

## Constructive Approach in Teaching Commerce

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### Abstract

Constructivism is a theory to explain how knowledge is constructed in the human being when information comes into contact with existing knowledge that had been developed by experiences. It has its roots in cognitive psychology and biology and an approach to education that lays emphasis on the ways knowledge is created in order to adapt to the world. Constructs are the different types of filters we choose to place over our realities to change our reality from chaos to order.

John Dewey believed education must engage with and expand experience; those methods used to educate must provide for exploration, thinking, and reflection; and that interaction with the environment is necessary for learning; also, that democracy should be upheld in the educational process. Dewey advocates the learning process of experiential learning through real life experience to construct and conditionalize knowledge, which is consistent with the Constructivists.

"Scientific observation has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment, and then refraining from obtrusive interference.

Montessori's beliefs are consistent with the Constructivists in that she advocates a learning process which allows a student to experience an environment first-hand, thereby, giving the student reliable, trust-worthy [conditional zed] knowledge.

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This summary report examines 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 a constructivist classroom are distinguished from a traditional teacher and classroom by a number of identifiable qualities: the learners are actively involved; the environment is democratic; the activities are interactive and student-centered; and the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous.

### Why Is Constructivism Important in teaching:

Educational curricula and teaching methods are changing. One component of the current redevelopment of all subject area curricula is the change in focus of instruction 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 actively involved in their learning to reach new understandings.

Constructivist teaching fosters critical thinking and creates active and motivated learners. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993) tell us that learning in all subject areas involves inventing and constructing new ideas. They suggest that constructivist theory be incorporated into the curriculum, and advocate that teachers create environments in which children can construct their own understandings . Twomey Fosnot (1989) recommends that a constructivist approach be used to create learners who are autonomous, inquisitive thinkers who question, investigate, and reason. A constructivist approach frees teachers to make decisions that will enhance and enrich students' development" in these areas. These are goals that are consistent with those stated by Saskatchewan Education in the the 1984 government report, Directions, that launched the restructuring of Saskatchewan's curricula. This demonstrates that constructivism is evident in current educational change.

## **The role of the instructor**

### **Instructors as facilitator**

According to the [social constructivism](#) approach, instructors have to adapt to the role of facilitators and not teachers (Bauersfeld, 1995). Whereas a teacher gives a [didactic](#) lecture that covers the subject matter, a facilitator helps the learner to get to his or her own understanding of the content. In the former scenario the learner plays a passive role and in the latter scenario the learner plays an active role in the learning process. A teacher tells, a facilitator asks; a teacher lectures from the front, a facilitator supports from the back; a teacher gives answers according to a set curriculum, a facilitator provides guidelines and creates the environment for the learner to arrive at his or her own conclusions; a teacher mostly gives a monologue, a facilitator is in continuous dialogue with the learners (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999). A facilitator should also be able to adapt the learning experience 'in mid-air' by taking the initiative to steer the learning experience to where the learners want to create value.

A few strategies for cooperative learning include

- Reciprocal Questioning: students work together to ask and answer questions
- Jigsaw Classroom: students become "experts" on group project and teach it to the others in their group
- Structured Controversies: Students work together to research a particular controversy.

A further characteristic of the role of the facilitator in the social constructivist viewpoint, is that the instructor and the learners are equally involved in learning from each other as well (Holt and Willard-Holt 2000). This means that the learning experience is both subjective and objective and requires that the instructor's culture, values and background

become an essential part of the interplay between learners and tasks. Learners compare their version of the truth with that of the instructor and fellow learners to get to a new, socially tested version of truth (Kukla 2000). The task or problem is thus the interface between the instructor and the learner (McMahon 1997). This creates a dynamic interaction between task, instructor and learner.

### **The nature of the learner**

In constructivism, the type of learner is self-directed, creative, and innovative. The purpose in education is to become creative and innovative through analysis, conceptualizations, and synthesis of prior experience to create new knowledge. The educator's role is to mentor the learner during heuristic problem solving of ill-defined problems by enabling quested learning that may modify existing knowledge and allow for creation of new knowledge.

### **The Constructivist Classroom**

A constructivist teacher and a constructivist classroom exhibit a number of discernable qualities markedly different from a traditional or direct instruction classroom. A constructivist teacher is able to flexibly and creatively incorporate ongoing experiences in the classroom into the negotiation and construction of lessons with small groups and individuals. The environment is democratic, the activities are interactive and student centered, and the students are empowered by a teacher who operates as a facilitator/consultant.

Constructivist classrooms are structured so that learners are immersed in experiences within which they may engage in meaning-making inquiry, action, imagination, invention, interaction, hypothesizing and personal reflection. Teachers need to recognize how people use their own experiences, prior knowledge and perceptions, as well as their physical and interpersonal environments to construct knowledge and meaning. The goal is to produce a democratic classroom environment that provides meaningful learning experiences for autonomous learners.

### **Constructivist approach in commerce:**

In the teaching of commerce subjects constructivism can be used with the help of:-

- a. Case studies
- b. Case Problems
- c. Role Plays
- d. Class Discussions
- e. Brain Storming
- f. Projects
- g. Debates
- h. Quizzes
- i. Interaction with ex-students and people in the industry
- j. Industry visits

k. Study Tours

l. Short term courses and workshops

m. Use of open education resources and internet.

n. Films and power points.

The teachers have to be trained in the development of the software & hardware of the above methods and using them efficiently and effectively. We have seen the implications of constructivism and the tools to achieve the same. Now the question comes how the teacher can be empowered to use it in class. The teachers need training in the use of tools listed above. For this appropriate programs can be designed and administered.

**Types of Training Programmes as Proposed/Conducted by NCERT /other Institutions for Commerce Teachers:**

There are different types of training programmes designed to suit the needs of the schools and teachers.

1. **3 day programme:** - This is usually organized as an orientation programme to introduce changes in the curriculum and textbooks. The focus is to familiarise the teachers with the changes and new approach adopted in the textbooks. The number of master trainers can be 50 or so.

2. **5 day programme:** - This programme is organized with the purpose of focusing on pedagogy and content enrichment. The objective is to demonstrate new approaches of teaching along with content. This enables the teacher to be empowered with contemporary pedagogy as well as refresh content and focus on emerging areas in the discipline. This manual may be used for 5 day

programs by teacher educators, state boards/school councils dealing with higher secondary education. It consists of objectives of commerce education, commerce syllabi and textbooks, commerce, Teaching learning strategies, Transaction of themes, Principles of Management, Business Environment, Globalization, Financial System, Marketing and Consumer Protection. Some of these topics are enrichment material for teachers and some in the form of

lessons for students which can be adopted by teachers'.

3. **21 day training programme:** - This is conducted on the principle of continuing in-service education for teachers. This is also a service condition and promotion is based on teachers attending a 21 day training programme conducted by an authorized organization or university. For example Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE), SCERT, and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan conduct such training programmes for their teachers. The focus is on both

content enrichment and pedagogy. Besides content many contemporary and emerging issues are also dealt with like Peace Education, Education for Groups with special Needs, Gender issues, and many other current issues related to school education.

## CONCLUSION

Researches suggest that constructivist teaching is an effective way to teach. It encourages active and meaningful learning and promotes responsibility and autonomy. Because constructivist teaching is beneficial in achieving desirable educational goals for students, it is important for teachers to grow professionally towards a constructivist practice. What is essentially involved in constructivist strategies and activities is a process approach to learning where ideas are allowed to develop in the learner's own mind through a series of related, supportive activities; where taking risks and generating hypotheses are encouraged by postponing evaluation; and where new skills are learned in supportive instructional contexts.

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