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Social constructivist pedagogy in business studies classrooms – teachers' experiences and practices

Abstract

Social constructivism is the dominant pedagogical theory endorsed in educational discourse today. This study set out to examine teaching and learning in Grade 11 business studies classrooms from a social constructivist perspective. The data were obtained through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. While the teachers were positive towards social constructivist pedagogy, they were not familiar with the epistemology that underpinned its emergence. The learning of multiple perspectives through discussion, a key tenet of the social constructivist theory of learning, was not evident. Teachers indicated that they preferred direct instruction, as it enabled curriculum coverage and better control over learners. Teachers viewed social constructivist approaches as slowing down syllabus coverage and leading to loss of control in overcrowded classrooms. Limited time and higher workload due to larger classes were common deterrents.

Keywords: *business studies, cognitive constructivism, dualism, epistemology, multiplism, social constructivism*

1. Introduction

Social constructivism founder, Lev Vygotsky, held that people learn best by engaging in conversation and cooperating with others. Vygotsky (1978: 88) argues that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them”. Social constructivism postulates that comprehension, relevance, and meaning are constructed in collaboration with other humans. Social constructivism has been referred to as a sociocultural revolution (Voss, Wiley & Carretero, 1995), as a paradigm shift (Kozulin, 2012), and as one of the theories of education that have had the most impact in the twenty-first century (Krahenbuhl, 2016). This theory originates from one of the influential learning theories called ‘constructivist theory’ which advocates active learning. The constructivist theory posits that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively create foundational knowledge through investigation and reflection.

Vygotsky, Brunner and John Dewey, the pioneers of constructivism, believed that learners should actively create information rather than passively acquire it, and that cognition plays an active role in the organisation of the world they experience (Joseph, 2021). Constructivist theory is divided into cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Unlike social constructivism, cognitive constructivism subordinates the individual and the social meaning-making process to objective knowledge. From a cognitive constructivist's perspective, the lesson's goal is for learners to develop mental models that correspond with or reflect the reality of expert knowledge. The textbook and the instructor's expertise serve as the basis for determining whether a learner's assumptions are correct or erroneous. There is a strict dichotomy between right and wrong, and the teacher's job is to help learners understand the truth (Hofer, 2001). However, social constructivist learning strategies assume that learners have full prior knowledge, are eager to share their partial understanding with others, and are at ease with uncertainty. Inadequate prior knowledge of learners, the shame of revealing ambiguous understanding to others, and the requirement for assurance (Moskal, Loke & Hung, 2016) pose unique challenges for educators.

The business studies curriculum is one of the subjects in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) that learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase may choose to study together with six other subjects. The CAPS is the third major curriculum reform in South Africa since the commencement of democratic rule. However, curriculum reform implementation is fraught with many challenges. Constant curriculum changes put a strain on schoolteachers (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020). Results from several case studies revealed challenges such as curriculum change, medium of instruction, overcrowded classrooms, discipline, and lack of resources. Much research on the CAPS reveals grave challenges in its implementation. Taole (2015) researched the factors that hinder or facilitate curriculum implementation in South African schools and found that support and resources remain central to the curriculum implementation process. The lack of parental involvement, the unavailability of follow-up visits from subject specialists, and school leadership affect the implementation of the curriculum. The study advocates pre-implementation training and a concerted effort from all stakeholders to ensure successful curriculum implementation.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE),

the subject Business Studies deals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values critical for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors. The subject encompasses business principles, theory, and practice that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainable enterprises, and economic growth (DBE, 2011:8).

The primary objectives of business education encompass comprehending the worldwide business environment and integrating theory, practice, and experience with it (Avolio, Benzaquen & Pretell, 2015). Chinomona and Maziriri (2015) assert that the Gauteng province is widely recognised for its vibrant commercial environment and financial activities, which provide a conducive setting for the implementation of social constructivist principles. By fostering collaborative learning settings that involve groupwork, discussions, and problem-solving activities, learners can construct their understanding of essential business concepts and principles effectively. Edokpolor (2018) recommends that business studies teachers integrate field trips into their teaching methodology to familiarise learners with their potential environments, such as workplaces, and/or invite successful entrepreneurs to motivate learners

about the business world. The effectiveness of the notion that learners ought to be viewed as information users is contingent upon educators adopting pedagogical methodologies that involve the evaluation and utilisation of information by learners.

Because of this shift, the teachers of business studies can no longer count on learners to rely simply on memorisation and recall of material for evaluation purposes. Novel pedagogical approaches that require active learning are suitable for the discipline. The way business studies ought to be taught to learners in high school has undergone a significant change (Majola, 2020). The incorporation of active learning strategies in a simulated business classroom setting is a beneficial approach for primary and secondary school-level learners (Meintjes, Henrico & Kroon, 2015). Various pedagogical approaches, such as verbal presentations, the interaction between the educator and the learner, and the involvement of learners in the creation of educational materials are suitable. The utilisation of the question-and-answer technique, group deliberations, the resolution of complex issues, project-oriented learning, the use of case studies, and simulation have been recommended by (Majola, 2020). However, Business Studies teachers encountered challenges in complying with the syllabus mandate of incorporating action-oriented pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning, commercial enterprise visits, simulations, case studies, and class presentations (Sithole & Lumadi, 2012). Despite the endorsement of active and critical learning methodologies in the curriculum, various impediments exist that hinder their implementation in the classroom. The key limitations include the extensive length of the syllabus, the need for customised instructional materials, and the time-consuming nature of implementing experiential teaching methodologies. The syllabus for business studies is excessively protracted, rendering it unfeasible to address the content comprehensively while implementing learner-centred pedagogical methods, which teachers regarded as being demanding in terms of time (Sithole, 2010).

According to Kaka (2021), in a recent study conducted in South Africa, teachers who took part in the research suggested that the attainment of effective and productive teaching of business studies is contingent upon the resolution of challenges such as the lack of in-service courses, restricted mentorship opportunities, inadequate financial resources, insufficient support from colleagues and the educational institution, a paucity of supplementary educational materials, and a lack of qualified teachers to teach business studies. In this study, a social constructivist lens is used to investigate the instructional strategies that Grade 11 business studies teachers utilise in their classrooms. The study is framed by the social constructivism learning theory that is based on constructivism from the standpoint of Vygotsky's theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory highlights knowledge construction and how learners build new representations and insights through social interaction and comparison with expert sources of knowledge. Business Studies lessons were analysed according to processes in the social construction of knowledge, such as learners discussing their prior knowledge and experiences in response to a problem; learners discussing the resources provided by the teacher for the task; and learners comparing their responses to expert sources such as the textbook, the teacher, and other specialist sources. We also examined the issues that make some teachers wary of adopting social constructivist strategies in the classroom.

2. Literature review and framework

2.1 Social constructivism

Vygotsky (1978) believes that the social nature of humans and the social process by which infants integrate into the intellectual activity of those around them are necessary conditions for learning. Vygotsky argues that adults in the immediate social environment help children learn and grow when they provide them with opportunities to tackle complex tasks that have real-world relevance. The adults in a child's life impart to them their culture's perspective on and in reaction to the world through the use of "language", which is the most significant cultural tool that significantly affects children's learning (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). In other words, the presumption of this theory is that comprehension, importance, and meaning are generated in conjunction with the efforts of other human beings. According to Liu and Matthews (2005), misunderstandings of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory stem from people taking his conceptions at face value, failing to recognise the overarching philosophical stance that guides his writings.

Kalina and Powell (2009) emphasise that collaboration and other forms of social contact are fundamental components of the social constructivist instructional approach, contributing to the method's high efficacy and universal applicability. In this context, it is essential to differentiate between knowledge and learning anything new. Knowledge is said to be inter-psychologically produced in the environment through collaborative efforts with other people, as proposed by the social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Even while learning can take place through collaboration, the learning process is still internal and occurs within the individual intra-psychologically. As a result, learning takes place on an individual level and is the product of the production of knowledge through collaboration, whereas the environment is responsible for the co-creation of knowledge. Therefore, the process of information internalisation is both an individual and a social one (Churcher, Downs & Tewksbury, 2014).

Social constructivist teaching is challenging to implement when teachers are not familiar with the epistemological basis of social constructivism. Although teachers are familiar with social constructivism, Davis and Sumara (2003) discovered that teachers frequently lack knowledge of the epistemological advancements that have sparked the fast growth of this vocabulary. The theoretical basis of social constructivism outlined by Doolittle and Hicks (2003) emphasises knowledge construction by the learner. Concerning tests for truth claims, social constructivism accommodates variations in learners' understanding of external reality. It is vital to note that the truth is not superficial, fixed, or individual, but adaptive and socially determined. Teachers should act as facilitators and co-explorers in their learners' quest for knowledge, prompting them to engage in in-depth critical thinking and ultimately draw their conclusions (Ciot, 2009).

Social constructivism emphasises the construction of knowledge and progression toward new understanding and awareness of many knowledge perspectives. Social constructivism foregrounds the

active creation and modification of thoughts, ideas, and understandings as the result of experiences that occur within socio-cultural contexts. Central issues in this creation of understanding include (a) what counts as valid knowledge (epistemology) and (b) what counts as existence and reality (ontology) (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003: 77).

In terms of personal epistemology, learners move from dualism, which is a right-and-wrong and absolutist view, to multiplism when they start to see that there are different points of view and that uncertainty is possible (Hofer, 2001). Concerning subject knowledge, the teacher goes further than textbook-defined facts and concepts.

More significant for learning is that learners interact and strive to reach consensus. This group consensus is then subjected to greater scrutiny as learners need to compare their agreement to expert knowledge. People at this stage are prone to accept opposing viewpoints as equally valid (Hofer, 2001). A social constructivist educational approach would emphasise the importance of social interaction, investigation, and negotiation. Thus, the social constructivist teacher might use a cooperative inquiry method in education. From the point of view of social constructivism, the teachers concern is not only that learners understand a certain set of facts and ideas that are in the textbook. The teacher is also concerned about how well the learners will be able to get along with one another, as well as learn new things. When learners are asked to compare their consensus with that of experts as a way to prove that they are right and to help them learn more, the circle of people they know grows, thus serving the socialisation goal.

Social constructivist pedagogies are advocated for the productive learning of Business Studies. Mohammad (2015) advocates a shift towards the use of constructive pedagogies, which will make it possible for learners of Business Studies to be active participants in the process of learning, cultivate their creativity, and simultaneously experience what it will be like to work in an office in the 21st century. The development of core abilities like critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and collaboration occurs due to learning in communities through collaborative groupwork (Mohammad, 2015). The role-playing method is a contemporary instructional strategy that allows learners to internalise the content by assuming the roles of various characters. The use of direct instruction is not advised, since it does not develop higher levels of thinking abilities and it does not transfer information to a new setting, as stated (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003). Direct instruction is a method of education that involves a great deal of structure, and is also referred to as teacher-led instruction (Adams & Carnine, 2003). While it is true that direct instruction is highly effective at imparting knowledge of real-world material, there is less proof that it imparts higher-order cognitive skills like reasoning and problem-solving, or fosters the adaptability that is necessary for learners to apply the learned strategies in unfamiliar settings (Peterson & Walberg, 1979).

Research of social constructivist pedagogic approaches outlines the challenges associated with it. The influences of social constructivist approaches on history teachers' opinions of social science education were investigated by Muhammed (2021). It was found that many challenges were identified in implementing social constructivist approaches in social science education such as the environment of fear, the shortage of proper public infrastructure, resources, and lack of care. The study also revealed several barriers such as the absence of sufficient well-designed teaching guidelines, lack of adequate clear instructions, inadequacy of classroom teachers' autonomy, and constrained freedom.

3. Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for gathering detailed and comprehensive data to answer the research questions. Bowen (2009) asserts that the qualitative approach enables research participants to express their opinions and experiences in their original words. According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative research is regarded as interpretive research, since it depends on the interpretations of the researchers to identify meanings concealed within the data. The research sites in this study were two schools in the Johannesburg North district of the Gauteng province of South Africa. The lower socio-economic status school (LSESS) is a fully government-funded, non-fee-paying school that mostly serves black learners and a small number of coloured learners. This school had greater teacher-learner ratios ranging from 1 to 50 to 1 to 65. The middle socio-economic status school (MSESS) is a fee-paying, former model C school that now serves learners of various races. The teacher-learner ratios at this well-equipped school range from 1 to 30 to 1 to 35.

Table 1: Summary of biographical data

School	Teacher	Gender	Qualification	Subject specialization	Teaching experience
LESS	TA	F	Advanced Certificate in Actuarial Science	Maths & Science	12 years
	TB	F	BCom Accounting PGCE	Economics & Accounting	8 years
MESS	TC	F	BEd Hons: Leadership & Management	Economics & Business Studies	4 years
	TD	M	BEd	Accounting & Business Studies	8 years

The teacher participants were chosen using a purposeful convenience sampling method. The teachers ranged from 4 to 12 years of experience in teaching Business Studies. According to Minott and Willet (2011), individuals with a substantial amount of knowledge possess the capacity to offer valuable insights and perspectives on the key topics that are pertinent to a specific inquiry. Data were collected through observations of eight lessons in each school and semi-structured interviews with the teachers. These observations of lessons served to corroborate the data from semi-structured interviews and document analysis. An interview schedule was developed by the researchers with open-ended questions and the participants were interviewed face-to-face once and consulted via telephone for clarification where the need arose. The audio records of the data were transcribed and analysed into codes, categories, and patterns. The thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012: 57), of systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across the data set was also followed.

Standard ethical measures were employed in this study. An ethical clearance certificate from the University Ethics Committee and a permission letter to gather school data from the Department of Basic Education were obtained. Permission to collect data in the schools was also obtained from the school principals. The teacher participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. They were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time if they needed to.

4. Findings

4.1 Document analysis

Standardised lesson plans and the CAPS curriculum for Grade 11 were among the documents examined. To reduce the teachers' workload, the DBE subject advisors have created lesson plans and activities for all of the subjects included in the CAPS policy. According to the DBE (2011:4), one of the primary goals of CAPS is to encourage the adoption of an "active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths". The active approaches promoted are examples of social constructivism pedagogies. Taking an active and critical stance, as outlined in the CAPS curriculum, ensures that learners acquire the skills they need to solve problems they may face in the real world. The CAPS policy does not outline types of active learning strategies teachers can employ in their classrooms. Instead, the description of the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) for Grade 11 found in section three of the CAPS document only outlines the topic, duration, content, and resources that are suggested for the teacher.

The teachers in the study relied on standardised, ready-made lesson plans provided by the subject advisors at the beginning of each year. None of the teachers prepared their own plans and activities for a particular classroom. Teachers were quite open about not preparing lesson plans themselves,

We no longer prepare individual lesson plans; we implement the ones provided to us, even teaching methods are suggested inside the standardised lesson plans.

The lesson plans for Grade 11 Business Studies contained extensive knowledge linked to the topic. The learning objectives, skills, and questions teachers ought to ask when teaching were clearly stated in the lesson plan. Thus, the lesson plans depicted the key concepts linked to the topic. However, the connection between content and concepts was not shown. When compared to the CAPS, the lesson plans did contain a list of hands-on methodologies such as "(i) explaining, (ii) question and answer sessions, (iii) demonstration, (iv) independent practice, and (v) group work" (DBE, 2020: 1). During the analysis of the standardised lesson plans, we identified a shortcoming linked to the absence of a detailed description of each suggested teaching method. The DBE lesson plans did not detail how teachers were to employ each teaching strategy in a real-life classroom situation. According to Shah (2019), teachers are more likely to resort to the lecture method when there is not a clear emphasis on different pedagogical approaches in the standardised lesson plans.

4.2 Observation findings

4.2.1 Teachers' views of social constructivist pedagogy

Although teachers were aware of the value of a social constructivist pedagogy, and that learner participation increased, classroom observation showed that they predominantly employed direct instruction methods. TA's words below show a positive attitude toward collaborative learning:

Yes, I employ this teaching method but less frequently as I have mentioned above. Many studies have proved that learners become alive when they work in group activities and enjoy presenting their findings. I have seen that with my learners.

TB disclosed that she hardly sets group-based projects or tasks because high-flying learners outshine struggling learners. Despite teachers being positively disposed toward social constructivist methodology, direct instruction was the most dominant pedagogy. This aspect is analysed in the next section.

4.3 Direct instruction in Business Studies classrooms

The direct instruction method dominated most lessons observed, followed by the lecture method and question-and-answer methods. We observed the following lesson on “entrepreneurial qualities” a starting topic in the Term 3 Grade 11 Business Studies syllabus. The classroom dialogue between TC and her learners below was analysed to highlight the dominant pedagogic practices:

TC: On Friday, we looked at an introduction to entrepreneurial qualities in businesses ... What is the meaning of Entrepreneur?

Learner 1: An entrepreneur is someone who seizes an opportunity to start and runs his own business and can either introduce a new product or services or upgrade an existing idea.

TC: Excellent. What entrepreneurial qualities do they need to have?

Learner 2: Perseverance.

TC: Excellent; what is the meaning of perseverance?

Learner 3: A new business takes time to become established and generate enough income to pay all its expenses. So, during that period, they must not give up.

TC: Yes. Sometimes you may have to pay salaries from your pocket. What are other qualities? Look at your notes.

Learner 4: Creativity, Responsibility, Risk-taking –taking calculated risks.

TC: Good. It would help if you always took calculated risks; otherwise, the business idea might not generate the desired income. Now let us proceed to today's topic.

TC continued the lesson by writing on the board the unique entrepreneurial attributes such as:

- *Organizational and management skills;*
- *Confident and ambitious;*
- *Need for achievement;*
- *Hardworking and energetic*

The question-and-answer technique dominated the pedagogy to provide opportunities for learners to learn about entrepreneurial skills. In TCs' classroom learners' responses were validated as “correct” or “incorrect” based primarily on the teacher as a source of truth. This attribute is characteristic of cognitive constructivism in which either the teacher or the textbook adjudicates the validity of the responses. Much lesson time was allocated to learners copying notes in their books. The primary roles learners played were copying notes from the board, listening to the teacher's explanations, and answering questions that required short answers. In social constructivism, learners are encouraged to compare their consensus to expert knowledge as a form of validation and further learning. Contrary to the social constructivist perspective, TC was concerned with whether the learners memorised a set of textbook definitions and teacher-validated facts and concepts. In addition, the circle

of socialisation was not enlarged beyond the teacher, textbook, and learner. TA on the other hand, attempted to employ the groupwork technique in one of the lessons observed. TA's lesson is analysed below.

During observation, we noticed TA had already divided learners into groups of eight. Three learners from different groups presented to their peers the business roles they play as individuals in their communities. It appeared that the learners had received the topic the previous day. Below are presentation extracts:

Learner 1

As an individual, I have a responsibility to make sure that the environment I live in is protected. During school holidays, my friends and I make sure that we clean local parks by collecting bottles and tins that people litter on the grounds. We place plastic bags around the park and show people where they need to litter the waste.

Learner 2

The role I play in my community involves helping the kids in my community with school projects. Most of the time, I help Grade 7s with Technology projects. The last project I helped them with was building a bridge. I went to local shops and asked for unused boxes and plastics for the children's projects.

Learners' presentations were characterised by common-sense responses to the task. It appears TA did not teach the learners about community business roles as stipulated in the syllabus. Without text-based references, learners used common sense and experiential knowledge only to respond to the task. There was no evidence of knowledge being socially constructed. Using direct instruction, TA elaborated on the following business roles: social responsibility; environmental sustainability; economic prosperity; product stewardship; procurement; product access; and dualistic economy.

Table 2: Summary of lesson observations data

Social Constructivism analysis					
Lesson number	Direct instruction	Group discussion	Sources provided	Validation of knowledge	Epistemology – Dualist/multiplism
1	Dominant	Absent	Textbook	Teacher	Dualist
2	Dominant	Absent	Textbook	Teacher	Practical/ individual perspective
3	Dominant	Present	Handouts	Teacher	Dualist
4	Dominant	Absent	PowerPoint slides	Teacher	Dualist
5	Dominant	Absent	Textbook	Teacher	Dualist
6	Dominant	Absent	Handouts	Teacher	Dualist
7	Dominant	Absent	Textbook	Teacher	Dualist
8	Dominant	Absent	PowerPoint slides	Teacher	Dualist

Table 2 above shows that direct instruction dominated the lessons; group discussion was absent in all the lessons; the teacher validated knowledge as right or wrong and dualist, right or wrong assessment prevailed.

4.4 Interview findings

Table 3: Summary of attitude and reasons for non-implementation of Social Constructivism pedagogy

Teacher	A	B	C	D	TOTAL
Attitude to social constructivism	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	4
Reasons for non- Implementation:					
Slows down syllabus coverage	√	√	√	√	4
Loss of classroom control and discipline	√	√			2
Limited time	√	√	√	√	4
Inadequate conceptual development of learners				√	1
Shortage of resources	√	√			2
Overcrowded classrooms	√	√			2
High workload	√	√	√	√	4

4.5 Reasons for dominance of direct instruction

Analysis of interview data revealed the following reasons for the dominance of direct instruction: syllabus coverage; inadequate conceptual preparedness of learners; shortage of teaching resources; overcrowded classrooms; and high workload which are analysed below.

4.6 Syllabus coverage

Teacher participants justified direct instruction as it can “fast-track” syllabus coverage within the allotted time while keeping learners engaged in the teaching-learning process:

TA stated:

Ideally (Umm), I prefer to use the lecture method; this is when I'm in charge of the classroom while pushing the content. During the delivery of the lesson, I pause and ask questions; then, learners give answers. This method keeps the learners disciplined, especially in overcrowded classes we teach in.

TC stated:

I use role-plays sometimes. If I use role plays in every topic as suggested in some studies, I will not finish the syllabus; I'll be behind with the ATP and will have to account.

4.7 Inadequate prior conceptual development

TA indicated that offering Business Studies only in Grade 10 disadvantaged the learners in their conceptual development.

TA stated:

The Business content covered in the EMS syllabus is just not enough and cannot be regarded as a foundation to Grade 10's Business Studies syllabus. The first term of Grade 10 is the most difficult as learners find it challenging to grasp the new concepts because they lack a solid background.

4.8 Shortage of teaching resources

The LSESS teachers also lamented the lack of technological resources in the classroom. While MSESS learners use computer tablets preloaded with a variety of textbooks, School Y still placed heavy emphasis on traditional textbooks.

TB mentioned that:

The number of learners doing Business Studies over the years has increased and has led to a shortage of textbooks in all grades. Some teachers don't fully retrieve textbooks at the end of the year, and the number of available Business Studies textbooks decreases each year. Also, we struggle to share online materials with the learners, as they do not have the devices.

4.9 Overcrowded classrooms

TA and TB stated that there are currently more than 45 learners in their Business Studies classes, making management and control difficult. As a result, it is difficult for teachers and learners to move around, and occasionally disturbances occur that hamper instruction. Teachers end up opting to abandon social constructivist teaching and learning techniques that, in their opinion, could have improved instruction and learning. Participants expressed their opinions about their current circumstances in crowded classrooms.

TA stated,

The current major problem we are facing in teaching the subject is the ever-increasing number of learners we teach. More and more learners are choosing the subject. Controlling the books has become a nightmare, as more than 50 learners are in one classroom. Sometimes we can't even do remedial work.

During observations, the researchers noticed that several learners shared a single desk and that there was not enough space between the rows in TA's classroom. As a result, it was impossible to organise learners for collaborative tasks due to a lack of space. The overcrowded classrooms results in greater control issues which have an adverse effect on teachers' pedagogical approaches. The present research lends credence to the claim made by Akar and Yildirun (2005) that constructivist pedagogy may work better in smaller class sizes. Additionally, Owuor (2010) pointed out that certain learners in large courses exhibit behavioural issues that interfere with the teaching-learning process.

4.10 High workload

Teachers have long complained about the mounting administrative tasks associated with working in packed classrooms. All four of the teacher participants stated that their high workload forced them to work long hours, causing stress and a detrimental effect on family time. The teachers' responses on how their ever-growing workload was affecting them are as follows.

TA stated:

At home, I hardly rest because of the marking I bring from school. Sometimes, I even ask my husband to help with the house chores. There's no quality time for us as a married couple, as I'm always working under pressure.

Similarly, TB stated:

Marking and creating a question paper at school is impossible, as learners are always consulting during break time. So, I'm left with no choice but to take the work home and sacrifice the time I spend with my children.

Participants also remarked that, in addition to the short time allotted for instruction, they had other responsibilities, such as overseeing instructional activities and resolving conflicts that often emerge in large classrooms between learners. Data analysis of observation and interview data show that business studies teachers intentionally rely on direct instruction to 'cover' the syllabus. Thus, learners are most likely to acquire a dualistic epistemology rather than the endorsed multiplistic epistemology that acknowledges different perspectives. Teachers hardly use constructivist strategies, even though many scholars, including Mohammad (2015), stress the importance of doing so to help learners better understand and apply business concepts in a variety of settings. The teachers set research-based group projects for School-Based Assessment (SBA) tasks only. Furthermore, they ignored the requirement of the practical application aspect of the business studies topics.

4.11 Limitations of this study

The findings of this study are constrained to the experiences of four business studies teachers in Grade 11, who teach at conventional high schools within a single district. As a result, it is not possible to extrapolate the conclusions to a broader population. The study could potentially have included multiple schools within the province, however, due to financial and time constraints, the researchers were unable to include additional schools.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

While social constructivism is one of the most influential philosophies in education in the 21st century (Krahenbuhl, 2016), direct instruction dominated classroom practices in these classrooms. Factual and conceptual knowledge was presented and validated by teacher and textual sources. In spite of pervasive research findings that social constructivist methods are conducive to higher thinking and understanding, direct instruction dominated the lessons that were observed. These results corroborate those of Mkala and Wanjau (2013), who conclude that teachers habitually employ relatively unproductive teacher-centred pedagogies and assessment approaches to deliver Business Education, intentionally avoiding the more effective ones. The teacher participants were aware of the value of social constructivist pedagogy but were more concerned about completing the syllabus, keeping order in the classroom, and preparing learners for examinations than facilitating active and deep learning. The participants saw social constructivist learner-centred pedagogy as incompatible with syllabus completion, keeping order, and preparing learners for examinations. Contrary to social constructivist goals of learning from multiple perspectives, the pedagogy in these classrooms trend towards dualism where objective, universal knowledge is validated by the teacher or textbook as valid knowledge.

Teachers raised concerns about delivering the extensive business studies content. Structural barriers such as limited time, the ever-increasing workload, shortage of teaching resources, and teaching in overcrowded classrooms, were cited as major constraints in the teaching of the subject in socially constructivist ways. The lack of proper exposure to important business studies concepts in Grades 8 and 9 also affects their teaching practices.

The following recommendations are made to improve the teaching of business studies. In-service teacher education on the epistemological basis of social constructivism and its implementation for learning multiple perspectives as valid knowledge. Secondly, the issue of large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms, and a shortage of textbooks are obstacles to implementing social constructivist pedagogy and ought to be addressed as prerequisite conditions for social constructivist pedagogy.

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