

John Dewey's Constructivist Learning Theory and Its Implementation in Islamic Religious Education Learning

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Abstract

This article first studies the constructivist learning theory from John Dewey's point of view, and then it investigates the extent to which the theory can be applied to PAI learning. In order to develop a well-established theory that is connected to constructivism, the process that is utilized is a literature review. The results of this research led the researchers to the conclusion that the constructivism learning theory has the capacity to engage students in active learning, even if they are required to construct their own understanding. This, in turn, makes the knowledge more relevant for the students receiving it.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji tentang teori belajar konstruktivisme dalam perspektif John Dewey, kemudian menyelidiki sejauh mana teori tersebut dapat diimplementasikan dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Metode yang digunakan yakni kajian kepustakaan untuk menghasilkan teori yang mapan terkait konstruktivisme. Dalam penelitian ini dihasilkan kesimpulan bahwa teori belajar konstruktivisme mampu melibatkan peserta didik secara aktif dalam pembelajaran bahkan mereka harus mengkonstruksi pemahamannya sendiri, sehingga menjadikan pengetahuan tersebut lebih bermakna bagi diri siswa.

Keywords: Constructivism, John Dewey, Islamic religious education

INTRODUCTION

Learning is not consist just of memorization, remembering, or the accumulation of a collection of facts or learning materials; rather, true learning is transformation that brings about change in the individual (Isti'adah, 2020). Of course, it is necessary for individual learners to go through these changes in order for them to be able to create what they go through and make it into something that has significance for them (Hapudin, 2021). As a result, according to the constructivism school of thought, it is essential for students to develop the habit of locating answers

to issues, accumulating knowledge, and discovering something that is beneficial to them (Saguni, 2019).

Empirical theorists believe that the only way for humans to acquire knowledge is through the sensory experiences they receive from their surroundings. The significance of having a wide range of experiences has been significantly narrowed as a result of this. Rationalists, on the other hand, are of the opinion that knowledge can only be acquired by the use of reason, and they despise experience because they consider it to be something that is uncertain. It is generally agreed upon that the concept of 'experience' in the context of the formation of knowledge has been diminished or obscured as a result of the group dualism. As a result, John Dewey endeavored to offer a more comprehensive comprehension of the characteristics that constitute the concept of 'experience' (Wasitohadi, 2014).

The conservative education system was subjected to severe criticism by John Dewey due to the fact that it was seen to be incapable of addressing all elements of the students' self, including cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor aspects. According to Dewey, one of the faults that traditional schools have is that they require students to study a great range of courses, and as a result, they only place an emphasis on the role of intelligence. In a similar vein, the assignments that are given to kids at school are accompanied by problem-solving activities, which is not good for the construction roles that they play. The position of teachers in schools appears to be dominant (teacher-centered) while pushing their will on pupils, rather than leading students according to their interests and talents (Iman, 2004). This is another critique that Dewey has leveled against the educational system.

As a response to the numerous criticisms that he had leveled, Dewey proposed a more democratic learning theory. This theory advocated for actively participating students in the learning process so that they may experience and discover the meaning of the material that they were being taught. The logical conclusion that can be drawn from the constructivism theory is that in order for a student to construct his knowledge, active participation in the learning process is required in order for him to acquire experience. Critical thinking, analytical thinking, and comprehensive thinking are all habits that students are accustomed to. The instructor, on the other hand, plays the role of a facilitator, providing the tools and media necessary for the students to acquire experience (Supardan, 2016).

The knowledge that is acquired in a meaningful manner will be more attached to the students' understanding, and it will be easier for students to apply the relevance of the concepts that they master to the reality that they face (Baharuddin & Wahyuni, 2010). This is one of the many benefits that will be provided by learning that is experienced directly by students.

Keeping in mind the significance of meaningful learning, which is the result of constructivist learning theory, is an important aspect of learning. Therefore, in this particular instance, the author will investigate

John Dewey's theory of constructivism with a greater degree of attention and will attempt to determine the extent to which it is applicable to the process of acquiring Islamic Religious Education.

METHOD

In this study, a qualitative methodology is utilized, and the research is conducted in a library setting. The purpose of this is to identify a well-established concept for a theory that is addressed based on literature. This literature includes books, journals, and scientific reports that are associated with John Dewey's ideas regarding education and constructivism theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

John Dewey, an American philosopher and psychologist, was renowned for his adherence to neo-pragmatism. He was born on October 20, 1859 in Burlington, United States, specifically in the state of Vermont, and passed away on June 1, 1952 in New York City (Santo, 2002).

He obtained his primary education from the public schools in Burlington, and thereafter pursued higher study at the University of Vermont. Dewey obtained his bachelor's degree in 1875 and later, in 1884, he successfully finished a PhD program in philosophy at John Hopkins University. His dissertation, titled "The Psychology of Kant," was the culmination of his studies.

There is no dispute about his profound knowledge and understanding in the domains of philosophy and psychology. In 1884, he assumed the position of assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. In addition to his teaching position at the University of Michigan, Dewey also held a teaching position at the University of Minnesota in 1889. Furthermore, he was designated as a professor of philosophy at the university. In addition, Dewey also instructed at the University of Chicago. During his tenure at the University of Chicago, he established a pioneering educational institution known as University Elementary School. This school served as a testing ground for a certain hypothesis (Setiyadi, 2010).

In 1904, Dewey departed from Chicago and relocated to Columbia University in New York. He instructed students in philosophy and education at the institution. Subsequently, Dewey's investigations and writing took on a more progressive nature. Notable works include *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Experience and Education* (1938), and *Education Today* (1940), among others. The constructivism theory refers to a philosophical and educational framework that emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own knowledge and understanding of the world.

Initially, constructivism, often referred to as progressivism, originated as a philosophical school rooted in pragmatism. Acquiring information is possible through firsthand experience. Subsequently, this

notion was inferred within the realm of education, leading to the understanding that education necessitates transformative growth in students, enabling them to effectively address the challenges they encounter in their lives. From this perspective, humans are regarded as dynamic and innovative beings, rather than static and mechanistic beings. Humans possess the autonomy to advance, which includes the liberty to expand their understanding (Barnadib, 1997).

Constructivist learning theory is a pedagogical approach that highlights the active participation and engagement of students in the learning process, aiming to enhance more favorable learning outcomes (Sa'adah & Azizah, 2021). Essentially, this approach allows individuals to have the autonomy to explore and cultivate their own knowledge, skills, and passions for personal growth (Thobroni, 2015). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the constructivism theory, due to its contextual nature, cannot be universally applied to all circumstances and subject matters. This is because its applicability is confined to certain contexts and does not extend abruptly (Saguni, 2019). Consequently, it is imperative to organize and arrange educational resources within a framework that students can develop.

Shymansky defines constructivism as an engaged process in which students actively build their own knowledge, derive significance from their learning, and integrate new concepts and ideas into their existing cognitive framework (Cahyo, 2013). From this perspective, constructivism is an approach that aims to engage students by allowing ample opportunity for them to comprehend their learning through the application of familiar concepts, which they may then implement in their everyday life (Suparlan, 2019).

According to John Dewey, the learning process involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Various pedagogical approaches can be employed for learning, such as conversations, training sessions, and other ways. However, it is crucial to underscore that the learning process can also be facilitated by educators, while students play a significant part in self-education (Fauzi, 2019).

The central concept of John Dewey's constructivist theory is the notion of experience. Experience is a multifaceted collection of activities that encompasses the different ways in which an individual, who is self-aware and seeks personal growth, interacts with their surroundings over time. Through this practice, individuals will consistently recreate and reorder their life experiences. Subsequently, the process of reconstruction will engender a novel consciousness or enhanced comprehension inside the individual regarding the actuality they confront (Wasitohadi, 2014).

Constructivism theory is sometimes known as progressivism. Both concepts are virtually synonymous, as they both highlight the individual's capacity to cultivate and refine their comprehension of the outcomes derived from their experiences within the surrounding environment. Education is deemed successful when students, who actively engage in the

learning process, acquire extensive experience and develop their own comprehension (Mustaghfiroh, 2020).

Constructivism and progressivism view education as more than just imparting knowledge to students. It encompasses a range of activities aimed at training and providing experiences that enable students to think broadly, critically, analytically, and systematically. This equips them with the ability to generate alternative perspectives and offer problem-solving solutions to the challenges they encounter (Mustaghfiroh, 2020).

Key Attributes of the Constructivism Theory

John Dewey's constructivist theory is characterized by numerous foundational elements that distinguish it: Firstly, life is characterized by its dynamic nature rather than being static. Consequently, the advancement of each era will determine the ongoing growth of individual experience and knowledge. Furthermore, the veracity of a theory hinges upon its utility in addressing real life predicaments (Iman, 2004). Furthermore, the mental processes of individuals are influenced by external stimuli, leading to reactions and subsequent adaptation to the surrounding environment.

According to Setiyadi, John Dewey views education as a means of adjusting to society. Both individuals and groups have the chance to acquire expertise as valuable assets in fostering essential, innovative, and efficient thinking and contributing positively (Setiyadi, 2010). John Dewey endeavored to reinvent education, resulting in the emergence of comprehensive educational objectives.

When implementing constructivist learning, it is crucial to consider certain key criteria. Included in the group are Mustaghfiroh (2020) and others. a) Educators should avoid becoming authoritarian towards their students. Education only acts as a facilitator who helps students' needs in gathering information and assisting them to provide motivation and appreciation; b) Do not burden students with a pile of subject matter, likewise, educators should not exclusively use methods that focus too much on books; c) In the learning process, do not use the rote method, because this method only makes students passive; d) Education must be open to social reality, so that students are flexible when dealing with their social environment; e) In the learning process it is not permissible to use physical punishment, because it will only cause fear and make it difficult for students to develop; f) According to John Dewey, education must instill discipline, but this does not mean an attitude of authority, the most important thing is to control the development of students; g) There should be no coercion in the learning process, instead, educators must have intimate communication with their students to find out more about their interests and achievements, and; h) Efforts are needed to create a participatory classroom atmosphere, where students are actively involved in learning.

Based on the aforementioned features, it is evident that education, according to the constructivism theory, is fundamentally a self-

improvement process that is essential for life. Furthermore, education serves as a social function, implying that it is a societal role in which all individual activities within a community group undergo progressive transformations. Furthermore, education is characterized as a process of personal development that stems from the individual's exploration of significance and firsthand encounters. Furthermore, education is viewed as a process of continual rehabilitation, as stated by Setiyadi (2010).

Constructivism and the Process of Learning

Constructivist learning involves the emergence of the principles of experiential learning and the resolution of problems. In order to do this, students must actively engage in the process of reconstructing their knowledge and abilities with the goal of continually enhancing their understanding of subjects. Constructivist learning theory is commonly employed in classes that utilize problem-solving and discovery learning paradigms (Saguni, 2019).

The constructivist learning approach is founded around the 5E cycle, which consists of engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation. During the engagement phase, educators aim to stimulate students' interest and curiosity regarding the topic that will be addressed. The exploration stage involves pupils actively participating in activities designed by instructors to test hypotheses, record observation data, or engage in discussions with peers. During the explanation phase, educators prompt their students to articulate an idea using their own words. The teacher seeks further clarification from the students regarding their explanations, or fellow students are invited to provide constructive criticism (Superni, 2018).

During the elaboration stage, educators offer feedback and clarification to address students' misconceptions. They also provide opportunity for students to establish connections between concepts and enhance their cognitive structure by linking or developing concepts with their skills. During the evaluation stage, the focus is on diagnosing and measuring the level of knowledge and comprehension that students have developed through their practice.

In a constructivist perspective, assessment employs goal-free evaluation, which is an evaluation framework designed to address limitations associated with specific objectives. Thus, constructivist learning yields expedited learning benefit. This examination necessitates a cognitive experiential procedure. Evaluation methods can be focused on authentic activities that involve complex cognitive processes, as well as through direct synthesis that considers a wide range of contexts and perspectives (Sumarsih, 2009). In order to accomplish this, it is imperative to focus on the procedural aspect of implementing this theory in the context of learning.

a. The role of an educator

Each educator fulfills a crucial function in facilitating the construction of their pupils' knowledge. Educators not only impart knowledge, but also assist pupils in constructing and structuring information into coherent knowledge. Similarly, educators must comprehend the cognitive processes or viewpoints of their students. Lecturers should refrain from exerting dominance and asserting their perspective as the exclusive viewpoint that must be embraced by their pupils. These steps can be achieved by: a) Offering educational experiences, information, resources, and other learning aids; b) Presenting students with thought-provoking questions or events that can arouse their curiosity; c) Assisting students in articulating their thoughts and expressing their ideas, and; d) Consistently providing opportunities for students to further develop and build upon their acquired knowledge and experiences.

b. The role of learners

As previously highlighted, instructors serve solely as facilitators in the learning process, while the responsibility for actual learning belongs with the students themselves. Students are required to engage actively in experiencing, critically thinking, forming thoughts, and uncovering the significance of each event. In this instance, the encounter is genuinely comprehensive, rather than being limited to basic sensory functions.

Students bear the responsibility for their learning results. They are required to independently engage in logical thinking and decision-making (under the guidance of educators) to address the disparity between their existing knowledge and the requirements of their new encounter. Therefore, it is inconsequential if there exist disparities among students in the process of creating their comprehension (Sulaiman & Syakarofath, 2018).

In order to accomplish this, pupils must adhere to certain protocols, which include: Initially, students are required to articulate their preliminary understanding of the issue under discussion. Teachers should offer incentive or encouragement to their students, if needed, in order to motivate them to confidently share their first understanding. Furthermore, pupils are afforded the chance to thoroughly examine the data, resources, or information that is supplied by the teacher. Furthermore, students engage in the process of arranging and analyzing the data/information within an activity that has been specifically crafted by the instructor. Furthermore, students articulate the outcomes of their comprehension of the encounter or interpretation, along with proposed resolutions to issues. Simultaneously, instructors offer input on this issue. Furthermore, pupils construct a novel comprehension of the information they discover. Students are afforded the autonomy to articulate their own viewpoints and ideas regarding the challenges they encounter. Furthermore, students are required to effectively utilize their conceptual comprehension in order to solve practical challenges in real-world scenarios (Lapono, 2008).

The active engagement of students demonstrates the efficacy of the constructivism theory in cultivating comprehension and nurturing a motivation for self-directed learning. Learning activities can be defined as the process of personal growth achieved through hands-on experiences that leverage one's skills and knowledge, while being supervised by educators. Learning activities have a crucial role in determining the success of the teaching and learning process. This is because learning is essentially the process of constructing the learner's understanding (Sardiman, 2007).

c. Pros and cons

Regarding the benefits of the constructivist learning theory: Initially, students assume a more active role in the learning process, while instructors take on the role of facilitators and motivators. Hence, educators do not only serve as the exclusive conduit of information acquisition, as pupils have the capacity to acquire or get knowledge from firsthand experience. Furthermore, students will develop into engaged, innovative, and efficient persons, possessing the ability to think critically, analyze effectively, and constructively problem-solve. Furthermore, meaningful learning enhances the retention of knowledge in students' memories, allowing previously acquired knowledge to serve as valuable material for future contemplation. Furthermore, the constructivist learning theory originated the concept of autonomous learning or learning democracy. This aligns with the Indonesian government's objective to establish educational freedom, as it is seen crucial for the advancement of future education. Furthermore, the presence of individuals is much esteemed, and any information produced by individuals is deserving of admiration (Cahyo, 2013).

Concerning the limitations of constructivist learning theory: Firstly, it necessitates educators to invest significant work in producing instructional materials, assembling procedures, providing guidance, and possessing comprehensive knowledge in the field of learning. Teachers must employ greater creativity to foster excitement and motivation in students. Furthermore, it is necessary to have well-established and fully equipped educational facilities in order to effectively accommodate the lesson material. Implementing lessons will be challenging without comprehensive learning facilities and resources. Furthermore, the process of constructing students' knowledge is time-consuming. Due to the fact that students do not hold full knowledge beforehand. Furthermore, students may experience confusion when they encounter numerous findings that diverge from their own (Cahyo, 2013).

Application of Islamic Religious Education Learning

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a crucial role in shaping knowledge and moral values. The primary focus of PAI learning is to enhance students' cognitive abilities, particularly in addressing religious issues that arise within their social context. Therefore, constructivist learning theory can also be applied to PAI classes. The implementation of

constructivism theory in PAI learning, utilizing the 5E learning cycle model, can be carried out in the following steps (for instance, in the context of teaching the Zakat Function material at the SMP/MTs level):

Initially, at the engagement stage, the teacher endeavors to stimulate the pupils' interest and curiosity regarding the issue of zakat that will be addressed. The teacher poses inquiries regarding everyday occurrences or events. Each response or assertion provided by a student might serve as a foundation for the teacher to assess the scope of the student's first understanding. As an illustration, during the zakat lesson, the instructor presents a movie that depicts the actuality of economic disparity between the affluent and the impoverished. Subsequently, the instructor poses the inquiry, "What are the reasons behind the disparity between the wealthy and the underprivileged?" What actions need to be taken in order to bridge the disparity in one's life? Subsequently, the teacher extends an invitation to the pupils to furnish their reactions to the film or pose questions. The response provided by each student serves as a crucial indicator for the teacher to assess the student's comprehension of the significance of zakat.

The second stage is the exploration stage, which involves the active engagement of students in the learning process. Here, the teacher organizes small groups of 2-4 students to engage in a discussion about the significance of zakat in life. This discussion draws from both literary sources and the personal experiences of the students. Students are required to evaluate hypotheses or generate new hypotheses while also resolving the problem. Subsequently, students document the outcomes of the conversation regarding their findings. Subsequently, the instructor, in the role of a facilitator, assesses the accuracy of the pupils' knowledge, determining whether it is correct, incorrect, or only half correct. In the zakat material, the teacher suggests a hypothesis that social inequality arises from the suboptimal utilization of zakat or the lack of attention given to it by many individuals. Subsequently, the students are prompted to examine this hypothesis and determine if it aligns with their own perspectives, or if there are alternative explanations. Students demonstrated their understanding of the significance of zakat, the rationale behind giving zakat, and its purpose in life, among other related topics. Educators should actively promote this by posing thought-provoking questions, thereby fostering students' confidence in articulating their original understanding.

In the fourth stage, known as the explanation stage, students are required to articulate or convey their understanding derived from the talks with their group using their own language. Meanwhile, the teacher requests clarification, data, or evidence in response to the students' statements. Students are required to gather and analyze material or literature that is relevant to their statement. Subsequently, students or other collectives are requested to scrutinize or react to the assertion made by the initial student/group. Subsequently, the instructor offers elucidation on the

notion of comprehension, specifically addressing the true essence of understanding.

In the elaboration stage, the concepts that have been comprehended are used in a novel situation or a distinct setting. Students get a deeper comprehension of the subject matter through the process of applying and constructing their own understanding. If the teacher designs this effectively, it will help enhance pupils' learning motivation. The student's duty is to establish a connection between the teacher's explanations and their own experiences or the actual world, with regards to the role of zakat. It has been discovered that zakat plays a crucial role in life, specifically in mitigating the socioeconomic disparity between affluent and impoverished individuals.

Furthermore, during the evaluation phase, the teacher has the opportunity to closely examine, diagnose, and assess the students' comprehension and the degree to which the learning objectives were achieved. If knowledge is comprehensively grasped and extensively implemented, it becomes contextualized, and achieving these outcomes necessitates thoughtful contemplation (Sa'adah & Azizah, 2021). Students can engage in a comprehensive manner by directly implementing the practical zakat learning approach.

CONCLUSION

The philosophy of constructivism is highly applicable in the context of learning as it actively engages students through direct experiential involvement with the subject matter or discussion of the lesson. Constructivism theory promotes student-centered learning, where students actively develop their own knowledge. Students engage in a process of assimilating new concepts and ideas into their existing cognitive framework, as they actively seek personal understanding and significance from their learning experiences.

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