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CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH: AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHOD

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Abstract

Constructivism has its roots in classical antiquity, going back to 'Socrates' dialogue with his followers. In it he asked directed questions that led his students to realize for themselves the weakness in their thinking. In this century, Jean Piaget and John Dewey developed theories of childhood development and education, what we call now progressive education that led to the evolution of constructivism. It is simply a learning or meaning-making theory. Constructivism is based on the belief that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experiences. The Constructivist Approach proposes that people create their own meaning and understanding, combining what they already know and believe to be true with new experience with which they are confronted. According to constructivists, learners construct their own knowledge by participating actively in the learning process. The present paper discusses the meaning of constructivist approach. It gives the importance of constructivism. It also focuses the difference between the constructivist classroom and the traditional classroom.

Keywords: *Constructivist approach, meaning-making theory, experience, learning process, etc*

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Introduction:

Constructivism is simply a learning or meaning-making theory. It is based on the belief that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Constructivism is not a theory about teaching…. It is a theory about knowledge and learning… the theory defines knowledge as temporary developmental, socially and critically mediated, and thus non-objective," (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). When learners encounter something new, they reconcile it with previous knowledge and experience. According to the constructivist approach, learning is an interaction between the learners and the learning environment. During this interaction, prior knowledge is used as a basis to interpret and construct new knowledge. Learning occurs if a student can construct his or her knowledge and apply or generalize its meaning to new situations. (Panigrahi S.C., 2005)

> 'Knowledge, no matter how it be defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience'. (Von Glaserfeld, 1995)

Constructivism can only be understood through ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to the issues concerning the nature of being and seeks to answer the questions. What is being? What is the nature of reality? Is there a reality? Idealism, a branch of ontology, views reality as something that can only exists in ideas or ideals. Plato stated that perfect, unchanging, universal ideas compose reality but that the visible, external world of object is just a shadow of these ideas. Epistemology, the second philosophical root of constructivism pertains to the origin, foundation, limits and validity of knowledge. Epistemology deals with the transmission of knowledge. Central questions of epistemology are: What is knowledge? Where does the knowledge come from? How much does the knower contribute to the knowing process? (EDUTRACKS, 2013, Vol.12, No.10 **)**

The Constructivist Approach proposes that people create their own meaning and understanding, combining what they already know and believe to be true with new experience with which they are confronted. According to constructivists, learners construct their own knowledge by participating actively in the learning process. Constructivism is an outgrowth of cognitive science. It is a movement that combines cognition from a developmental perspective

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with other important issues, such as motivation, self-directed learning and a focus on the social context of learning.

Constructivism has two main aspects. First, learning is a process of knowledge construction instead of absorption. According to constructivists learning requires the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction. Second, knowledge is highly related to the environment in which the learner experiences and constructs the knowledge. Therefore, constructivists emphasize cognitive experience in authentic activities. Another second main aspect of constructivism is similar to situated learning. The recommendation of constructivism is to engage students in building objects. Constructivism is currently an influential view on learning. As Von Glaserfeld says, "the term constructivism has become fashionable in recent years" (Von Glaserfeld, 1994) .

The constructivist revolution has brought new conceptions of learning and teaching. The catchword "Constructivism" applied both to learning theory and epistemology The constructivist revolution offers a new vision of the learner as an active sense-maker and suggests new methods of instruction. The constructivist approach allows the learners to have more control over their own learning, to think critically and to work collaboratively.

Importance of Constructivist Approach

Educational curricula and teaching methods are changing from the transmission curriculum to a transactional curriculum. In a traditional curriculum, a teacher transmits information to students who passively listen and acquire facts. In a transactional curriculum, students are involved actively in their learning to reach new understandings. Learning in all subject areas involves inventing and constructing new ideas. (EDUTRACKS, 2013, Vol.12, No.10) Constructivist teaching fosters critical thinking and creates active and motivated learners. Constructivist approach must be used to create learners who are inquisitive thinkers and autonomous. It must free teachers to make decisions which will enhance and enrich students' development in these areas. Jonassen (1991) states that many educators and cognitive psychologists applied constructivism to the development of learning environments. (Jonassen D. 1991, pp. 28-33)

The Constructivist Classroom

In the constructivist classroom, teacher encourages students to use active techniques to create more knowledge and reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. The constructivist teacher provides tools such as problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities with which students formulate and test their ideas, draw conclusions. Constructivism transforms the students from a passive recipient of information to an active participant in the learning process. Students construct their knowledge actively rather than mechanically. 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 pours knowledge into the passive students.

Constructivist Classroom and Traditional Classroom:

Teaching, learning, and environment in constructivist classrooms are different from those of traditional classrooms. In constructivist classrooms, the teachers embrace the notion that learners make sense of the language by combining prior knowledge with new experience

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
1. Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole. Emphasizes basic skills.	1. Curriculum emphasizes beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts.
2. Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks.	2. Materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials.
3. Learning is based on repetition.	3. Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows.
4. Teacher disseminates information to students, students are recipients of knowledge.	4. Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge.
5. Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority.	5. Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation.
6. Learning within the four walls of the classroom.	6. Learning in the wider social context.
7. Knowledge is seen as inert.	7. Knowledge is dynamic, ever changing with our experiences.
8. Students work primarily alone.	8. Students work primarily in groups.
9. Teacher centric, stable design	9. Learner centric, flexible design.
10. Linear exposure of student.	10. Multiple and divergent exposure
11. Assessment is through testing, correct answers.	11. Assessment includes student's works, observations, and point of view, as well as tests.

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Conclusion:

The Constructivist Approach focuses on ideas as the evidence of knowledge occurs only within humans who construct their own reality. Constructivist learning environment covers negotiation, task analysis, developing multiple perspectives, based on three common elements as context, collaboration and construction. It relies on the concept of a learner-centered learning environment.

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