A conceptual analysis of constructivist classroom management

By

VICTOR JUSTICE PITSOE

Thesis

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Supervisor: DR F.J. NIEUWENHUIS

March 2007
Declaration

I, Victor Justice Pitsoe, declare that

“A conceptual analysis of constructivist classroom management”

is my own work, that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed:_____________________   _________________________
V.J. Pitsoe      Date
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DEDICATION

To my late grandmother Sinah Mangena Pitsoe
ABSTRACT

Outcomes-based education (OBE) (at least at a conceptual level) is moving from an instructionist (teacher as transmitter of knowledge) to a constructivist approach (teacher as mediator and facilitator in the construction of meaning). This shift requires teachers that move from a traditional teacher-centred classroom to a learner-centred classroom management approach. The policy originators label this shift as a “paradigm shift”, but in the training of educators in OBE, no training was offered in terms of a new approach to classroom management. In this study I argue that if OBE in the South African context really constitute a paradigm shift, then at conceptual level, it would require a new approach to classroom management. Against this background, the aim of the study is to conceptually interrogate the notion of constructivist classroom management and investigate how classroom management within a constructivist mode differs from traditional classroom management within an instructionist approach.

This study is qualitative in nature and employs conceptual analysis in the form of conceptual historical analysis, conceptual cartography and hermeneutic analysis. The Wilsonian concept analysis was used to examine and distinguish between the defining attributes of the concepts “instructionist classroom management” and “constructivist classroom management” and their relevant attributes. Also, a typology of non-empirical questions applied to conceptual analysis was used. The Matrix of Paradigmatic Value Systems was used as a tool/lens to categorise “instructionist classroom management” and “constructivist classroom management” in terms of their paradigmatic roots. Credibility and authenticity was achieved through crystallisation instead of triangulation.

Emerging from the literature and concept analysis, “instructionist classroom management” is informed and guided by the traditional paradigm – it is based on a mechanistic worldview. On the other hand, “constructivist classroom management” is compatible with the emerging paradigm – it has holistic and artistic features. Traditional classroom management is underpinned by the principles of scientific management whilst constructivist classroom management is informed and guided by contingency approaches to management theory.
Based on the analysis done and the reflection on the data, it is posited that classroom management within a constructivist setting needs to move from traditional to contingency classroom management approach. On the surface, basic management principles such as, planning, organising, leading and control, appear to be similar, but this is a myth. For example, planning, seen from its traditional defining terms, approaches classroom management as a step-by-step process under control and directed by the teacher; and may restrict the degree to which learners become collaborators in the teaching and learning situation. Organising focuses on issues of group work and collaborates learning; control moves to accountability (where learners become part of the development of class rules and partners in ensuring order and discipline); and evaluation moves to ongoing assessment and feedback as a strategy to ensure continuous improvement and the facilitation of the construction of new knowledge. Thus, this study proposes rethinking a set of principles compatible to the emergent paradigm that should not only support the construction of knowledge in the constructivist setting, but also promote collaborative interaction.

**Keywords**

Instructionist classroom management
Constructivist classroom management
Outcomes-based education
Revised National Curriculum Statement
Curriculum 2005
Constructivism
Policy implementation
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LIST ACRONYMS

C2005 Curriculum 2005
DoE Department of Education
OBE Outcomes-based education
NCS National Curriculum Statement
RNCS Revised National Curriculum Statement