



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2019; 5(8): 421-423
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 03-06-2019
Accepted: 05-07-2019

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Constructivism: A vibrant approach for social science

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Abstract

Generally Social science subjects are considered as boring and non-utility subjects, and they get less importance than natural sciences. It is believed that social science merely transmits information and these subjects are theoretical and too text-centred in nature. On the contrary social science subjects are equally important as any other subject as these subjects create a base for values like trust, freedom, mutual respect etc. and promote civic competence in young students. Thus the aim of social science teaching should be to develop child's ability to think independently, to enhance the capability of analysing social-political reality instead of just memorization of facts. But unfortunately in present, these subjects are still taught by traditional methods which involve techniques like lecture, memorization of facts and heavy reliance in text-books. So Social science classroom needs to be revitalized by adopting such vibrant teaching approach which fosters creativity, critical thinking, ability to draw relationship between past and present among students. Constructivism is a new approach which can be successfully utilized for attaining above mentioned goals. Present paper will throw light on the utility of constructivist approach for social science teaching. It will also present and discuss major constructivist learning models that can revitalize the social science classroom.

Keywords: Constructivism, learning environment, social science teaching

Introduction

Traditional approach is very common in teaching. It ignores the students and subjects need the context in which the training is progress the mental level of interest of the students. The emerging trends include the constructivist which is moral and more focus on innovative activities and knowledge acquisition. Constructivism is the buzz word of learner- centered education, today we find text books structured on the philosophy of constructivism. Teachers need to have a sound understanding of what constructivism means to evaluate its promise and to use it effectively.

Basic idea of constructivism is that the learner must construct knowledge. The teacher cannot supply it. It is an approach in which the learner is building an internal illustration of knowledge, a personal interpretation of experience. It is active, constructive, cumulative, goal directed, diagnostic and reflective (Simons 1993). Constructivism emphasizes the careful study of the processes by which children create and develop their ideas.

In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different teaching practices. In the most general sense, it usually means encouraging students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. The teacher makes sure she understands the students' preexisting conceptions, and guides the activity to address them and then build on them.

Constructivism is a learning strategy that draws on students' existing knowledge, beliefs, and skills. With a constructivist approach, students synthesize new understanding from prior learning and new information. The constructivist teacher sets up problems and monitors student exploration, guides student inquiry, and promotes new patterns of thinking. Working mostly with raw data, primary sources, and interactive material, constructivist teaching asks students to work with their own data and learn to direct their own explorations. Ultimately, students begin to think of learning as accumulated, evolving knowledge. Constructivist approaches work well with learners of all ages, including adults.

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5Es Learning Model

The 5E model initial phase is designed to engage the learner's prior knowledge and final phase, to evaluate the students understanding. Each phase has a specific function and contributes to the teacher's coherent instruction and to the learner's formulation of a better understanding of scientific and technological knowledge, attitudes and skills. These all five phases, activities in each phase and student and teacher activities in each phase are represented below.

Engagement: This phase of the instructional model initiates the learning task. The activity should make connections between past and present learning experiences, anticipate activities, and focus students' thinking on the learning outcomes of current activities. The student should become mentally engaged in the concept, process, or skill to be explored.

Exploration: This phase of the teaching model provides students with a common base of experiences within which they identify and develop current concepts, processes, and skills. During this phase, students actively explore their environment or manipulate materials.

Explanation: This phase of the instructional model focuses students' attention on a particular aspect of their engagement and exploration experiences and provides opportunities for them to verbalize their conceptual understanding, or demonstrate their skills or behaviours. This phase also provides opportunities for teachers to introduce a formal label or definition for a concept, process, skill or behaviour.

Elaboration: This phase of the teaching model challenges and extends students' conceptual understanding and allows further opportunity for students to practice desired skills and behaviors. Through new, experiences, the students develop deeper and broader understanding, more information, and adequate skills.

Evaluation: This phase of the teaching model encourages students to assess their understanding and abilities and provides opportunities for teachers to evaluate student progress toward achieving the educational objectives.

Lesson Plan Based on 5E Model

Topic: Water Resources– uses, sources, problems and conservation

Subject: Geography

Grade: VIII

Duration: 45 minutes

Standards: (Performance and Knowledge)

The students will be able to identify the major problems of availability of water.

The students will acquire factual knowledge of different sources of water and methods of conservation of water.

What concepts do you want to understand after completing this lesson?

Uses of water

Sources of water

Problems of water availability

Conservation of water

Essential Questions

Why water is important for life?

Give any three natural resources of water.

How we can conserve rainfall water?

How much area of earth is covered with water?

Criteria for Success

Students will mark the areas covered with water on map.

Students will be able to identify the main problems of water availability.

Students will be able to answer the question on the natural resources.

Resources

Physical Map

Power point slides on Water Use, problems and conservation.

Text book of social science of CBSE by NCERT.

Learner Diversity

Use of real objects, chart and slides to overcome language constraints (if any)

Presentation of the lesson through slides so far to capture and retain the interest of learner.

Active participation of the students in answering the questions.

Group activities so as to facilitate co- ordination among them.

Adequate explanation to be provided by the teacher.

Process

Engage

The teacher will ask some thought- provoking questions in order to capture students interest and to increase their level of curiosity towards the topic.

- How is climate change affecting water resources?
- How groundwater is important?
- Can we produce new water?
- Why earth is referred to as a water planet?

Explore

Student will formulate hypothesis that the water we can use for different purpose is very important resource. They will discuss among themselves. The students will identify the water uses sources on map and water uses in different countries on page no 16 of the prescribed geography text book. Students will indulge in group discussion.

The teacher will provide the students with self-constructed written material and will instruct the students to write answers to the following questions:

- Prepare a list of all natural water resources.
- Write any five household activities which are dependent on water? (the class will be divided into 4 groups for group discussion)

Explain

The students will be asked to prepare separate lists of different uses of water, problems of water resources and conservation of water resources. Students will be asked to explain these points.

The class will be divided into three groups. One group will be asked to prepare list of different uses of water, the second group will be asked to collect points about problems of water resources and the third group will be asked to prepare

the list of methods for conserving water resources. After acquire knowledge from teacher students will share their ideas with each others.

Elaborate

Students will compile this information, make notes of them and discuss among themselves regarding the natural resources and their types. They will consult their text books and read the content. They will ask question to satisfy their query. The teacher will provide opportunities to students to practice transferring their learning to other contexts.

For this purpose she will form four groups and organize brain storming session in each group on following topic:

- Water pollution
- Conservation of water
- Uses of water
- Problems related to water resources

Evaluate

Students will then close their text books and answer:

How we can conserve water at home?

Which is the fresh water source?

Give three ways to minimize water pollution?

Give ways to bring down water use?

Teacher can ask some more questions to check that students have well acquired the objectives of lesson or not.

Conclusion

There is a need to reform the social science' pedagogical practices. Constructivist theory can play a crucial role in the way the content of social science is presented to the students. It can changed the social science drastically as it shows the complexity and multiple perspectives of real world situations and promotes active learning in classroom by using various constructive teaching methods like class discussion, brain storming, storytelling, situation analysis, observation, demonstration, role play etc. Bringing changes of this nature in the classroom the role of teachers is very important.

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