

Constructivism Philosophy for Bringing Quality in Education

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Abstract—Educational institutions are the treasures of knowledge. They are the agents of social change and transformation. The only mission of any institution of higher education must be the pursuit of 'knowledge' in its best form and spirit. The demand for competent and skilled workforce in national and international markets is on rise. Educational quality is highly influenced by the learning experiences gained during the teaching learning process, which is based on the psychology of learner. Constructivism is a philosophical viewpoint about the nature of knowledge. Constructivist teaching is based on constructivist learning theory. Constructivist teaching is based on the belief that learning occurs as learners are actively involved in the process of meaning and knowledge construction as opposed to passively receiving information. Learners are the makers of meaning and knowledge. In order to improve the quality of education, reformers advocate a move away from traditional, teacher centred, direct instruction, where students are passive receptors of knowledge, towards more student-centred understanding- based (Constructivist) teaching that focusses on exploration and experimentation and reinforces lifelong learning skills.

Keywords: Knowledge, constructivism, transformation, quality.

Today, as we emphasised our consideration on giving quality education to students in our schools, we find a model shift taking place in the basic process of education- from 'teaching to learn' to 'helping to know'. Now, we have not only realised the limits of traditional learning but started looking for better ways of ensuring learning through effective ways of teaching. The knowledge is required to take place within the individual, if understanding is not to be seen as a product to be acquired through transmission/deposit, but as a subjective experience. Students produce their own understanding in the process of understanding when they come across with actuality involving objects, persons and events. This is constructivist model which is based on the hypothesis that understanding is personal, circumstantial and partial and students make understanding in public and educational environment which they are surrounded. (Dwivedi, 2010).

Constructivism is a viewpoint of learning created on the ground that by making a reflection on our experience, we make our own meaning of the world in which we live. In this philosophy, learner makes use of his senses and constructs

understanding out of it. No direct guidance by the teacher is given to students while making use of constructivist learning approach in the classroom. In order to improve the quality of education, atmosphere is given to the students where there is minimal interference by the teacher and maximum opportunity is given to the students to envision, articulate, define, explain, understand, and relate the knowledge in given circumstances. The role of teacher in constructivist classroom is to prompt and in smoothening discussion process. Therefore, in constructivism classroom, the main focus of the teacher should be on directing students by asking them about queries so that this will help them to form their own viewpoints and inferences on the issue. Parker J. Palmer (1997) suggests that good teachers join self, subject, and students in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self, they manifest in their own lives, and evoke in their students, a capacity for connectedness".

Constructivist Learning Process

Constructivist philosophy rely on the fact that previous understanding of the concepts effects the learning practice. In order to solve new problems, similarities between present knowledge and a novel situation can recap people of what they know by this time. This is often one's first style for finding solution to new problems. Knowledge that is not linked with student's previous understandings will be rapidly gone. In short, the students must enthusiastically create new figures into his or her prevailing mental structure for significant learning to happen.

Curriculum transaction in constructivist paradigm

Constructivism offers a novel theory of learning and teaching. This theory calls for a major change from teacher-centered approach of instruction to student-centered understanding based teaching.

Constructivist Curriculum

A constructively oriented curriculum presents an evolving plan based on what children know, what they are confused by, and the teachers' learning goals. In constructivist curriculum, the individual learner has a significant part in defining what

will be learned. The teacher decides with the others as to what learning is significant, beneficial and essential to learners.

Constructivist Teaching

Constructivism is created on the faith that students dynamically generate, understand and distinguish knowledge in individual ways. The teaching method based on this faith, recommends that learners should take participation in practices that uses these ways of learning. Such experiences include inquiry activities, discovery, problem solving, discussion with peers and teachers, collecting and interpreting information from different sources, expressing their understanding in different ways, etc. Teachers should provide trustworthy learning situations, complex learning environments and facilitate discussions.

Constructivist Assessment

Traditional teachers lay emphasis too much on marks/grades and the situation secured by a student in the classroom. The methodology of testing in this pattern was developed to decide whether student could reproduce actualities and determine accurate answers to problems. The student understanding is judged against the test constructor's awareness. From a constructivist viewpoint, evaluation of student learning should not be mediated on whether student can solve the problems posed with a worthwhile solution.

Characteristics

The main purpose of constructivist teaching is that learners learn how to learn by providing them the exercise by making reflection on their own learning involvements.

According to Audrey Gray, the features of a constructivist classroom are as follows:

- There is an active involvement of the learners.
- Democratic environment is given to the students
- The activities are organized by keeping the child in centre i.e. emphasis on child centered-approach.
- the teacher provides an environment where the students are given encouragement to be accountable and independent

In the constructivist teaching –learning process, there is an emphasis on working in groups and knowledge and understanding are collaborating and active. There is an excessive emphasis on societal and communication skills, as well as teamwork and sharing of ideas. This is in opposition to the old-fashioned classroom where learners work mostly alone, learning is achieved through replication, and where the textbooks are given more importance. It lacks students focused learning, lacks emphasis on critical thinking, lacks process oriented learning and also lacks interactivity. There are some actions which are encouraged while making use of

constructivist approach in teaching-learning process. Some of these activities are discussed as under:

- **Emphasis on experimentation in learning:**

In this approach, an experiment is performed individually by the students and then they together discuss the results in the class.

- **Discussion of the findings of problem:**

Learners make a research on a problem and can discuss the findings of the research in the class.

- **Excursions:**

This helps the learners to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context. Field trips would often be followed by class discussions.

- **Discussions in classrooms:**

This method is used in all of the techniques which are discussed above. It is one of the most important feature of constructivist teaching procedures.

- **Role-playing –**

Role playing is also an important technique in constructivist approach. In this approach, all the students have to play different roles and this helps in deep understanding of concepts.

Major tenets of Constructivist Learning and Teaching

- There is a central role of students in learning process.
- Goals and objectives are determined by the student or in cooperation with the teacher or system.
- Construction of knowledge is and not reproduction is stressed.
- Knowledge construction takes place in individual contexts and through social cooperation, teamwork and involvement.
- The previous knowledge of the learners and attitudes are emphasized in the knowledge construction process.
- Problem solving, higher order thinking skills and deep understanding are emphasized
- Multiple perspectives and representations of concepts and contents are presented and encouraged
- Collaborative and cooperative learning are favoured in order to expose the students to alternative viewpoints
- Importance is given to the primary sources of information in order to ensure genuineness and real world complications.

- Learning is a search for meaning. Therefore, learning must start with the issues around which students are actively trying to construct meaning.
- The purpose of learning is for an individual to construct his or her own meaning, not just memorize the right answers.

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that in order to improve the quality of education, there is a need to shift from traditional teaching-learning process to constructivist approach of teaching-learning. It is important that teaching must not merely accommodate the constructivist viewpoint, it should also support the creation of powerful learning environments that enhance the value of the underlying epistemological ideologies.

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