Constructive Teaching and Its Meaning for Vietnamese Education Nowadays

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Abstract- *Constructivism is a concept that is rarely mentioned in Vietnam. However, another concept related to it is mentioned much, especially when discussing the issue of education reform in Vietnam recently, that is the phrase "Learner-centred Learning" or "Student-centered Learning" (Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, 2017; Thanh, N., 2014; Canh Toan, N., 2005; Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b; 2019). Normally, in the field of education, the Constructivism model is usually placed next to the Instructivism model (Thanh, N., 2014). The second concept is what we have seen in the traditional learning model in Vietnam, and the first concept represents the new trend. If the traditional learning model emphasizes the monopolistic role of the teacher and his knowledge, the student is merely a passive object; constructive learning focus on the active, creativity of the student, and the role of the teacher and his knowledge is just relative. That distinction in the two models has resulted in different results, which impel or hinder social development. In this report, the author wants to clarify the philosophical foundations of Constructive teaching, thereby finding out what it means for the education of Vietnam. While not completely denying the traditional education model, Vietnamese education needs to strongly select the constructive education model, not only as a solution to escape the current crisis but also as the philosophy of education. Because just at the philosophy level, it can help each reach out to the value of freedom – a basic value of humans – being the foundation of all development.*

Keywords: Education; Constructivism; Instructivism; Learning; Vietnamese Education

Introduction

Educational philosophy is considered one of the five pillars of education (along with elements of content, curriculum, teaching methods, teaching staff, facilities, financial, the educational management system). In particular, when education is in crisis, the first thing, people often think, that is back to the original, that is the philosophy of education (Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b; 2019).

In this context, the Vietnamese education system with the problem of crisis today is no exception. So the right thing to do is search, studying the educational philosophies that it has ever existed, dominant, and find out what values are still relevant, its value has become obsolete, at the same time, discover new philosophies that fit the age, to complement the old (Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b; 2019).

In that trend, constructivism is a theory that has been mentioned quite a lot in Vietnam in recent years. In both theory and application, it is still being discussed and researched in early successes through the use of constructivism at some schools in Vietnam, it further urged us to investigate this theory more thoroughly (David Jenner Martin and Kimberly S. Loomis, 2013; Thanh, N., 2014).

Through initial exploration, we find that the questions posed around constructivism are: Is it the theory of learning or methodology? What is the major function of constructivism? Could it be an appropriate education philosophy for Vietnam's current education? It is possible that in Vietnam there have been papers, posts on constructivism as well as its significance for the education of Vietnam. But from the philosophical point of view, philosophy, this issue has not been discussed extensively. Thus, we chose "teaching tectonics and what it means for Vietnam" as the subject of its research (Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, 2017; Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

The Position of Consrtructivism in the Educational Philosophy System

Through the study of some documents, we notice that people are seeing constructivism in two respects. The first is to understand it as a doctrine in the system of philosophical doctrines of education. The second is to understand it as a doctrine within the system of theories of educational psychology. This determination is necessary, at least for the researcher to understand the location of constructivism and recognize the boundaries of the approaches to it. However, in the context of interdisciplinary science and cross-industry are becoming a trend, we can not deny that there are intertwined elements, mixed, forcing them to look at constructivism with synthetic thinking, complex. And more precious, if that vision gives us new values both theoretical and practical.

Therefore, it is necessary to first clarify the tectonic theory in terms of philosophy and educational psychology. In the book "Building Teachers: A Constructivist Approach to Introducing Education" (David Jenner Martin, Kimberly S. Loomis, 2013), the authors David Jenner Martin and Kimberly S. Loomis were based on a common-sense use of the word "philosophy" to define the definition of philosophy, from that they define education's philosophy or educational philosophy (Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b; 2019).

Philosophy is the belief system, concept, and general view of an individual or group of people. So educational philosophy is the belief system, concept, and general view of an individual or group of people about education (David Jenner Martin, Kimberly S. Loomis, 2013; Edgar Morin, 2008). According to these authors, the philosophy of education (in the United States) has consisted of five theories: The first, the perennial, represented by Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902 - 2001) – that the education should focus on universal truth conveyed through thought as well as classic works, it has existed for centuries and it is familiar to all generations. The second, essentialism, represented by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (born 1928) - thinks that education should focus on knowledge, basic skills, and knowledge necessary for students. The third, progressivism, represented by Dewey, J.(1859 - 1952) - is an educational theory that focuses on students instead of teaching content and anything that teaches students to have meaning and The goal of education is to help students become lifelong learners in a constantly changing society. The fourth, existentialism, represented by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) - emphasizes the existence of each individual, man is responsible for identifying themselves. Thus, in the classroom where follows existentialism, students decide what they want to learn, the teacher acts as a facilitator, accompanies each student to help them find the best materials and learning methods. Finally, the fifth, that is social reconstructionism, represented by Paulo Freire (1921-1997), It is especially following the world is gradually narrowed today. This theory asserts that society needs to change (re-construct) and schools are the ideal tool for promoting change. Social reconstructionists believe that the global crisis calls for people to use education to support the establishment of a new society with a truly democratic nature. Schools are considered as agents for social reform, instead, it only serves as a transfer of knowledge.

So, by the authors above, constructivism is not classified as an educational philosophy but is classified in the system of theories of educational psychology. They distinguish the two systems as follows. While the philosophy of education focuses on the familiar questions about content, teaching methods as well as the role of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, the psychology of education involves styles of the activity of the mind when people learn. In other words, educational psychology cares about how does learning takes place? This distinction does not negate the interrelationship between these two systems. Educational psychology greatly influences teaching practice and educational philosophy. and vice versa, the philosophy of education also affects educational psychology.

Two above authors arranged constructivism as one of the three theories of the system of educational psychology. Humanism - emphasizes human innate capacity for self-development, as well as the ability and desire to control one's destiny; Behaviourism is a psychological approach that assumes that learning is shaped by the action of the environment, whereby each individual's behavior is shaped by the actions and reactions of others, it is more than voluntary will of him/herself; Information processing theory (or mind) - focus on the way of Information processing of the brain by paying attention to information to stimulate feelings.

Constructivism - with two main representatives: Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980), Swiss psychologist, and Lev Vygotsky (1896 - 1934), a Russian psychologist, assumes that people build their knowledge through communication and social interaction. So far, the content of constructive theory has been supplemented, renewed, especially the contributions from the field of neuroscience. However, with limited documents in Vietnam, we can not go into full tectonic theory. In our capacity, we present some understandings of constructive theory.

Follow the two above authors, constructivism is arranged in the system of educational psychology. But this classification is only relative. Above all, by complex thinking (Edgar Morin, 2006, 2007), we can still see it as both a philosophy of education and a theory of educational psychology. Because, from the way of thinking, which Jean Piaget or Lev Vygotsky pointed out about the formation of knowledge, allows people a new perspective on the everyday questions of the educational philosophy: content, curriculum, teachers, learners...

Characteristics of Constructive Teaching
1. The concept of "teaching activities"

Firstly from the beginning, the term "teaching activity" is a fundamental concept in the education theory system. However, The concept itself also has its movements and changes from classical to modern. In the past, people understood "teaching activity" as the teacher's activity. The teacher plays a central role in teaching and learning. In this activity, the teacher decided from the preparation of the teaching content, the method of transmission, the instructions, the questions... Students are just passive recipients, learning to "repay the test". The master holds the "key of knowledge," the door of knowledge can only be opened from the teacher's side, through the teacher's teaching. Thus, "teaching activity" in the old sense is understood to be unilateral activity from the teacher. How much the teacher is building, designed teaching activities in a full and especially, the teaching works effect so much. Managers will set up "golden rules" to force each teacher to comply fully and rigorously. This fact leads to the situations that many hours of study become boring, falls into a one-way knowledge transmission, it can not meet the individual needs of learners. So, this teaching concept is being thrown away.

From a theoretical perspective on modern teaching, teaching activities include the activities of both teachers and students. Psychologist A. Mentriskaia writes: "The two activities of teachers and learners are two aspects of the same activity" (Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, 2017; Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Thus, "teaching activity", the primary is an interactive activity, which means, it needs at least two or more participants: the instructor and the learner. Moreover, this interaction has specific characteristics. In Davydov's opinion, "The teaching-learning activities are the together activities of teachers and learners" (Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, 2017; Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). This particular characteristic is expressed in several points. *First*, the teaching activity belongs to the social activity and comports the social properties of the person, but on the level of professional activity. To participate in teaching, they must have the standard and

ability to teach. *Second*, this is an interactive activity with the same goal. Interaction in teaching is not the same interaction between individuals or social groups as in economics, politics,...which is sometimes not the same goal. But activities teaching and learning are active of teachers and learners wich they attract to the same goal. *Thirdly*, from the teacher's nature, teaching activity, in essence, is not just the transfer of knowledge, but more importantly, he is the conductor, organizer, and conductor of the activity of the learner, let learners find the right knowledge for themselves. The teacher is a designer, the student is a constructor.

2. The concept of "constructive teaching

According to the above understanding, teaching is a particular interactive activity. But theorists have not exactly pointed out that In this interaction, how many are occupied "capacity" of the role of the teacher and the role of the student? If in teaching, the teacher can not decide everything, then, how much will be their role in the "capacity" of teaching and learning activities? Is the teacher still the main or is there a transfer of roles between teachers and learners? If the learner is the main, what is the role of the teacher? Does the role of the teacher disappear? The concept of "constructive teaching" can help us answer some parts of these questions. Constructivism in education is essentially a theory of teaching, not a way of learning. Applying that theory to each environment, context, we will have different teaching styles and methods, but not just only one.

In our opinion, the greatest specific characteristic of constructivism is "constructive" nature. The problem is that "who build - construct ?", how to build -construct?" Let's go back to Piaget who is considered the father of constructivism. Based on the structure of the brain, Piaget argues that the brain is a set of cognitive structures, called primitive structures, also referred to as sketchy structures. This term refers to a process instead of saying it is a real structure. Accordingly, initial structures are always open, they are broken down and connected as they react to the flow of information received into the human mind. Because no one experiences the same, each person has a distinct primary structure. Initial structures are interconnected in a variety of ways, based on the individual's own experience as well as the relationship between the experiences. Based on this, according to Piaget, knowledge ownership is a continuous process, rather than a situation that will end. Thus, with this view Piaget envisioned that learners will be the main subjects by making up their knowledge, through separate experiences by communicating or interacting. New information connects to old information in structures that have been defined in the brain (David Jenner Martin, Kimberly S. Loomis, 2013).

While Piaget has focused on the distinct nature of the process of creating knowledge, Vygotsky has focused on the role of others in the building of individual knowledge. One of Vygotsky's major contributions to education is the "zone of proximal development" theory (David Jenner Martin, Kimberly S. Loomis, 2013). This is an area where learners can operate and operate independently, but with the support of teachers as well as other sources.

In short, constructivism in education not only does recognize that teaching is a specific interactive activity but in that connection, it affirms, emphasizes the role of learners as a prominent subject in the process of creating their knowledge. This allows each person can to become self-trained-educated, and their learning process is a lifelong process, even without a teacher. This does not mean that constructivism negates the role of the teacher, but it clearly defines what is the role of the teacher in acquiring the knowledge of the learner. Essentially, according to constructivism, the teacher's role will be to support the learning process of the student - by sharing a variety of learning experiences to help each student learn his or her way, self-generated information is meaningful to every individual. The teacher, by constructivism,

will ask the student to come to the conclusion and explain the conclusion, instead of repeating the content the teacher presented. For teachers in constructivism, listening to students is far more important than teaching. And maybe by this, from the experience of each student, the teacher can create, or add more knowledge, information for himself. In this case, the proposition "Learner is a designer, the teacher is a constructer" seems correct (John Dewey, 2016a, 2016b; Morin, E. 2006; 2008).

The meaning of the Constructivism Teaching for Vietnam
    1. **The tendencies to apply constructivism for education in the world**

As mentioned above, constructivism is a theory of learning but it is not a method of learning. There will be many ways to implement this theory following each country, nation, even with each specific culture and religion. Like many other educational trends, constructivism also brings success, failure, and many experience lessons for the nations. By referring to the article titled "Trends in applying the constructivism in education" on the Vietnam education forum website, we present some examples applying constructivism in education at the countries: The United States, Japan, China, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and Vietnam (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

    Japan approached tectonic theory in 1927, by Professor Kanji Hatano, who was at the time a student of the University of Tokyo. By the 1960s, Japan was one of the countries is delivered the teaching program of science in the way of constructivism by UNESCO. This is considered one of the most important innovations of Japanese education (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016) By the 1980s, this theory had become a trend of Japanese education, especially in foreign language teaching. However, in the process of applying this theory, Japan has encountered many difficulties, according to the research of Kansai University, the biggest difficulty is the cultural issues. In Japan, with the characteristics of an Oriental country, the role of the teacher is always promoted in universities, the distance between teachers and students is relatively large, in addition to the impact of the one-way transmission method, Japanese students and learners did not receive the educational method according to the constructivism. Even, there were some times, students and parents in Japan have caused a wave of protests against "datsu yutori kyoiku" (anti-relaxed education), expressing the desire to return to traditional academic teaching. The research by Kansai University has concluded that applying constructivism to teaching is essentially a cultural change, but It is not simply a change in teaching methodology. At present, many universities in Japan study constructivism, but have not yet applied massively at all levels (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).
The United States applies universally and effectively constructivism in education, especially to its success in the universal education system. In the 1930s and 1940s, constructivism became the dominant trend in public schools in the United States. And there are several groups, associations, federations including people supporting constructivism teaching (Association of Constructivist Teaching). The activities of these groups and associations are to exchange, meet and share teaching materials between lecturers and educators, especially publishing activities the books concerning constructivism teaching. Besides, the system of schools in the United States thoroughly applies this theory in teaching and learning. Only in the state of Chicago alone, 290 schools are having applied constructivism for teaching. However, because there are no common criteria for evaluating this method of education, many parents are not reassured. In 2009, the country introduced the National Common Core State Standards and in 2014 came into effect in all states of the United States (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

In the United Arab Emirates, constructivism teaching has failed this country. Thus, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has taken a bold step in educational reform, that is, they have invited prestigious American universities such as New York State University and Michigan State to open international schools in their country. At this moment, these American universities were ready to bring modern, bold, and innovative educational processes to the UAE. However, only after a short time, the first American universities here have closed. According to Marilyn Dahl, author of the paper "Failure to Thrive in Constructivism", the reason for this failure is UAE students do not meet the challenges of the program, which is mainly due to the cultural characteristic and background knowledge, as well as the English ability of students (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

Singapore and China. In Singapore, the concept of constructivism teaching is rather faint. Only some public schools in Singapore apply this theory in teaching mathematics. Some Chinese universities claim to have applied constructivism in teaching and research, such as Peking University with the Mapping model. According to a Chinese newspaper, by 2013, there are 51 primary schools in China piloting this methodology (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

In Vietnam, constructivism is only present in the curriculum of some schools and some educational research topics. The experimental school in Giang Vo district - Ha Noi, which was built by Professor Ho Ngoc Dai in 1978, is a typical example of the application of the teaching method by constructivism. Over the past 30 years, constructivism teaching has been praised by many educators, but there are still many debates about this educational model. However, in recent years in Vietnam, at some non-public schools, there have been some teaching and learning slogans which having the direction of constructivist teaching, such as FPT University, Hanoi School of Technology and Education, Olympia Intercultural School (2010), Montessori Experimental Kindergarten. In addition to the above-mentioned private school system, from 2011, under the sponsorship of the United Nations Global Fund, the VNEN project has been in operation until 2015 to reform primary education. This project is applied in 1,447 primary schools in 63 provinces and cities nationwide. Although not the slogan, but the criteria and activities offered for the school model, the above-mentioned project has demonstrated the guiding principle of constructivism teaching for comprehensive development for students (Vietnam Creative Education Forum, 2016).

2. Significance of applying the constructivism teaching to Vietnamese education

As stated in the preamble, every education system in the face of the crisis must find the philosophy of education as a fulcrum for thinking, finding the way out, and the path to go. The Vietnamese education system since its inception and development to this nowadays has always had the fundamental educational philosophy for oneself. The presence of educational philosophies in Vietnam is not merely isolation, separation but always in harmony with other factors such as culture, national psychology, the trend of the age, thinking of the era. So every educational philosophy itself is a reflection of those elements. Therefore, the philosophy of education often has long-lasting value, even it is deeply rooted, it is permeated deeply into the thinking of generations and it is not easy to remove. On the other hand, because the educational philosophy belongs to many social factors, every educational philosophy itself contains positive values, invariant, and it has negative, outdated elements. The universal positive characteristic in the educational philosophy of Vietnam is humanity and for human beings. Although, in each historical period, this feature is sometimes dark or light at times, but never lost.

Getting back to the current Vietnamese education, in the face of a systemic crisis, we can not help wondering when returning to search for educational philosophy. Many questions about the philosophy of education in Vietnam have been set for us. Through exploration, consultation, and open access, we have known constructivism as a new educational philosophy. The focus that we have learned in constructivism is that we understand Vietnam's education must inevitably be transformed from a paradigm of teaching transmission to the paradigm of constructive teaching. This inevitability is based on the basis, scientific principles, solid foundations, so it is so objective and contains value for the practical.

However, looking at some countries that have adopted this constructivism, especially Eastern countries, we understand that from theory to application there is still a long way to go. Because the application is not just a formality, it is a change in educational thinking, culture, and education. That takes time and needs to change many other factors in Vietnamese education.

Conclussion

1. constructivism - a theory for a method of learning, it is a new supplement, even it creates a revolutionary for thinking about education, especially for the education of Vietnam. On the platform of this theory, all people received the inevitability of transformation from a paradigm of teaching transmission to the paradigm of constructive teaching. It is a progressive process that cannot be rejected.

2. However, Vietnam is an oriental country, it has bold cultural identities such as "venerated master, respect the moral principle", "If there is no teacher, what can you do?"….. How will Vietnam's education system receive the best and most effective constructivism? Moreover, it is important to understand that the application of a new doctrine is not merely a change of form, but also a change of thinking and culture. The experiences of countries that have applied this doctrine to their education system have shown that. Facing the crisis that is heating up day by day, Vietnamese education needs to be cautious when it comes to receiving and applying new educational theories. Along with constructive theory, Vietnamese people need to have open minds to be able to accept other new educational theories, based on that, finding the way out of crisis and search for the path of sustainable development for the education of Vietnam.

3. The influence of scientific research on the quality of education and training in Vietnamese universities is enormous (Nguyen Huynh Phan, 2015). In particular, the study of constructivism to apply for teaching in Vietnam plays a greater role because, from this study, there may be new educational philosophies. However, this is a big question, with little reference in the context of Vietnam. Even more, many references are outdated. But overcoming the circumstances, we have presented the initial research on this issue as above. And we will continue to study this topic in the future until we can contribute a small voice to shape the philosophy of education in Vietnam nowadays (Tran Minh Hieu, 2018a, 2018b; 2019).

Acknowledgment

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