

Chapter 5

Constructivism, Pluralism, and Pedagogy From Below in India: An Integrative Role of Educational Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

The chapter argues for a synthesis of principles of constructivism with the political and legal dimensions of educational pluralism. This synthesis has been argued to give a determining and central position to pedagogies from below in the process of framing curriculum and organizing teaching learning activities in Indian schools. Constructivism and educational pluralism represent two voices which assert for relying on psychological principles and countering the dangers of political hegemony in educational landscape, respectively. They both talk about the importance of pedagogy from below as a helpful reality focused toolkit for undoing the effects of historical social inequity and breaking the hegemony of dominant class in the process of knowledge construction and dissemination. Integrative role of educational anthropologists with the help of ethnographic research on native communities across the world in developing innovative methods on how can local community knowledge be integrated into formal curriculum and pedagogic practice has been highlighted.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of constructivist pedagogy has become inevitable keeping in view the theoretical and legal development around the world (Windschitl, 2002). Constructivism is a psychological theory, which unlike other psychological theories developed out of research on human subjects in real life settings than on animals in labs and in artificially simulated environments. Therefore, constructivism forms in real sense the psychological and anthropological principle of human learning (Ayers, 1991). Constructivists besides arguing for the active role of subjects, also highlight the importance of prior knowledge of students in the process of learning. Constructivism points towards creating an educational environment which forms a part of continuum from home and community to school culture (Windschitl, 2002). While constructivist psychologists argue for the role of community and local knowledge in school curriculum, pluralists assert that social reality is plural and school curriculum cannot be framed taking only the dominant culture into consideration. Therefore constructivism and educational pluralism represent two voices which talk of the need for relying on psychological principles and the dangers of political hegemony in educational landscape respectively. While constructivism emerged from psychological perspectives, pluralism emerged from legal and political perspectives on education. They both talk about the importance of pedagogy from below as a helpful reality focused toolkit for undoing the effects of historical social inequity and breaking the hegemony of dominant class in the process of knowledge construction and dissemination (Bernstein, 2000, 66-77).

The prime objective is to present a methodological analysis on how can the principles of constructivism and the legal and political perspectives of pluralism be integrated into a new framework called 'pedagogy from below'. Pedagogy from below shall be conceptualized as a methodological tool. This has been done particularly by drawing on worldwide research and knowledge of educational anthropologists. Educational anthropologists through ethnographic research on native communities across the world have developed innovative methods on how can local community knowledge be integrated into formal curriculum and pedagogic practice (see for example González, Neff, Amanti & Moll, 2006).

Critical Narratives from many south Asian countries indicates that importation of educational concepts and policy orientations have led to the diminished results of education, creating new forms of inequities and disadvantage. The super diverse nature of the region poses formidable challenges and opportunities for contextual innovation (Batra, 2019). This is very much important considering the challenges nation state like India is facing for developing culturally relevant pedagogy for the vast majority of culturally diverse communities and tribes. This will also be helpful for teachers and other educational practitioners who are facing practical and realistic

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