

Challenges of inducing Socio-moral Constructivism in Curriculum Development: An Inferential Study

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The 21st century education has steadily been getting into the contrivances of technological advancements leaving apart the basic essence of forming human society. Later the socio-moral needs led to the development of society with culture and civilization being carried from the societies through ages with value developments. The missing link of man and his socio-moral values in the contemporary world is the result of materialistic science which discards the basic human elements of divine values which are on the verge of extinction in the present education. In the present world, the system of education has been surrounded by a thick layer of materialistic attainment and development wherein man is also being considered as material in the blind race of development. In such a situation constructivism with regard to real education needs socio-moral essence in curriculum through which the education in the present world may transform the students into sensitive human beings to protect humanity essence in education side by side with the technological advancements and scientific developments.

Quality education and preparing quality teachers have become a global concern as all nations strive for excellence at all levels of education. Yet, there is little consensus around what constitutes quality and how quality teachers might best be trained. Constructivism is drummed across the world but there is still a great dearth of educationists and planners to improvise the real learning constructs for the learners who are served the same age old patterns of teaching techniques, tactics and methodologies. Lacking the principles of constructivism in curriculum planning and development and its implementations deprive the learners to avail better opportunities of self-learning through constructivism which is still to be inducted in the teacher training programmes in India and abroad.

Constructivism is a theory of learning or making meaning of the learning constructs which an individual makes use of during his lifetime. It is asserted that individuals construct their own new understanding on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact.

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Social constructivism means human constructs in which humans acquire knowledge and understand various social determinants from family, society, politics, ideologies, values, and the preservation of status, religious beliefs, and economic self-interest (Phillips, 2000). This approach is focused on the ways in which social factors, the economy, political and economic power affect the people in understanding and formally knowing about their world.

Moral Constructivism has evolved with time and experience of the contemporary society and developments worldwide. We develop morally within a system that affects both our thought and action. Though the moral constructivism was considered to be one of the basic components of education in the ancient systems of teaching-learning in India but the concept of moral constructivism and its development in the modern education has evolved from the psychoanalytic theory of Freud in 1961 and it has been well established in the modern cognitive and neuro-science theories of the 21st century after due consideration of education in terms of modern curriculum and its transfer to the students which has failed so far to induce the basic human qualities in students.

Essence of Constructivist Pedagogy

The constructivist pedagogy in terms of education and learners involve the following characteristics:

1. Student-centered domain including the attention to the individual and respect for students background and developing understanding of and beliefs about elements of the domain facilitation of group dialogue that explores an element of the domain with the purpose of leading to the creation and shared understanding of a topic.
2. Formal domain of knowledge with conversation through direct instruction, reference to text, exploration of a website and other means of communications.
3. Provision of opportunities for students to determine, challenge, change or add to existing beliefs and understanding through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose; and
4. Development of students' awareness of their own understandings and learning processes.

In teacher education also, the practice of constructivist teacher education programs need to be inducted. Such constructivist learning theory and its applications can be brought into the mainstream course of teacher-education programmes which can be practiced by student-teachers. Models of teaching

based on constructivism can also be presented to the teacher education students to guide them in establishing constructivist classrooms.

It is emphasized to induce the constructivism and its basic principles in the teacher education programmes to validate the legitimacy of the theory among the teacher education students who in future will organize such constructivist classrooms in schools.

Need and Scope of Moral Constructivism

The wide spread depression and regression of socio-moral values in the youths is the result of invalid curriculum which is diverted from its man making process to machine making endeavours summoning the need and scope of re-establishing the socio-moral constructivism in contemporary curriculum.

Most educational institutions have structural features that explicitly address issues involving the moral right, at least in terms of the obligations and rights of students, faculty, and staff. Teleological values relate to issues of moral good, or concern over the welfare of others. These are often not explicitly addressed within school systems, though services such as extra- curricular activities, community programs, social activities, student counselling, and various other activities are organised by the schools which are expressions of the moral good. The values or qualities such as generosity, empathy and loyalty are given least importance in the transfer of learning within the framework of present curriculum.

Intrinsic values such as autonomy, consciousness, intelligence, and knowledge based on information are given more importance in present curriculum. Their advancement is viewed as the advancement of persons. The extrinsic values which have the potential to produce goodness in terms of common good and welfare are slowly disappearing from curriculum of the modern education which is exclusively focussed on individual growth and development rather than developing cosmopolitan approach of ensuring human welfare.

The scope of socio-moral constructivism is wide as all the subjects of study at different levels can make use of constructivism to induce the value essence in context of the contents of study which can ensure the integration of socio-moral essence and the contents of study so that the learners can acquire both the contents and its value essence in an integrated form.

Model of Socio-moral Development in Constructivism

Researches and contributions of Baldwin, Mead, Piaget, and Vygotsky,

Kohlberg and others have examined the contents of socio-moral developments and its significance in the life of students. After Piaget, Kohlberg found that distinct, qualitative, developmental changes in moral thought could be identified using structured clinical interviews. He emphasized on the stages of such developments in students

Kohlberg's stages have several specific characteristics. His Stages imply distinct or qualitative differences in modes of thinking or of solving the same problem at different developmental levels. These different modes of thought form an invariant sequence, order, or succession in individual development. While cultural factors may speed up, slow down, or stop development, they do not change its sequence. Each of these different modes of thought forms a structured whole. Cognitive stages are hierarchical integrations. Stages form an order of increasingly differentiated and integrated structures to fulfil a common function.

Kohlberg (1971) makes an additional, and controversial, claim about the hierarchical nature of moral reasoning stages. He asserts, as does Piaget 1985 in the logico-mathematical realm, that reasoning using the more complex structures available at the higher stages is superior to reasoning at lower stages due to the increasing integration and differentiation of thought structures.

Socio-moral Constructivism forms Goodness and Values

It is asserted that the essence of socio-moral constructivism forms goodness and values in the learners. The subjects of study right from the primary education to the higher education have potentials of inducing the socio-moral essence wherein the curriculum be framed in such a way so that both the teachers and learners recognise the value essence and accordingly the same is to be imbibed through education by providing opportunities to students to construct their own ideas, thoughts and desired learning through creation of learning situations and its assimilations. This needs efforts on the part of teachers to organise the subjects of studies on principles of constructivist pedagogy taking into consideration of organising the teaching-learning in context of socio-moral objectives which is inherent in the subjects of study at least at the school level.

Kohlberg's moral judgment stages (1987) and Armon's good life reasoning stages are carried on in various stages where constructivism vary from one stage to the other. Stage one which includes 4 to 7 year-olds; defines doing right by following the rules that have been handed down by their authorities. The reason for obeying these rules is often fear of punishment or an unquestioning regard for authority. Children at this stage also define the right as avoiding physical harm to objects or others. The good life is feeling good or engaging in

activities that produce good feelings.

In stage two, which is the stage of reasoning used mostly by 7+ years and older elementary school students, in which the individual determines what is right exclusively in terms of his own or another's individual interests. Fairness is an issue at this level, but is understood only in instrumental, concrete terms. At stage two the individual can think about his own thoughts and feelings and understands that other people may have different thoughts and feelings, but he cannot put himself in the other person's shoes. Consistent with the concrete instrumentalism of this stage, the good life is conceptualized as one in which the individual's needs, interests, and desires are respected.

In stage three, which is the most common stage of moral reasoning among the adolescents, wherein the individual becomes aware of the abstract inner processes of other persons, can infer what these might be, and can take them into account when making decisions about the right. Such decisions are often framed in terms of upholding conventional human relationships or of being a good person. Moral judgments are formed at this stage.

Stage four is basically the stage of generalizations in terms of moral judgments in group or society. However, the good life consists of upholding the society or group while pursuing one's own self-interests and developments.

Finally, in stage five, which develops in only a small percentage of adults identify, analyze, and coordinate systems with reference to a consistent set of self-chosen values, relying upon coordinated, formal thought mechanisms. Doing right involves upholding the self defined goodness of society, including human rights and human services, even when doing so conflicts with the laws of society. The good life is one which is rationally constructed from self-chosen values that can be generalised and consistent especially in terms of goodness for self and others.

Can Morality and Constructivism co-exist?

Yes, morality and constructivism can co-exist if the teaching-learning environment and curriculum are integrated with moral setups by organising the contents of transfer of learning with value essence of morality being properly induced and implemented in both the contents as well as the transfer modes to attain the desired objectives of teaching-learning.

Morality is formed by judgment. The judgment is a necessary part of every moral action, and judgment and action are part of the same process (Kohlberg, 1984), a judgment need not be sufficient for evaluating the morality of

activities that produce good feelings.

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an action. The question of assuring a good outcome which is justified in the sense that the action is done for the common goodness of all is what we can term as morality. The behavioural sciences have duly recognised the constructivist pedagogy as an important component of forming morality in different age groups of students through moral action based constructs formed by individual students as well as group of students forming constructs about good and evil based on their own judgment.

Several studies of moral reasoning and action have demonstrated that moral judgments alone cannot account for moral behaviour, though subjects at more advanced stages are more likely to act in accord with their judgments than those at lower stages. Moreover, in his review of the judgment and action literature, Blasi (1980) found a strong relationship between higher stage reasoning and consistently altruistic behaviour. He also found that subjects at the higher stages had more resistance to following the crowd, an indication that at least one factor, social influence, is more important at lower stages than at higher stages.

One of the most common problems for moral developments is the elaboration of models of moral development that account adequately for the various factors that influence moral behaviour. Rest (1984, 1986), has proposed one useful model. It incorporates four components. These include the subject's sensitivity to moral situations, including ability to identify a moral problem, determine who the affected parties are, and identify alternative solutions; the way in which the subject structures a moral judgment, the weight that moral issues are given relative to other issues, such as personal considerations, and the way in which the ego strength or moral character of a subject influence persistence and courage in pursuing a moral end. In all such cases the learners can be better taught within the paradigms of constructivist classrooms where teachers play the role of facilitators by creating constructivist situations so that the learners construct their own constructs based on the constructivist plan of the teachers.

Psychological Dimensions of Socio-moral Constructivism

The influence of psychological dimensions and its theories on moral development can be traced in Piaget's theory. According to Piaget, thought is organized into structures called schemata. Groups of these are further organized into subsystems, which are, in turn, part of a total system. Each scheme is composed of a set of associations. For example, infants develop, during the first few months of life, a reaching and grasping scheme that incorporates the set of acts required to reach for an object and hold on to it. During development, such

schemes become more differentiated and are coordinated with one another in increasingly complex ways. For successful grasping to occur when the object of interest is in motion, the reaching scheme must be coordinated with the visual tracking scheme. Subsystems are composed of schemes that are organized and integrated at a new level of complexity. These schemes and subsystems are part of the total cognitive system.

According to Piaget, positive and negative feedback are not regarded as entirely dichotomous. In fact, both can contribute to development, in that positive feedback is reinforcing and negative feedback is corrective. In other words, both positive and negative feedback can have positive or negative developmental consequences. For example, the negative consequences of failure can result in renewed efforts, and the positive consequences of success can result in complacency. In the moral realm, cognitive conflict often results from a balance of both positive and negative feedback.

Sociological Dimensions of Constructivism

The social interaction in schools is more important than content transfers as reinforcement and correction from social point of view are essential constituents of socio-moral constructivism which is seldom attainable through direct transfer of learning without providing opportunity to construct ideas, thoughts and concepts by the learners. Group discussion, co-curricular activities, field trips and training individually and in groups are important social dimensions of self-learning which can help the learners to construct socio-moral ideas and thoughts through course of study organised in a classroom based on constructivism.

Every school has a socio-moral atmosphere and, therefore, a socio-moral impact on those who come into contact with it is evident and can be seen in students reciprocal to the socio-moral atmosphere of the school. Schools are also affected by the moral thought and social action of students, faculty, staff, other institutions, and the society itself. The constructivist curriculum takes control of the socio-moral atmosphere as planned on the basis of contents and course of study so as to attain the desired change in students in behavioural terms.

Conclusion

In context of the constructivism, it can be concluded that the subjects of study right from the primary education to the higher education needs the reframing of the curriculum by including socio-moral essence wherein the curriculum be framed in such a way that both the teachers and learners recognise the value essence and accordingly the same is to be organised through activity

based teaching-learning by providing and creating self-learning opportunities to students so that they construct their own ideas, thoughts and desired learning through creation of learning situations and its assimilations more on the basis of experiential learning against the formal teaching-learning through monotonous text books and classroom teaching. This demands rigorous pre-teaching tasks on the part of teachers to plan and organise their subject of studies on principles of constructivist pedagogy taking into consideration of organising the teaching-learning in context of socio-moral objectives which is inherent in the subjects of study at least at the school level.

In view of the degeneration of socio-moral traits in students, it is desired to induct the constructivist pedagogy based on the principles of behavioural sciences which has attained due recognition as an important component of forming socio-moral traits in different age groups of students through action based constructs formed by individual students as well as group of students forming constructs about good and evil based on their own judgments through various learning activities rather than teaching-learning in conventional and theoretical forms.

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