

A Study on Evaluating the Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach of Teaching- Learning in Social Science Curriculum at Elementary Education of Assam



Rimi Borah

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Education,
Rajiv Gandhi University,
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh



P. K. Acharya

Professor,
Deptt. of Education,
Rajiv Gandhi University,
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh

Abstract

The constructivist approach as an emerging pedagogy is given impetus in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2005, (NCFSE-2005). The present paper evaluated the present status of constructivist approach among the teachers of elementary schools teaching social science at grade VIII. The sample of the study consists of 60 elementary social science teachers. The teachers are selected from two districts of Assam namely Lakhimpur and Dhemaji. The study is based on a survey conducted among the social science teachers by administering a self-developed questionnaire. The investigators had arranged the questionnaire correspond to constructivism relating to the teaching-learning of social science.

Keywords: Constructivist Approach, National Curriculum Framework, Social Science, Present Status of Constructivist Approach.

Introduction

Constructivism as the most current psychology of teaching-learning is based on the works of *Jean Piaget*, *Vygotsky* and supported and extended by contemporary biologists and cognitive scientists. The words like 'constructivist', 'constructivism' become a part of psychological lexicon in the second half of the twentieth century (*Mahoney, 2005*). The idea of constructivism has a long history, starting from the writings of *Gautam Buddha (walsh, 1999)*, *Heraclitus*, *Lau Tzu*, a contemporary of *Gautam Buddha* and Italian Philosopher *Giambattista Vico* were the contributor to the idea of constructivism. These thinkers related with the idea of constructivism have emphasized on individual perception of the reality. The founder of the modern constructivism is *Jean Piaget*, whose cognitive psychology has influenced the idea of constructivism.

Constructivism is a teaching-learning approach which has been given impetus in recent years. In the development of constructivist idea various thinkers in different age has contributed their own effort. The idea of constructivist approach asserts that, human constructs or builds knowledge on the basis of their prior ideas or experiences as a result of the human own effort to understand the reality they come into contact. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2005*, (NCFSE-2005) has brought a change on our thinking of the learner and the process of learning. The learner has been given primacy and learning is considered as a process that is continuously being conducted by the learner through his own effort. The process of learning should not be imposed on the learner but he/she should create it from the environment that comes into contact. The capacity of thinking, reasoning, sense of self and the world and the ability to represent those ideas through language is an interacting and interactive process which is important in the learning process of the learner. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2005*, (NCFSE-2005) has recommended a teaching-learning process that will support the learner to construct knowledge by connecting new ideas to existing ideas not by following any authentic authority like the teacher and the textbook. The teacher is the facilitator who encourages the learner to analyze and interpret the constructed knowledge.

Social science is the integrated study of political science, history, geography and economics at grade VIII of elementary education of Assam. In simple terms, it is a course of study at the school stage which started with the study of local community life and family, and later on the study becomes more specific and discipline based in the gradual stages of education. The grade-VIII of elementary education is the stage which is senior level of primary education that is the upper primary level of education. The social science curriculum at this level presented the differences in the life styles having people around the world, the geographical factors affecting the world population and their life, the history of national political system and the present day political system etc.

The social science curriculum is designed in consonance with the objective to provide all the necessary basic knowledge on political system, historical development, geographical conditions and socio-economic influences on human life. From the very beginning of the formal level of education, it is necessary to develop a positive social attitude among the children that remain necessary for their future life. Henceforth, the subject social science in the elementary level of education has an important role to play that makes the children think about the society they live in. The contents of social science at present are designed according to the recommendations of *National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2005*, (NCFSE-2005). The framework has also suggested on the primacy of the child in teaching-learning of social science which will arouse learners' active participation.

Learning has been considered as a repetitive activity in traditional thought of teaching-learning process. The advent of child-centered approach has brought various methods of teaching-learning to make teaching-learning more effective and interesting. Constructivist teaching approach is a radical and revolutionary teaching approach that has given utmost importance on the child and the process of his/her learning. A number of studies have been conducted by various researchers in social science and other subjects of education. In this regard studies conducted by *Muhagir (2014) on Constructivism in Education*, *Mwanda (2016) Adoption of the Constructivist Learning Approach in Secondary Schools in Kenya: Focus on learner achievement in Biology by class category*, *Chowdhury (2016), The Effectiveness of Constructivist Approach on the Achievement in Mathematics of IX Standard Students*, *Adak (2017) Effectiveness of Constructivist Approach on Academic Achievement in Science at Secondary Level* etc. These studies show that the constructivist teaching approach is better than the conventional way of teaching-learning. Henceforth, it is also important to study the status of the constructivist approach among the teachers engaged in the teaching-learning process. This will focus on the teachers' interest, awareness and their concept on the approach that helps in understanding the present status of the approach.

Social science is a theoretical subject which studies about the broader areas of human society.

The curriculum is designed with the concept, nature and some specific areas relating to the human society. The teacher of social science needs to pre plan about his/her teaching and the knowledge to be constructed by the learner by his/her own effort under his/her guidance. The constructivist approach of teaching has transferred the role of the teacher into a facilitator who only guides the children in the path of their knowledge creation. In perspective of constructivist approach, the teacher will arrange the necessary environment for the construction of knowledge in the social science classroom. In this changing environment of teaching-learning of social science in a sense the role of the teacher becomes more important where he has to supply the correct information and promote students to construct the knowledge. The teacher in this approach has to prepare the teaching-learning content based on the knowledge to be constructed by the learners. In the process of knowledge construction, the students have the chance to communicate with each other and they could conduct some group activities for gathering information. Therefore, through the use of constructivist approach in teaching-learning of social science the teacher can present a new environment in front of the student which makes them to think that social science is an interesting subject area which has importance in their life like science and mathematics. However, the effectiveness of an approach is depends on the efficiency of the teacher how he arranged the learning environment.

Objective

The objective for the present study is To study the status on the use of Constructivist Approach in VIII Grade social science curriculum of Assam.

Methodology

For the present study the investigators has adopted the following methodology to carry out the study.

Method

The survey study of descriptive method of educational research has been adopted by the investigators.

Sample of the Study

In the present study a sample of 60 teachers were selected from 60 elementary schools of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam. The teachers teaching social science at grade-VIII were selected for the study randomly from elementary schools of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji district of Assam.

Design of the Study

The investigators for investigating the present status of constructivist approach of teaching-learning has adopted descriptive cum survey method of educational research. The data for the present study were collected by using a questionnaire among the teachers teaching social science in elementary schools of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam.

Tools used

For collecting the requisite data in the present study the investigators has used self developed tool as follows.

Questionnaire to Evaluate the Present Status on the use of Constructivist Approach

In relation to the objective of the study, the questionnaire for studying the present status on the use of constructivist approach among the teachers of elementary education of Assam was developed according to some dimensions corresponding to the approach constructivism.

Statistical Techniques Used

The data collected in the present study was statically analyzed by using the following statistical techniques.

1. Descriptive statistic such as percentage analysis was done after collecting the data from the sample of the study.
2. 'Bar Diagram' for the graphical representation of the data.

Analysis and Results

In order to collect the data in tune with the objective of the study the investigators had administered a questionnaire among the selected sample teachers transacting social science curriculum at grade-VIII. The responses of the teachers has been organized and tabulated and presented with the help of table with its respective percentages as given below.

Table 1.1: Showing the Overall Responses of Teachers in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji Districts of Assam Evaluating the Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach

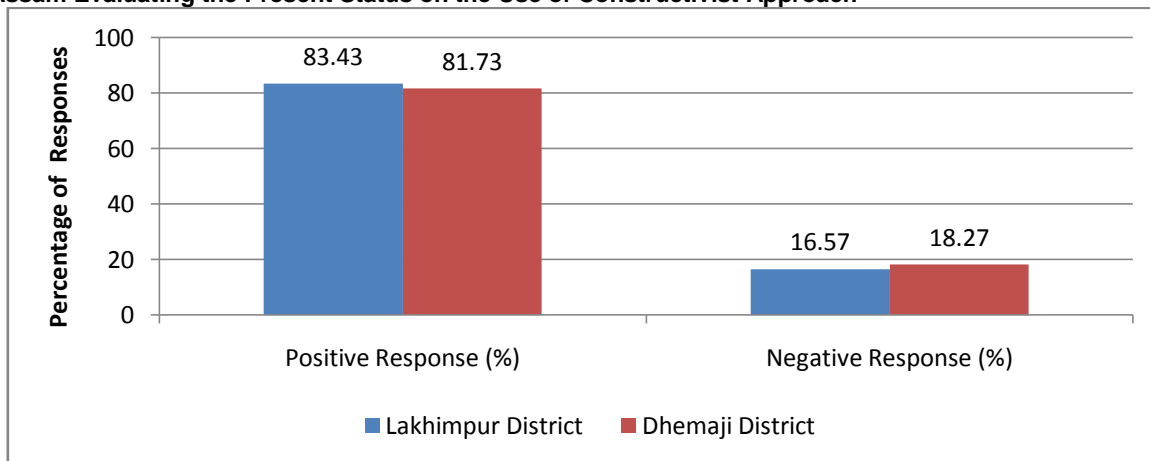
District	No. of Positive Response	Percentage of Positive Response (%)	No. of Negative Response	Percentage of Negative Response (%)
Lakhimpur	826	83.43	164	16.57
Dhemaji	662	81.73	148	18.27

An observation of the table 1.1, indicates that the teachers (83.43%) and (81.73%) of both Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts had their positive expressions that they have basic knowledge on the use of constructivism. On the other hand, the teachers (16.57%) and (18.27%) of both Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam had negative expressions that they were quite ignorant with the knowledge on constructivist approach provided at present in the elementary education of Assam.

Based on the opinion of the teachers, we can generalize that more than (82%) of the teachers in both the districts of Assam has basic idea on constructivist approach to change their teaching strategies. But, (18%) of teachers teaching social

science did not have any rudimentary knowledge and awareness on the use of constructivism in teaching-learning of social science. It is being the fact that, either the teachers were old teachers who have been for a long time in the teaching profession of schools without any interest towards the new approach of teaching-learning or absence/non-attendance of undergoing training-programmes organized by DIET's/SCERT of Assam. The old teachers were serving the last period of their teaching profession who are not interested towards training in any child-centered or other learner participatory approaches of teaching-learning.

Fig 1.1: Graphical Representation of the Overall Responses of Teachers in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji Districts of Assam Evaluating the Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach



Dimension Wise Analysis of the Responses of Elementary School Teachers of Assam on Evaluating Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach in Teaching-Learning of Social Science of Assam

The responses of the teachers on present status on the use of constructivist approach had been analyzed according to the variables determined for the questionnaire. Therefore, the researcher had tabulated those responses accordingly and presented in the following table 1.2

Table 1.2: The Responses of Elementary School Teachers of Assam to Each Dimension According to Variables on Evaluating Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach

Dimension	District	Total No of Teacher :60			
		No. of Positive Response	Percentage of Positive Response (%)	No. of Negative Response	Percentage of Negative Response (%)
Knowledge	Lakhimpur	249	83.00	51	17.00
	Dhemaji	254	84.67	46	15.33
Interest	Lakhimpur	88	97.78	2	2.22
	Dhemaji	86	95.56	4	4.44
Awareness	Lakhimpur	109	90.83	11	9.17
	Dhemaji	101	84.17	19	15.83
Willingness	Lakhimpur	160	88.89	20	11.11
	Dhemaji	160	88.89	20	11.11
Status on Useness	Lakhimpur	86	71.67	34	28.33
	Dhemaji	90	75.00	30	25.00
Training	Lakhimpur	55	61.11	35	38.89
	Dhemaji	50	55.56	40	44.44

Interpretation

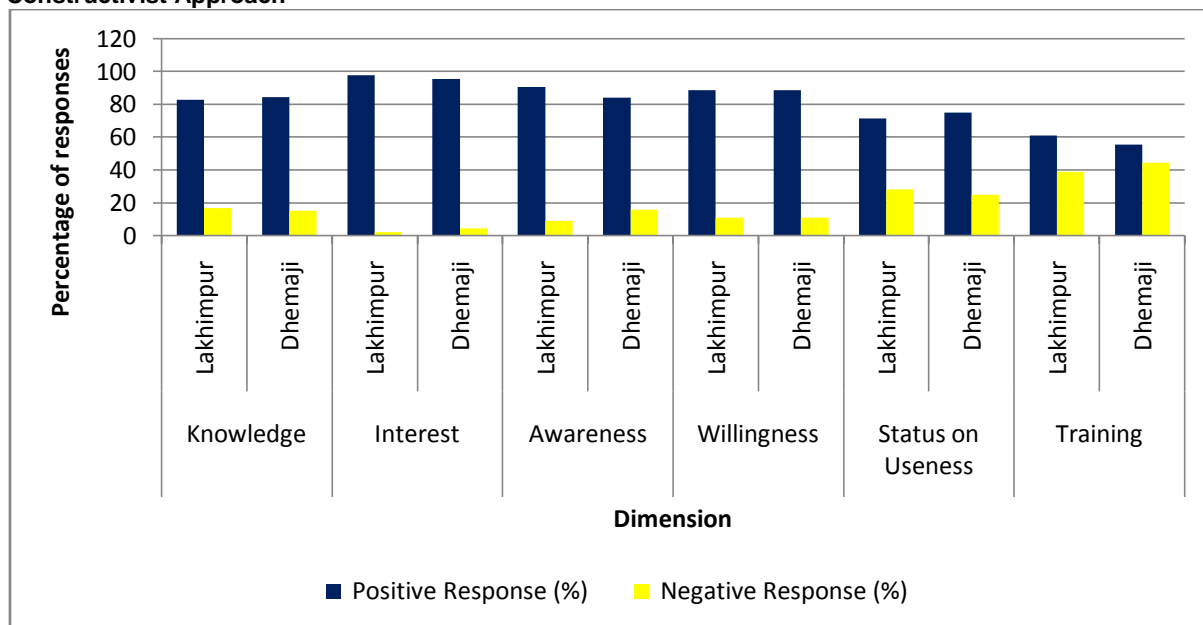
In the light of the table 1.2, it indicates that (83%) the school teachers of Lakhimpur district has responded positively that they were fully acclimatized with the use of constructivist approach, and it was found that they had the basic knowledge on constructivist approach. On the contrary to those school teachers of Lakhimpur district, the school teachers (84.67%) in Dhemaji district of Assam teaching social science at grade VIII had responded positively that they had also knowledge and awareness on the use of constructivist approach of teaching-learning. The school teachers teaching social science (17%) in Lakhimpur district at elementary level for grade VIII has given only responses negatively that they were unknown to the constructivist approach. Likewise, (15.33%) teachers of Dhemaji district responded negatively that they were not familiar to the use of constructivist approach in teaching.

An analysis of the table 1.2 reveals that, the elementary school teachers teaching social science (97.78%) in Lakhimpur district of Assam had interest on the use of constructivist approach in teaching-learning of social science at grade VIII. But, (95.56%) teachers of Dhemaji district were also interested to use constructivist approach in teaching-learning of social science at grade VIII. However, (2.22%) in Lakhimpur and (4.44%) of school teachers in Dhemaji district were not interested for the use of constructivist approach in teaching social science. Similarly, it is also showing that (90.83%) elementary school teachers in Lakhimpur district were aware about the teaching-learning process and they wanted to change the traditional lecture method by constructivist

approach in teaching-learning of social science. Whereas, school teachers (84.17%) in Dhemaji district of Assam were aware about constructivist approach and ready to change traditional approach by constructivist approach. But, only (9.17%) in Lakhimpur and (15.83%) school teachers in Dhemaji district were unaware on the use of constructivist approach in teaching-learning of social science.

In relation to the dimension willingness, it was found that elementary school teachers (88.89%) in Lakhimpur district of Assam were willing to create a classroom environment which will ensure students participation in teaching-learning of social science and (88.89%) of school teachers in Dhemaji district of Assam was found to be willing to ensure students participation in teaching-learning of social science at grade VIII. But, (11.11%) elementary school teachers in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji both of the districts were unwilling to create a motivating environment for student's participation in teaching-learning of social science at grade VIII. The table 1.2 also depicts that (71.67%) teachers of Lakhimpur and (75%) in Dhemaji district of Assam responded in support of the status on the useness of constructivist approach. On the other hand, the elementary school teachers (28.33%) in Lakhimpur and (25%) in Dhemaji district had no idea on the useness of constructivist approach. The study also reveals that, (61.11%) of Lakhimpur and (55.56%) of elementary school teachers in Dhemaji district of Assam responded that they had undergone training in teaching-learning process. Whereas, (38.89%) of Lakhimpur and (48.44%) of elementary school teachers in Dhemaji respectively did not undergo training related to constructivism.

Fig 1.2: Graphical Representation of the Responses of Elementary School Teachers of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji Districts of Assam to Each Dimension According to Variables on Evaluating Present Status on the Use of Constructivist Approach



Educational Implications

1. The teachers teaching social science curriculum should have the basic knowledge on the approach constructivism.
2. The constructivist approach can bring a change in 'heavy school bag' by replacing the 'textbook' to knowledge construction process.
3. The role of the teacher in the constructivist classroom is transferred to a facilitator who arranges environment for the creation of knowledge by the learner.
4. The training programmes organized by the higher authorities can motivate the teachers towards the use of learner participatory approach like constructivism.

Conclusion

The result of the study clearly showing that, the teachers of elementary education were familiar with the basic idea of constructivist approach. They were interested and aware to improve and bring a change in the teaching-learning process. They had willing to replace the traditional type of teaching-learning which is based on rote memorization and teacher centered. From the opinions of the teachers, it indicates training is necessary to made them more aware and interested to use an approach like constructivism in teaching-learning of social science.

References

1. Adak, S. (2017): *Effectiveness of Constructivist Approach on Academic Achievement in Science at Secondary Level*, *Academic Journals, Educational Research and Reviews*, vol 12 (22), ISSN: 1990-3839, pp 1074-1079. Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org> dated 2/12/2017
2. Chowdhury, R. S (2016): *A Study on the Effect of Constructivist Approach on the Achievement in Mathematics of IX Standard Students*, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* vol21 Issue 2, e-

ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845, pp 35-40. Retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org dated 2/12/2017

3. Fosnot C. T (2005): *Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives and Practice*, Second Edition, Teachers College Press Columbia University New York and London.
4. Jha, A. K (2009): *Constructivist Epistemology and Pedagogy, Insight into Teaching- Learning and Knowing*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, U.P India.
5. Lata, H. & Sharma, L. (2013): *Effect of Constructivist Approach on Academic Achievement of Seventh Grade Learners in Mathematics*, *International Journal of Scientific Research*. Retrieved from citeseerx.ist.psu.edu on 2/9/2015
6. Muhagir, M (2014): *Constructivism in Education*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, pp2-11. Retrieved from <http://muhagir.files.wordpress.com> dated 9/19/2014
7. Mwanda, G.M et al (2016): *Adaption of the Constructivist Learning Approach in Secondary Schools in Kenya, Focus on Learner Achievement in Biology by class Category* vol6, No 1 *US-China Education Review A* vol6, No1, pp 31-44. Retrieved from www.davidpublisher.org dated 22/4/2016
8. NCFSE (1988): *National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 1988*, National Council of Educational Research and Training. Retrieved from ncert.nic.in dated 2/11/2015
9. NCFSE (2000): *National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2000*, National Council of Educational Research and Training. Retrieved from www.eledu.net dated 11/16/2015