. In the constructivist classroom a student perform following activities :-

- a- Constructing
- b- Experimenting
- c- Practicing
- d- Summarizing And Reading
- e- Conducting Research And Analysis
- f- Articulating (writing, drawing)

It focuses on “independent learning student centred empowering model” instead of “old talking head, teacher centered, passive student model”. Students undertake all sorts of research from a variety of resources – newspaper, articles, and interviews with experts, books and videos to solve their problems. Just as detectives need more than one type of evidence to solve a crime students can use multiple tools (computer, texts, interviews etc.) to approach a problem. Students need colleagues and mentors for discussion, reflection and dispute to help them work through solutions to their problems. Students learn from their own experiences and doings learners grasp new knowledge connecting with their experiences.

4.3 Curriculum In The Constructivist Classroom : In constructivist classroom a thematic interdisciplinary curriculum that presents a larger picture is more recognizable and more meaningful than are isolated facts. According to constructivism, learning is the result of individual mental construction whereby the learner learns by matching “new” against “given” information. It emphasized on integrated curriculum that provides physical moral and intellectual training firmly based on concrete experiences. It is based on the process of internal organization of knowledge and understanding is important in transformational change. Constructivists viewed curriculum with developmental perspectives not from learning perspective only.

Constructivists include dialogues and conversational type of content. It enhance social skills also which is the base of social constructivism and backbone of cognitive constructivism. Curriculum should be set in a way that it includes activities, projects and open ended questionnaire. Curriculum includes content of activities like brain – storming, concept mapping, quizzes, puzzles, think – pair – share activities, group activities and group games. Curriculum should involve situation cognition, anchored instruction, apprenticeship learning, problem based learning, generative learning, constructionism and exploratory learning curriculum should include three principles given by Vygotsky (1978) :-

- a- Skills which the student can not perform.
- b- Skills which the student may be able to perform.
- c- Skills that the student can perform with help.

So we can say that constructivism focused on skill based curriculum and activities that engaged students. These activities are helpful in utilizing experiences in practical way.

4.4 Assessment In The Constructivist Classroom : Assessment in the constructivism goes through the non judgemental questioning. The teacher leads the student to construct new understanding and acquire new skills. The believers of constructivists approach believe that assessment should be used as a tool to enhance both the students' learning and the teacher's understanding of the student's current understanding. This intention or purpose of assessment should not be such to feel some students good and others to give up. Following principles guide the assessment process of constructivism :-

For assessment teachers must frame questions using words like “classify”, “analyze”, “predict” and “create” etc.

Constructivist teachers allow a waiting time after posing questions.

Constructivist teachers encourage and accept student autonomy and initiative.

Constructivist teachers encourage students to engage in dialogue both with the teacher and with one another. The rationale and logics of dialogue are the base of assessment.

In assessment constructivist teachers seek elaboration of students initial responses.

In short we can say that “conceptual conflicts and dilemmas” “sharing ideas with others” and “arguments, discussions and debates” are the key factors of assessment in constructivism.

Teacher’s role is very important in assessment. Teacher is helpful to facilitate students to pursue their personal learning goals and to cope with their learning difficulties. In order to achieve this the teachers have to focus on students approaches to learning, study skills and strategies. Teachers are able to identify students with inappropriate study methods during interactions in the tutorial groups. Thus we can say that teachers’ wider and larger role is important in assessment.

III. CONCLUSION

Conclusively we can say that constructivism is a meta concept. Many theories influenced it. Pragmatism, existentialism, reconstructionism affected constructivism. All these schools of thought concerned to human experiences and practical life. Same as constructivism in the form of social, psychological and philosophical terms relate to human experience and life. It touches the learners social, psychological and emotional dimensions. Now-a-days it is the most recommendable teaching and learning approach. It is helpful for a learner to understand his experiences to enhance experiences to co – relate experiences with practical life. Through this approach social skills can also be inculcated in learners. Social skills means communication, skills, sympathy, attachment with others and above all to accept the experiences and ideas of others with respect and incorporate them in their own existing ideas. The ultimate aim of education “the all round development of an individual” will be achieved through this. It is constructivism where we can find use of strategic exploration of errors to strengthen the learners involvement with intentional learning processes and self feed back.

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