Examining the Applicability of Constructivist Theory in History Teaching in Bulo Parents Secondary School, Bulo Sub County of Butambala District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the application of construction theory in history learning at Bulo Parents Secondary School. The study found that the procedure was time-consuming and needed to be replaced with others. The study recommends that history teachers must work hard to elicit students' past knowledge because new knowledge is built on pre-existing knowledge. Teachers should use pre-tests, informal interviews, and small group warm-ups that require prior knowledge to achieve this. History professors should challenge students' thinking with difficult issues and exercises to create cognitive dissonance. As learners solve difficult tasks and change schemas, they build knowledge. Teachers should empower students to evaluate and modify knowledge. This requires presentations, small group or class discussions, and tests to compare pre-existing schema to the fresh circumstance. Teachers should provide students a chance to demonstrate their learning through presentations, reflection articles, or step-by-step tutorials. Student instructors must be introduced to constructivism and its use in the classroom. The constructivist approach must be used to create and implement educational plans. In-service programmes should include conferences, workshops, and seminars to train instructors in the constructivist approach.
Keywords: Application, Construction theory, History teaching, Students, Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1950s cognitive revolution, constructivism began as an intellectual movement to explore the mind and its functions. Constructivism is a reaction against behaviourism, which concentrated on behaviour rather than "hidden" cognitive processes[1]. Educational cognitive constructivism was led by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. People learn by associating their experiences with presented concepts, according to Piaget[2]. His research focused on children's cognitive growth and learning, not what impacts them. Constructivism is a broad theory with several views that holds that learning is an active process and that students construct knowledge rather than acquisition it[3]. The constructivist learning theory emphasises discovery-based learning, drawing on prior knowledge to learn new topics. Constructivism sees learning as building and as a building with prior knowledge as a foundation. Constructivists view learning as knowledge production. Learners actively construct knowledge by connecting new and old ideas from materials/activities[4]. Teachers can use this method to assist pupils understand previous concepts by applying them to their daily lives. The rise of inquiry-based history teaching and technological improvements have made constructivist approaches relevant in today's history classroom. Based on personal experiences and sentiments, may view the same instruction differently. History education increasingly emphasises building and analysing historical arguments and construct and test hypotheses. This necessitated the need to explore the applicability of constructivist theory in history teaching in Bulo parents secondary school, Bulo Sub-County of Butambala district, Uganda.

Concept of constructive teaching

Constructivist classrooms change how we think about knowledge, learning, and what matters. One can move from controlling one's subject and students to being comfortable with a less predictable and more ambiguous subject. Lester and Onore[5] argue that teaching and learning attitudes affect classroom practice and our ability to change it, and that instructors' construct systems—their teaching beliefs—determine their change abilities. More so, we see things via our particular construct system,

and teachers think and behave based on their teaching and learning beliefs. The extent and type of change teachers encounter depends on their definitions of knowledge, how individuals acquire it, and how we assess it. Kelly [6] created personal construct theory in 1955. The theory suggests that, like scientists, we hypothesise about experience and construct expectations based on our model of reality from experience and contemplation. Experience makes us believe something and interpret experience accordingly. New experiences may change these hypotheses, or personal constructions, but some are reinforced and affirmed, so they may shape experiences instead of being shaped by them[7]. According to Lester and Onore[5], schooling ideas and practices are hard to modify because of this. To change teaching and learning, they advise we analyse the conceptions or assumptions that impact our decisions.

They believe we can improve our teaching and learning practise by changing our beliefs. The concept that humans construct knowledge is the key construct impacting a teacher's transactional, constructivist teaching style. To transform their teaching, teachers must modify their ideas and beliefs about knowledge[8]. Prawat[9] argue that true learning comes "from questioning or reassessing our existing beliefs about the world. Reflecting on one's teaching practice helps one cross the bridge in terms of teaching beliefs. This allows him or her to switch from transmissional to constructivist and transactional training. Reflection involves critiquing our beliefs' assumptions and changing our viewpoints[10]. According to Liu[11], instructors are instructed to employ numerous teaching and evaluation frameworks but not to question their assumptions. More than technicians, teachers should be transformative

thinkers having critical conversations. Constructivist and non-constructivist teachers have different teaching and learning assumptions. According to Reech[12], changing classroom gimmicks without changing our teaching and learning philosophy will not change our practice. If we want to change classrooms, we must reimagine teaching and learning. In a constructivist classroom, teachers create settings where students examine their and each other's preconceptions. Constructivist teachers also create circumstances to challenge traditional teaching and learning assumptions. Young[13] found that at the constructivist level of knowing and thinking, we constantly reevaluate our knowledge assumptions, change our attitude towards "the expert" and ambiguity, are drawn to complexity, and pursue a never-ending quest for truth and learning, which is seen as a process of construction in which the knower participates. Constructivist teachers' view of classroom knowledge is dependent on their students' interactions with each other and their teacher, and they tend to create complexity because they can accept uncertainty. Shah[14] notes that a constructivist view of knowledge allows teachers to experiment with innovative teaching and learning methods. This belief still has to be applied in the classroom. The task is complicated by the school system, policies, and culture. Constructivist teachers empower and make pupils feel competent and important. Some constructivist teaching is intuitive, but it also requires intelligence, creativity, patience, responsiveness, and the ability to live with ambiguity to spontaneously abandon a plan to fit specific individual or classroom situations[15]. While constructivist teaching is challenging, its benefits to students' learning and growth are clear.

The role of the teacher in the Constructivist teaching and learning

The role of the instructor may be unclear given constructivism's emphasis on student knowledge construction. In constructivism, kids learn from experience, but teachers modify those experiences. Many teachers must create scaffolding for students to build knowledge. Sending students to an archive for an hour may not teach them how to write a historical argument. Instead, giving students edited primary sources can help them form their own historical perspectives[16]. The constructivist method applies to all topics, but history especially.

Subjective history textbooks are common. Theories change, challenging long-held views, adding to the confusion. Thus, history teachers should create opportunities for their students to become socially engaged and create history as a historian does with primary sources, building citizens who are willing to take a stand on issues by understanding their genesis and appreciating the power of individual voices and the dignity of national identity and pride[17].

METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The researcher used qualitative research for this review. Documentary analysis was utilised to analyse literature and emphasise the construction's role in teaching and learning. History. According to Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah[18], document analysis that involves analysing material from secondary

sources including textbooks, magazines, and others pertinent to a study. To understand and illuminate a field, it requires reading a lot of text. Researchers reviewed written resources on constructivism and its application to research, teaching, and learning using

interpretative analysis, which aims to decipher hidden meanings for public consumption.

Study Area

Bulo Parents Secondary School is a school for parents that is not used by the government. It was founded in 1992 by five people: Hajj Musa Kibirige Ndirangwa, who donated land, Hajj Mickidad Nsubuga, a prominent Bulo town senior citizen, Hajj Kafumbe Mukasa (RIP), former finance minister, Hon. Amanya Mushega, former education minister, and Mr. Kibuuka Kasim, a retired senior educator.

The school started on 6 acres and now has almost 15 acres. Day and boarding enrollment ranges from 1350 to 1200, with majority in boarding. The school has a Muslim foundation but is secular and respects all faiths' worship days and practices. This school teaches history from senior one to six. The school implemented a constructivist-based lower secondary competence-based curriculum.

Target Population

The population suitable for this study comprised all students from the six classes taking History as a subject. All senior one and two were potential participants in this study, but for the purpose of time

and resources, the researcher used one senior three stream.

Sample size and selection techniques

The researcher used a Convenient Sampling Technique to select all the one hundred (112) Form three History students to participate in the intervention. The technique was preferred because

in Uganda History is a compulsory subject from senior one to four implying that all students in Form two were potential participants of study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: respondents' responses on the rankings of study groups based on their ability to construct new knowledge

Students' ability to construct an extensive and knowledge	Excellent	Good	Average	Below
Groups which were able to develop their own perspectives regarding situations.	05	09	08	00
Groups which were able to make accurate interpretations of historical events using their experiences.	08	09	05	00
Groups which able develop their own thinking based on their own individual experiences	05	10	07	00
Total	**18/66**	**28/66**	**20/66**	**00/66**
Percentage	**27%**	**42%**	**30%**	**0%**

Source: field survey, 2024

From the table above, five (5) groups were rated excellent in developing their own perspectives regarding interpretation of history, nine (9) were good and the remaining eight (8) were average. Eight (8) were rated as exceptional in making accurate interpretations of historical events using their experiences, nine (9) were good and the remaining five (5) were average. Five (5) groups were exceptional in developing their own thinking based on their own individual experiences, ten (10)

were good and the remaining seven (7) were average. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Tang, Vezzani and Eriksson[19] when they observed that the highest percentage of students managed to generate and construct new knowledge, because they were able to relate it to what they already knew by engaging in lesson activities in their respective groups, relevant prior knowledge and this facilitated the processing of new information.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the effectiveness of experiential learning strategy in developing students' generic skills

Students' level of development of generic skills	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Communication	9	8	3	2
Curiosity	5	11	4	2
Cooperation	8	13	0	1
Problem solving	5	12	3	2
Creativity	5	10	5	2
Total	**32/110**	**54/110**	**15/110**	**9/110**
Percentage	**29%**	**49%**	**14%**	**8%**

Source: field survey, 2024

From the table 2 above twenty (20) groups were rated as above average in communication, and only

two (2) were poor. Another twenty (20) were above average when observed for their curiosity and only

two were less curious. Twenty-one (21) groups investigated and solved their problems with cooperation and only one group displayed intolerance. When it came to problem solving twenty (20) were ranked above average but the remaining two proved showed some difficulties. Twenty (20) were creative as far as solving the problems as seen in ways they improvised to look for authentic resources to solve their problem, however the remaining two groups were not that creative as seen from their reluctance to look for other means to solve their problem and just relying on what the teacher had provided. These findings are in line with the findings of Laar et al[20] when they found that since the majority of groups are able to communicate effectively and were curious to solve problems assigned to them, with creativity as problem solvers, and collaborators it shows the effectiveness of experience based learning to developing learners twenty first century skills that are transferable to a variety of fields that they will encounter as lifelong learners.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on the percentage distribution of rating of evidence of self-direction

Level of students' self-direction during learning	Yes	No
Students possess metacognitive Problem-Based Learning awareness of what they do and do not understand.	20	2
Students set learning goals, identifying what they needed to learn more about for the task they are engaged in.	20	2
Students plan their learning and select appropriate learning strategies.	20	2
Students decide on a course (or courses) of action to reach these goals.	21	1
Students were able to monitor and evaluate whether or not their goals have been attained.	20	2
Total	**91/100**	**9/100**
Percentage	**91%**	**9%**

From the evidence in table 3 above, twenty (20) groups were aware of what they do and do not understand about their problems, but the remaining two (2) were not. Regarding the setting of learning goals and identifying what is needed to learn more about for the task they are engaged in, twenty (20) groups were conversant with it but the remaining two (2) were not. About group members planning for their learning and selecting of appropriate learning strategies and resources, twenty (20) were aware and the remaining two (2) were not. Regarding group members deciding on a course of action to reach these goals, twenty-one (21) were aware and the remaining one (1) was not. About group members being able to monitor and evaluate whether or not their goals have been attained, twenty (20) fulfilled this and the remaining two (2) did not. The findings are in line with the findings of Desautel[21] when he observed that majority of the group members had strictly mastered metacognition skills of learning through experience. This skill automatically yields high levels autonomous and self-directed learning. The Experiential learning strategy was effective here because the teacher had emphasized this to the students during the lessons. For the two groups that have persistently ranked poor was attributed to lack of seriousness of group members.

Table 4: Respondents' responses on the students' level of motivation to learn

Students' level of intrinsic motivation	Frequency	Percentage
High	7	35%
Moderate	11	55%
Low	2	10%
Total	**20**	**100%**

The level of intrinsic motivation of students in seven (7) groups were high, eleven (11) groups were moderate, however two (2) groups were low. The findings are in line with the findings of Helle, Tynjälä, Olkinuora, & Lonka[22] when they averred that when students have a high degree of motivation for learning, they tend to engage in learning activities because they enjoy and value them as opposed to being motivated purely by grades. Research on the impact of experiential learning suggests that participating in a class featuring experiential learning increases students' intrinsic motivation to learn over the course of the class.

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Table 5: Respondents' responses on the interpretation of form two students' history results before the innovation was implemented

Students' assessment scores after the innovation	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	2	10
Coherent	6	30
Accurate	12	50
Relevant	2	10
Total	**22**	**100%**

Findings from the foregoing table show that out of the twenty groups of students that participated in this innovation; two (2) were ranked excellent in performance and therefore displayed an exceptional response unsolicited in the instructions. Six (6) were coherent in performance, because they presented ideas which were connected to each other smoothly, logically, in choice of words and in a way that give meaning to the issue, half of the groups twelve (12) displayed accuracy when it came to presentation of ideas, that carefully conformed to the facts and truth known about the issue. And the remaining two (2) groups were ranked as relevant in performance since they presented ideas that were connected, correct and suitable for the issue at hand.

Table 6: Respondents' responses showing the percentage distribution of students' challenges to problem-based learning

Students' ability to construct an extensive and knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Some students failed to participate for reasons	14	70
There were not enough resources for students to carry out research on problems.	22	100
Groups performed on average because of lack of enough resources and time to conduct research	19	95
Inadequate time to look for relevant information	22	100
Some groups were often found diverting away from the problem in focus	6	30
The researcher at times ran dry of how to guide learners since the innovation was new.	22	100
Total	**22**	**100%**

Fourteen (14) of the study complained that some of their group members failed to participate for various reasons; all the study groups (22) complained of lack of adequate resources for students to carry out research on problems, nineteen (19) of the groups claimed their average because of lack of enough resources and time to conduct research. The twenty-two (22) study groups however highlighted insufficient time for them to perform and accomplish group tasks. The researcher however noted six (6) groups who often diverted away from their assigned tasks and all the twenty-two (22) study groups opined that the teacher did not provide sufficient guidelines due to the innovation being new to the researcher. These findings are in line with the findings of Paloyo[23] when he observed that what the students shared explain the fore findings which range from individual attributes of learners such as; inability to work together in a group to share ideas, slow learners. It should also be noted that the intervention was implemented on a short notice during school practice, there was no time to acquire and provide adequate learning aids to problem solvers. This resulted into constraining students' creativity.

CONCLUSION

Student collaboration was proven by their ability to find common ground, resolve disagreements, and negotiate activities in groups to reach an agreement. Most study groups performed averagely in integration tasks because members had shallow historical information and knowledge needed to score well. Regarding the challenges, some group members were reluctant to participate in group tasks for reasons ranging from immaturity, unfamiliarity with tasks, lack of prerequisite knowledge, teacher

questioning student ideas in a constructive manner, and the researcher realised that in an attempt to reinforce new concepts, they disrupted group activities and asked topical questions to a group. The researcher realised the procedure was time-consuming and needed to be replaced with others.

Recommendations

It is recommended that history teachers must work hard to elicit students' past knowledge because new knowledge is built on pre-existing knowledge. Teachers should use pre-tests, informal interviews, and small group warm-ups that require prior knowledge to achieve this. History professors should challenge students' thinking with difficult issues and exercises to create cognitive dissonance. As learners solve difficult tasks and change schemas, they build knowledge. Teachers should empower students to evaluate and modify knowledge. This requires presentations, small group or class discussions, and tests to compare pre-existing schema to the fresh circumstance. Teachers should provide students a chance to demonstrate their learning through presentations, reflection articles, or step-by-step tutorials. Student instructors must be introduced to constructivism and its use in the classroom. The constructivist approach must be used to create and implement educational plans. In-service programmes should include conferences, workshops, and seminars to train instructors in the constructivist approach. Student instructors should be taught the constructivist approach to work with primary texts and build history to spark interest in history. This would boost student instructors' interest in history. Constructivism provides improved understanding and meaningful knowledge production, which leads to long-lasting learning. Finally, Constructivist approach should be adopted for all other subjects at all levels of teaching and learning because research has shown its efficacy above conventional ways.

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