

# Constructivist Methods in Teaching: The Case for Albania

Alfred Nela

MSc. Alfred NELA

## Abstract

In the previous century many theories were created for the teaching. One of them is the constructivist method widely used. The focus of constructivist theory is oriented towards the pupil. It presupposes that the environment of learning should provide view points or different interpretations of reality, building knowledge, wealth content, and activities that are based on experience. Constructivism is focused on lore and knowledge and not in mechanic imitation of subject content. It is based on a persuasion that the person builds his lore based on his experience, mental structure and faiths used for interpretation of objects and phenomena. The mind is used like an instrument in the interpretation of the event, goals and prospects because they are personal and individual.

The main goal of the survey is the coverage and elaboration of some theoretical and practical views, reported from a considered number of research examples about constructivist methods and an actual analysis of Albanian educational system. As a research methodology we have exploited quantitative data. National and international surveys are used, dedicated, to the evaluation of Albanian Pre-university educational system.

In the last decade Albania, started adopting some reforms in the teaching methodology. Some experts in educational field

[www.dx.doi.org/10.21113/iir.v6i2.265](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.21113/iir.v6i2.265)

published some textbooks and manuals about constructivist methods. Prior to these reforms in the field of teaching, policy making bodies approved ordinance and legal drafts in adjustment of this methodology. But even after these reforms, the Albanian educational system is behind the regional education system in regards to the achievements of pupils. The lack of specific training of educational staff, non-adaptation of educational software, inappropriate physical infrastructure of schools, the lack of technical equipments hamper the practicability of this method. Another aspect is insufficient financial budget dedicated to education. Albanian school is also guided and managed by leaders and teachers that follow traditional methods in teaching and administration.

**Key Words:** Constructivism; interactive methods in teaching; curriculum; ICT

## **1. Introduction**

Our view of the outside world is distinguished from the others due to individual experiences that we have adopted. An important factor of constructivist theory is that the education of pupils should be concentrated in authentic tasks and assignments. They are tasks that have important value flowing from reality, whereas they are integrated in the plan and educational program to enable an active participation of the pupils. For this scientific research purposes, mainly quantitative data are used which are focused on specific matters of the survey. Articles as well as national and international scientific research of recent years are exploited. After analytic synthesizing, key surveys are filtered, those which are most popular from experts of educational science. Literature scrutiny in this survey displays some priority: firstly elaboration of a variety of views, secondly discussion and debate coverage of recent times that are being done specifically about these methods and thirdly the provision of a viewpoint based on these teaching methods in Albanian educational system.

## 2. Constructivism in Teaching

Teachers are flexible, sometimes they give pupils knowledge but very often they are in the role of orienting. Dvaer, concludes that this access is more oriented toward the pupil than toward curriculum while Bagly and Hunter, consider that the lesson is a dynamic process (cited in Prenton and Jankullovska, 2009, pp. 8). They emphasize that the active lesson leads to a higher level of thinking and like the knowledge is grown in a continual way with information, pupils certainly must learn how to have access to these informations because today exists a lot of information to remember. The lesson is an internal process and is under the influence of precursory knowledge and under the influence of lesson goals. Constructivist viewpoint describes educational environment as the place when lore and knowledge mastering is interactive and inductive, where a lot of perspectives are presented and where questions are evaluated. The context is linked with knowledge and lesson where essential element is authentic activity (Musai, 2009, pp. 1-3).

Elmore states that school systems have achieved to make people adopt systems requests of accountability supported by standards and they have reached this appropriation, mostly through giving of examples and concentration, using interactions face to face, and not by bureaucratic control (Fullan, 2011, pp. 387). How should be knowledges transmitted to youngvster, Gardner raises the question? That is called education "with imitation" where the teacher demonstrates the achievement or a wanted behavior and the pupil reproduces that with lots of loyalty. A reward is assigned for the correct appropriation of information or reproduction, such as slave reproduction of models. Every deviation from the model is challenged or refused immediately. In transformational method except for modeling of wanted behavior, the teacher serves as a coach or facilitator, trying to invoke qualities or certain meanings in pupils (Gardner, 2003, pp. 152).

Constructivist access with focus pupil in centre, stirs up the involvement of pupil in knowledge building process and requires ways for teacher to be mitigating in the educational process and not to dictate information. This access evidently is related better to the integration of technology. For instance, discoverer lesson as a form of constructivist access encourages motivation, autonomy, responsibility and independence of pupils. The pupil is instructed by the teacher to interact and to perform experiments

that helps him/her build knowledge abilities getting started from knowledges and precursory abilities (MAS and IZHA, 2015, pp.10).

### **2.1. Cooperation and Interaction**

With today's all worries for the placement of academic standards, the achievement of high results in tests that estimate the achievement of pupils and international comparisons in this way, education has always been inclined for something more than just academic learning. Certainly, academic education is the primary directive but apart from this, education prepares the pupils to live and to work together with different types of people. Most of corporates are in search of employees to be not only good in owning a special arsenal of academic abilities but to also have the ability to work with a wide range of colleagues like an interactive team, to disclose initiative and responsibility and to communicate with efficiency. During the recent three decades researchers have reviewed the cooperation and interaction in schools. With some discrepancy, generality of students shows that groups which are really interactive practice positive effects in pupil's empathy, in tolerance toward differences, in acceptance feeling in friendship, in confidence and even in the attendance of school (Lawrence, 2001, pp. 103-112).

### **3. Tasks/Assignments for Interactive pupils**

Like in many other places in teaching, the plans to use interactive groups starts with a purpose. What should pupils perform? Which is their task/assignments? (Kennewell, 2004, pp. 64). Assignments for the interactive group can be more or less structured. Too structured assignments include works that require specific answers, exercise and practice, application of routines or procedures, award of answers for read parts, calculation in mathematics and so on. While complex ill-structured assignments require multipronged answers and have unclear procedures, require problems solving and a thinking process of a higher level.

The preparation of pupils for interactive learning (Abrahamson, 2006, pp. 34-42), exposes that: Essentially, interactive teaching is to give pupils something to do, taking what they have done and then to assimilate it oneself in a way that it can be decided what will be better to be done afterwards.

David and Roger Johnson, list five elements that outline the groups of real interactive learning (Woolfolk, 2011, pp. 323-326).

1. Face to face interactive
2. Positive interdependencies
3. Individual responsibility
4. Cooperative ability

Pupils interact when they are face to face and near each other, not from one side of the class in the other. Group members experience passive interdependencies, that is to say need support explanations and instructions.

#### **4. The Albanian Educational System and the Access to Constructivist Methods**

After the recession of communism, many European places, derived from totalitarian regimes, were included in wide educative reforms to rebuild and reframe educative systems, which were ruined and collapsed, in order to adapt to European vision and global developments in education. After the '90s, Albania also was involved in the redesignation and reforming educational system. Improvements were made in some fields such as: curriculum, school infrastructure, textbooks, teaching methodology and funding. International reports and reviews that measure educational achievements in international and global level, appreciate the performance of Albanian educational system in low levels. Positively regarding to the performance of Albania, we are going to reflect some inputs from the results of PVNN or PISA for Albania (World Bank Group, 2014, pp.3). Albania's performance in PVNN 2012, results with a little improvement in reading and science and a great improvement in mathematics. The inputs show that the performance has been with different rates where the greatest achievements are from 2000 to 2009.

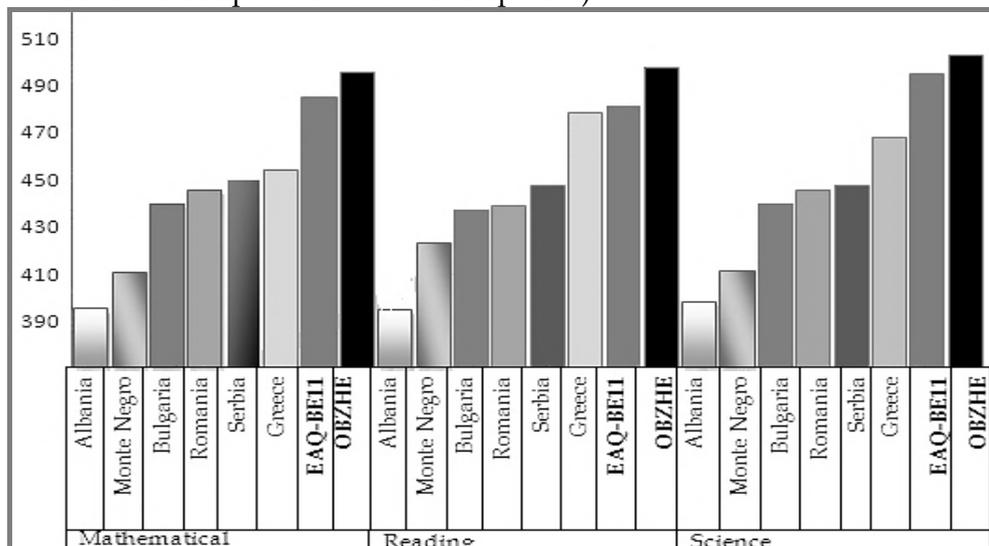
**Table 1:** Albania's performance under the disciplines PVNN, 2000-2012

<b>Performance by Aspects</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>Advance average of the nations of OECD-s in 2012</b>
<b>Performance in reading</b>	349	385 (+36*)	394 (+9)	494
<b>Performance in mathematics</b>	381	377 (-4)	394 (+17*)	496
<b>Performance in science</b>	376	391 (+15*)	397 (+6)	501

**Source:** World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 6

Despite improvements, Albania's achievements are in the last place among places of the region. Albania's results are the lowest in Europe and Central Asia in mathematics and science and penultimate in reading. A compound result for the three subjects shows that Albania is 15-30 points after Montenegro, about 40 points after Bulgaria and over 100 points after OECD, where each difference of 40 points is equal with approximately a year education. Whereas that some other places hadn't had any great improvements of their results between year 2000 and 2012. Albania is the poorest place in this group and the gap that Albania must fulfill remains big.

**Figure 1:** Results PVNN 2012 Albania and comparing countries against averages ECA (Europe and Central Asia) and OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

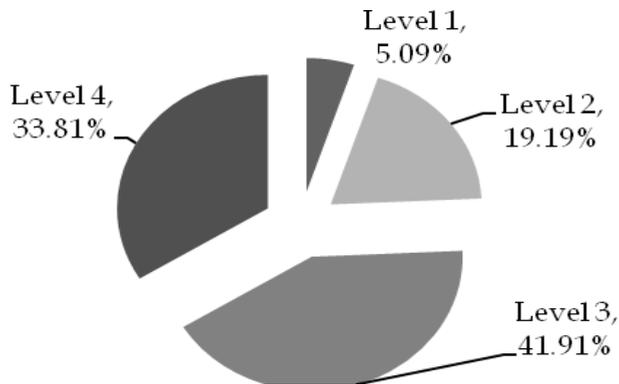


Source: World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 6

Policy draft of Pre-University educational development 2014-2020, has introduced some inputs, where some shortages about professional preparations of teachers are reflected. The practice has shown that training of educational employees done by special institutions are seen more like as an optional element. The trainings are not arranged according to professional standards and their content isn't compiled to improve professional competences. In trainings sessions, the place of interactive methods has been generally used by lectures. Trainer services are limited for the diversity of agency providers, because in them it is not included how universities should be. This process suffers from low suitability toward individual needs and teamwork of teachers, especially toward new teachers. As an outcome, in schools the learning process is a result of a mix of outdated practices with new ideas, but unclear or well undigested. Also, these services don't balance teacher's needs according to learning fields. During state's exam for new teachers in 2012, 40% of teachers that have undergone this exam have failed. This fact talks about weak performance of new teachers (MAS, 2014, pp. 8).

Review results for "Teaching and learning" field of teachers in national level, developed by Ministry of Education and Sport and Institute for the Development of Education show that about 34% (Level 4) of rated teachers own knowledge and abilities of satisfactory level. About 42% (Level 3) teachers possess the knowledge and skills to a satisfactory level, but with necessities for improvement, about 19% (Level 2) of teachers own knowledge and abilities that have considerate necessities for improvement and about 5% (Level 1) of teachers own knowledge of unsatisfactory level with essential necessities for improvement.

**Figure 2:** Results of the evaluation area of "Teaching and Learning"



**Source:** National Report: Identifying training needs of Directors and School Teachers in Pre-university Tirana (MAS and IZHA, 2016, pp.20).

Programes of teacher's formation must include research and investigation so that new teachers to be able to carry out educational research in school practice. Their recognition with school and pupils must begin with the beginning of studies. New programs for all categories of teachers, must reflect innovations and continual improvements of curriculum, to enrich with TIK subject (Technology of Information and Communication) and with techniques of tests composition for level review of curriculum development. All of these, are expected to provide that students to come in auditors to discuss and not to reproduce those that had been given in lecture, in books and in other materials, typed or in electronic form. With an order of 2015, Ministry of Education and Sport has ascertained criteria and procedures of teachers qualifications where among

others in article 7 are described programmes of qualifications in basic cycle, school subject and kinds, but their revival is still facing difficulties (Haxhiymeri and Mita, 2015, pp 33-40).

Another aspect that must be considered important in order to be successfully applied in constructivist methods, is the curriculum. In Albania since 1993 curriculum of pre-university education, teaching and learning process have been and remains continual issues of improvement. Curriculum in its content during the period of important changes, is faced with many phenomena, which have influenced in years the achievement of results and the aims for qualitative education and its generalization. Internal and foreign reviews of pre-university education curriculum show that, contrary to today's inclination of curriculum policy for development of access with base competence, the actual curriculum is mainly based in it access to base objectives. This is organized in special subject programs which are structured severally, and are unrelated with each other. This leads to the accent at theoretical formation rather than at pupil's practical accent. In curriculum of base education, programs are overloaded and don't fit with the level of pupils' development. It has been required from experts of educational science, that textbooks, to apply teaching-learning methods, which are characterized from situations that are taken from real life, to be oriented from application, and to have pupil in the centre. They must encourage teamwork, independent, creative and critic thought and pupils individuality (CRCA and Gjokutaj, 2013, pp. 34).

Another element that complicates the development of educational system, is financial budget. Albania spends less for education as a percent of PBB, than other places in region. In 1999 Albania spent 3.5% of PBB for education, while in 2013 it has been decreased more, reaching to 2.7% of PBB. Compared with 4.6% that is the average in East Europe it means that expenditures for education in Albania are almost 2% lower (CRCA and Gjokutaj, 2013, pp.34).

An important influence is physical infrastructure of schools. Apart from spaces for each pupil are also physical conditions like quantitative deficiency and the quality of educative and didactic labs, school libraries, facilities for information's technology as digital libraries and informative cabinets, etc. With all investments that are made, use of ICT in educational system is limited. Offered equipments with public funding in the major part are not exploited or are out of inventories.

## **5. Conclusion**

Constructivism in educational practice is a method which requires more useful ways of teaching and learning. With traditional methods the experts of educational sciences and teachers have noticed shortage in pupils' understanding and passive knowledge in all ages and classes. Constructivist educational practices are supported by another philosophic argument. Incentives that we encounter, including messages from the others, are never enough for bearing understandings. Moreover, the human has always built and rebuilt the understanding of phenomena. In this way it makes sense to be organized for learning in order to reflect reality.

Constructivism as philosophy and educational practice, enables persons to think in a critical way. For people that think in a critical way, the base of information understanding is the starting point. The development of thinking in a critical way includes ideas absorbing and scrutiny of their impact, their display on a diluted skepticism, their balancing against opposite viewpoints, construction of reliable systems to prove them and the enterprise of an attitude based on these structures.

In recent years in Albania, adoption of some reforms in teaching methodology was initiated. From specialists of educational sciences, were published some books and teaching manuals in order to help teachers. Also, some legal decisions from policy making bodies in adjustment of reforms in teaching field were approved. The difficulty of this method retains in her its implementation by the educational staff. Many teachers nowadays apply traditional methods of teaching that are inherited from the past. These shortcomings are highlighted in one of the most prestigious international institution. The World Bank reports for education, rates that the performances of Albanian pupils are the lowest in the region.

## **6. Recommendations**

Implementation of constructivist methods in the Albanian reality, requires investment both in human capital and in physical infrastructure. Harmonization of educational policies, continuous training of teachers and school logistics investments will contribute positively to the application of constructivist methods. Pre-University education system in Albania, after the 90s, has encountered some difficulties in many respects. The continuous, frequent changes of educational policies have created an imbalance and an

unsatisfactory level of competitiveness compared with some countries in the region. Drafting of modern educational strategies, the permanent training of teachers and development of textbooks that promote interaction, will positively affect school performance.

For teachers:

- Teachers must demonstrate directly to pupils the usefulness of constructivist teaching.
- Encouragement of exchanging experiences and practices between schools and teachers.
- Teachers training must be organized and developed through accredited institutions and with professional and academic capacities.
- For publications and curriculum:
- To increase/add professional publications for teachers.
- To reduce the curriculum overloading and orient toward texts that have priority in constructivist learning.
- To exploit online libraries.
- Infrastructure:
- School equipping with functional infrastructure for information exploitation (computers, laptops, smart table).
- Technical support that provides efficiency of infrastructure.
- Usage, accessing opportunities in learning portals in accordance with arranged curriculum and in portals that enable monitoring of pupils results from their teachers and parents.
- Classes must be patterned in order to adjust contemporary methods of teaching and learning.

## List of References

- Abrahamson, L. A. (2006). "Teaching with Classroom Communication System - What it Involves and Why it Works", *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, Vol. 15, No. 1, DOI: 10.1007/S10956-006-0360-1.  
<http://www.et.kent.edu/fpdc-db/files/classroom-response-systems-a-review-of-the-literature.pdf>. [Accessed: 07 March 2012].
- CRCA. and Gjokutaj, M. (2013). "The Situation in Pre-university Education", Evaluation Report, Tirana.
- Fullan, M. (2011). "The Meaning of Educational Change" Publications CDE; Tirana, pp. 387.

- Garden, H. (2003). *"The Mind of Unlettered"* Publications ISP, Tirana, pp. 152.
- Haxhiymeri, E. and Mita, N. (2015). *"Professional Development and Evaluation of Teachers in Albania, 2015"*, Tirana.
- Kennewell, S. (2004). *"The Influence of Interactive Presentation tools on Pedagogy"*, University of Manchester.  
[https://www.google.al/ëebhp?sourceidçchrome-instant&ionç1&espvç2&ieçUTF-8#qçKennewell%2C+S.\(2004\)+The+influence+of+interactive+presentation+tools+on+pedagogy%2C+](https://www.google.al/ëebhp?sourceidçchrome-instant&ionç1&espvç2&ieçUTF-8#qçKennewell%2C+S.(2004)+The+influence+of+interactive+presentation+tools+on+pedagogy%2C+) [Accessed: 22 October 2011].
- Lawrence, E. (2001). *Classroom Management: "A Critical Part of Educational Psychology, With Implications for Teacher Education"*, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST, 36(2), pp. 103-112.
- MAS. (2014). *"Strategy of Pre-University Education Development 2014-2020"*, Draft, Tirana.  
[http://www.arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/apu/karta/Strategji\\_APU\\_dokument\\_i\\_perfundimtar\\_24\\_03\\_2015.pdf](http://www.arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/apu/karta/Strategji_APU_dokument_i_perfundimtar_24_03_2015.pdf). [Accessed: 10 March 2015].
- MAS. and IZHA. (2016). *"The Identification of Training needs of Directors and School Teachers in Undergraduate Education"*, National Report, Tirana.
- MAS. and IZHA. (2015). *"The Learning with Situation, Constructivism and Technology"*: Guideline for Teachers, Tirana.  
<http://www.izha.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Udhezuesime-situata-te-te-nxenit-me-TIKun.pdf>. [Accessed: 12 December 2015].
- Musai, B. (2009). *"Interactive Methodology in the Teaching of Mathematics"*, Tirana.  
[http://www.edualba.com/doc/met\\_ndervepruese\\_mesimin\\_mat.pdf?PHPSESSIDçfaab98f937119ea6f088b77c33c85674](http://www.edualba.com/doc/met_ndervepruese_mesimin_mat.pdf?PHPSESSIDçfaab98f937119ea6f088b77c33c85674). [Accessed: November 2011].
- Prenton, K. and Jankullovska, S. (2009). *"Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century"*, USAID & Academy for Educational Development, Skopje.  
[http://stepbystep.org.mk/WEBprostor/Krijimi\\_i\\_mjedisit\\_p%C3%ABr\\_t%C3%AB\\_nx%C3%ABnit\\_p%C3%ABr\\_shekullin\\_XXI.pdf](http://stepbystep.org.mk/WEBprostor/Krijimi_i_mjedisit_p%C3%ABr_t%C3%AB_nx%C3%ABnit_p%C3%ABr_shekullin_XXI.pdf). [Accessed: 22 October 2012].
- Woolfolk, A. (2011). *"Psychology of Educational"*, Pearson and CDE, Tirana.
- World Bank Group. (2014). *"Quality of Education and Opportunities for Development of Skills in Albania"*: Analysis of the results of PVNN's, Tirana.  
<http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/Albania/al-pisa-report-al.pdf>. [Accessed: 22 April 2015].