

A Case Study of Development of Socialisation through Social Constructivist Approach of Learning

A Vital Concern to Teacher Education

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Abstract

A qualitative case study was carried out to investigate the social constructivist components of socialisation through small group learning of teacher trainees. What are the ways and how sharing with the social community takes place were understood during the learning situation through focused exploration using Focus Group and Field Note. A total of 15 components were analysed to infer how the teacher trainees learnt to socialise.

INTRODUCTION

Constructivism is considered to be an approach to facilitate learning. Under this approach, a congenial learning environment is created to make learning enjoyable to the learner. The learner is the main actor and she/he creates a meaning-making

situation and constructs knowledge. It generates authentic process of learning in a composite way. Jonassen *et al.* (1999) asserted that learning is the process of interpretation of the reality. The learner constructs knowledge when she/he interacts with the environment with her/his

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own activities. Therefore, learning is the learner's construction of his own reality in his mind related to an event. The learner's interaction with the social environment is the main concern towards meaning-making.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

Social constructivism suggests that knowledge is constructed by learners as a result of their own activities and interaction with the environment. Learning is the learner's construction of knowledge through the process of interpretation of the reality. The notion of learning as passively responding to the environment and directly internalising knowledge given by others is rejected by constructivists. Therefore, our education system must avoid treating the learner as a passive recipient of important information; instead the learner must become a potential participant in his own learning. Thus constructivism emphasises how the learner constructs knowledge. It suggests that —

1. Knowledge exists beforehand in the mind of an individual.
2. Knowledge is constructed from inter-relationship with the world.
3. Knowledge construction is sharing.
4. Knowledge is constructed through action.
5. Meaning-making depends on knowledge.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Teacher education has direct bearings to implement the constructivism approach in school scenario. Keeping in view of the purpose and practice of teacher education, NCF 2005 has suggested certain reformations:

- a. Teachers need to be prepared to care for learners, develop sensitivity to the problems of the learners.
- b. Teachers need to view learners as active participants in their own learning in order to construct knowledge.
- c. Teachers need to organise learner-centred, activity-based and collaborative learning experiences through projects, discussion, dialogue and observations.
- d. Teachers should have “reflective practice” of their teaching.
- e. Teachers need to appreciate the potential of hands-on experience as pedagogy strategy both inside and outside the classroom.

Social constructivist pedagogy recommends small group learning. What are the ways and how sharing with the social community takes place are interesting to understand through small group learning. For this purpose, a case study was carried out to investigate the group phenomenon. Through the case study, researcher expected to gain in-depth understanding of learning situation and meaning for the teacher trainees who were involved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was based on the following questions.

1. How do teacher trainees use the social constructivist components of socialisation during group learning?
2. How does socialisation occur to create learning environment?

METHODOLOGY

An attempt has been made to search answers to research questions through qualitative case study. Small group learning was designed to elicit social behaviours of teacher trainees. The case study was done in the following three phases.

Phase I: Maintaining researcher's diary through participant observation.

Phase II: Focused exploration using:

- Focus group
- Field note

Phase III: Communicating the result.

SAMPLE

Ten teacher trainees of Science and Mathematics method group of Dr H.R. Gajwani College of Education Kutch, Gujarat of the sample study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to ascertain the socialised behaviours, a group of teacher trainees were engaged in the solution of a real-life problem. The problem-scenario was based on "Green House Effect". The learning of group of teacher trainees was activated through social interactions. Teacher

trainees' behaviour with one another in finding possible solutions led them to be sociable. The analysis and interpretation of process of socialisation was carried out through following components.

How did teacher trainees learn to socialise?

A total of 15 components are discussed below to elicit answers pertaining to this question.

Component 1: Teacher trainees became aware of 'Self'.

One sample of evidence collected through field note is cited below.

EVIDENCE

The teacher trainees looked at one another as they saw the hard copy of problem scenario. It was something to explain Green House Effect to disagree to population growth and might be to find problems due to pollution!

Jalpa raised the question asking the meaning of "thermostat" and then started conflicting herself by saying that "due to rise in temperature, it causes a change in carbon number, it is always flexible. Carbon dioxide is produced...".

Mridula was slow and comfortable to speak her guessing about the carbon number.

At that time, *Deepti* was silently looking at *Mridula*, putting the palm under her cheek.

Neelam was disagreeing to the points of *Jalpa*. She thought in a different way and requested to repeat in order to understand better.

Saket answered to *Neelam* explaining “how it occurs”. He showed the information to the group.

Mamata asked pin-pointedly to search for the meaning of carbon number.

Through such conversation, *Mridula* took up the responsibility to make loud reading of the statement of problem scenario.

Observation 1

The fact that there was a time when a teacher trainee could not understand that others had feelings like his/her own. All were asking questions to one another. All were looking for answering. As a matter of fact, the teacher trainees could not understand even for a minute that they themselves were separate individual people, capable of independent feeling and action. The awareness about self, of being somebody came gradually.

At the first instance, one teacher trainee was not known by other trainees in relation to their backgrounds. They were all aware of their resemblance about their background in relation to their B.Ed course which was quite natural. It was however, in due course of group learning process, the future relation with one another was developed. It was the base how the group learning facilitated towards one to one relation among teacher trainees.

Component 2: The trainees were different from one another.

Observation 2

Analysis of group interaction revealed that initially all teacher trainees

were comfortable in mixing with each other, presentable and well-mannered. They were quite graceful in exhibiting their behaviour in front of their colleagues. However, there were two teacher trainees whose behaviour indicated some deviance in their group behaviour. Thus, differences between one and another were marked in the group learning.

The reactions to one another with regard to number of things were well-behaved and humble. All members except one were not participating. She was isolated. However, irritation towards other teacher trainee was not seen. Successful interpersonal adjustment was lacking within her.

Component 3: How did one do and what did she/he do?

Observation 3

As one teacher trainee approached another she/he might be casual, relaxed and at ease. She might be friendly or hostile, confident or afraid. She/he may have the right words or still be relying on body movements. The quality of one's approach to another was seen by the quality of his/her voice, the rhythm, fluency and tempo of his/her speech, facial expression and gestures and postures. These were all in one integrated response. Therefore, it was more important to see when teacher trainees did something and working out their social relations during exploring the learning materials.

Component 3.1: Body position and movement

Observation 3.1

Body expression is a part of personality expression. A person's body is herself/himself. She/he uses it, as she/he feels. The tilt of the head, the use of the hands, body stances, amount of body activity, even body contacts all were means of communicating. Trust and fear, confidence and inadequacy all found expression in body posture. So, the body movement gave an indication about some sort of social behaviour. It was found the situation was stimulating for good articulation.

Component 3.2: Facial expression. This was related to communication. This accompanied 'quality' in speech.

Observation 3.2

One was intelligently communicating her ideas to others within the group. Another was taking approval of others and hence, it was communicating the issues clearly. Some of the members agreed upon those written points as it was understood from their non-verbal gesture and posture during listening to other's points. Therefore, face-to-face eye contact, feelings while explaining, thrilling expression in the voice and modulations with ease were the ways of communication.

Component 3.3: What did the teacher trainee say? And how did the others respond?

Speech did not reveal everything. But, it talked a good deal. The actual dialogue and conversation between the teacher trainees could describe the response and their behaviour patterns in group setting.

Observation 3.3

Dialogue was quoted during group conversation. This approached a part of relationship. It was an act of social behaviour of teacher trainees. What did the other trainee do and say? Such record illustrated how behaviour was affected by other trainees' responses.

Component 3.4: What happened next in the relationship?

Approaching each other was a meaningful relationship. After it was made, then what did the teacher trainees do? Did the trainee carry on the conversation? Whether the content/approach blossomed into a new and additional consideration? To what extent it worked out the problems both of intellectual comprehension and of emotional complexity? The characteristic way in which one member was likely to respond with other members emerged the pattern of behaviour.

Observation 3.4

It was found as a way of exploration of friendship. One to one approach developed interpersonal relationship between one and another. While providing important material one was approaching another. This was a part of relationship. This developed scientific outlook among members. After that, the other trainee's response determined further action. It revealed orderliness among the teacher trainees.

Component 3.5: Emotional association. A teacher trainee in the group played the role in relation to his/her feeling and attitude towards others.

Observation 3.5

One tried to clear the doubts through explanation and then further by using internet materials. It was motivation to approach each other while they were clarifying the doubts. Thus, the way of behaving was consistent in the group learning. It was seen that attitude changed their role in different contexts. The evidence demonstrated certain behaviours like carefulness, curiosity, conflicting own self through brainstorming among the teacher trainees.

Component 3.6: Pattern of behaviour. The characteristic way in which the trainees responded in their relations with other trainee emerged a pattern of behaviour. The changing pattern of behaviour towards socialisation indicated the success of group learning. The pattern of social behaviours was organised by clustering the items around such categories as following:

Component 3.6.1: Evidence of interest among teacher trainees.

Direct evidence was the number of trainees approached with each other or positive approaches in between the trainees. Looking to one, listening to others, imitating and recording the points were the indirect evidences of interest shown within teacher trainees.

Component 3.6.2: How were contacts made?

Observation 3.6.2

The way the teacher trainees moved towards others (initially or always)

and how one's moves were studied. The movement was both appealing to some trainees and sometimes uncertain and unassuming. The trainees responded to the behaviour of others through appreciating their ideas and giving suggestions with consent of others. The trainees were questioning and excited to discuss different components of problem scenario. They were interested to collect data to find out possible solutions. There was interaction through talk, conversation, dialogue and demonstration of ideas. The correspondence was also made when one was calling to seek information through internet search. In this way, the contacts among one and all were made.

Component 3.6.3: How did one behave with other teacher trainees?

Observation 3.6.3

In order to understand one, the recording of one's behaviour was analysed to know to what extent one was aware of other's right. To what extent one was able to help others? Did one contribute ideas and suggestions? And to what extent? How was one able to share materials? What was the general tone at group work? It was found that one's suggestion was consistent with other trainee's ideas. Hence, it was accepted by all. Thus, one's wishes, desires and annoyances, etc., were understood during group learning.

Component 3.6.4: What seemed to be one's feelings about other trainees?

Observation 3.6.4

The feelings of likes and dislikes were the nature of inter-relationship. Even the paired work was demonstrated, which was a kind of special friendship. One was inclined to others to discuss unanswered questions and made clarification in an amicable way. The approach towards each other developed their inter-relationship.

Component 3.6.5: What position did one take in relation to others?

Observation 3.6.5

The seating arrangement of teacher trainees was circular. But none of the trainee's position was fixed. However, the pair of trainees in relation to certain personality or interpersonal relationship was understood from their positions. Most of the times, in the group trainees' positions were maintained in pair.

Component 3.6.6: Evidence of growth.

Observation 3.6.6

Comparing the first day and later days' behaviour of teacher trainees, their performance became matured. Summing up the generalisations in the light of the pattern of emerged behaviours, the study brought into focus an image of how group learning was effective in the solution of real-life problems to develop social behaviours. Thus, it was understood that socialisation took place in the group learning. Some of the patterns of behaviours exhibited by the participants during socialisation are given next.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study resulted that the teacher trainees demonstrated social behaviours over the period of group learning. The teacher trainees worked in a small group situation. They learnt how to socialise. The group members provided assistance to each other such as explanations and other types of helping responses. At times, in a group, teacher trainees provided more help to each other such as providing directions and directions with prompts like 'that is right', 'okay', 'see the level of picture', etc. These were approaching behaviour with others. These were proved soliciting behaviour as a part of their socially oriented behaviours. Verbal as well as non-verbal behaviours were seen among teacher trainees. The teacher trainees were more verbally communicative in small groups. It was such involvement with each other about the task that encouraged teacher trainees to ask questions, provide explanations, clarify the points and participate in discussions. Through this engagement the teacher trainees learnt to plan how to proceed with their work and communicate their new ideas to their mates. In effect, as Vygotsky (1978) observed that they used language as medium to relate each other, to facilitate others to learn, to scaffold each other's language. So, it became their own and it developed "ownership of their learning".

Teacher trainees' skill in communication, particularly non-verbal communication, during

interaction, discussion and dialogue was nurtured. The gesture, posture and body movements symbolised their communication during discourse. These were part of their socialisation. Along with verbal, face-to-face communication, non-verbal behaviours were focused to ascertain social behaviours, because the verbal and non-verbal communications were concurrently focused in their discourse. These were individual's social skill in receiving and interpreting non-verbal communication of others which engaged them in a social discourse (Behera, 2014).

The socially desirable behaviours like greater involvement with others, showing interest in others, approaching others, sharing his/her work and taking care of others promoted a healthy community. It enabled the proper functioning of learning environment. Hence, group learning was effective to evolve a congenial learning environment and overall to create a community environment to enable improved learning. Then interpersonal skills were generated within the community. So, interpersonal relations were

characterised by showing interest in others, tolerating, taking care of others and accepting others (Behera, 2014). The teacher trainees solved problems through sharing of knowledge, collaboration and socialisation. Thus, group learning explored the social constructivist components. Hence, it should be recognised that Vygotsky's social constructivist approach of learning premises to develop social behaviours leads to socialisation.

IMPLICATIONS

The following implications may be useful for classroom learning —

1. Small group learning should be the focus of the learning situation.
2. Hands-on and heads-on learning activities should be incorporated in the learning process.
3. Active interaction through social relationship should be facilitated to create constructivist learning environment.
4. Programmes of teacher education should include learner-centred, activity-based experiences through dialogue, discussion and collaboration.

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