

Pedagogical Concerns Regarding School History

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Abstract

History has been an important component of school curriculum for a long time. Since Independence a number of changes have taken place both in the content and teaching of history. In more recent years, there have been changes in almost all the aspects of history namely, its concept, approach and also in the methodology of teaching. The main reason for this change is the deeper understanding that developed about the purpose of studying history. However, unfortunately, these changes have not been reflected in the textbooks and pedagogical issues of teaching and learning history, particularly in schools. New findings brought out enormous research, with the aid of advanced tools that is being carried out in the universities and advanced centres of learning, have not been reflected in the classroom practices and school text books. The old themes with emphasis on chronological approach dealing with the dynastic changes and biographical details, presented in a narrative style are being continued both in classrooms and textbooks. This is more deplorable to say the least. For, the scope of history has broadened as it includes now, within its purview, every aspect of life of human beings in society from the time of the evolution of man on earth about a million years ago. Also, the purpose of studying history has changed enormously. Therefore, there is a need to bring innovative approaches in the pedagogical aspects at school level. The aims and objectives of the paper is to suggest the teachers of history to be aware of new methods and techniques of teaching learning History at school level, to adopt new pedagogical approaches such as constructivist approach in making history teaching effective in the classrooms, help them adopt a constructivist approach in the classroom activities, learning process, and able to organise activities, discussions, within the parameters of constructivism in history classroom.

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I

History has been an important component of the school curriculum for a long time. In light of changing trends in classroom teaching there is a felt need for social science/history teachers to adopt a constructivist approach in classrooms and organise activities, discussions and teaching strategies within the parameters of constructivism. Since Independence a number of changes have taken place both in the content and teaching of history. In more recent years there have been changes in almost all the aspects of history namely, concept and approach and methodology of teaching. The main reason for this change is the deeper understanding that developed about the purpose of studying history. These changes have not been reflected in the textbooks of history, particularly in schools. New findings brought out various insights into evolution of the subject history with the aid of advanced tools. The old themes with emphasis on chronological approach dealing with the dynastic changes and biographical details presented in a narrative style are being continued in textbooks. This is now debated among academic circles. For, the scope of history has broadened as it includes now, within its purview, every aspect of life of human beings in society from the time of the evolution of human beings on earth about a million years ago. On the other hand, the purpose of studying history has changed. Earlier it was meant to

study the past in order to justify the present and legitimise the present day institutions and beliefs.

Today, history is considered as a discipline that deepens our understanding of the process through which societies have changed and evolved to the present stage, thus adding to our grasp of the contemporary processes of change. Gradually history has developed into a scientific study of society in all its facets-social, economic, political, cultural etc and, more importantly, their mutual interactions. The purpose of history is neither to glorify the past nor to condemn it but to understand it. As E.H. Carr puts it, *the function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to understand the present.* The study of the past is mainly intended to understand the present.

Textbook, being the first source that a student uses, should be able to provide right kind of material to get the necessary training in history. It plays a significant role in dissemination of information required to understand the dynamics of the discipline. Most of our schools, even now, do not possess sophisticated teaching aids. Hence, the need for a good textbook and appropriate strategies of teaching methods cannot be over emphasised. In fact, these are the key sources to teachers and children before they lay their hands upon other more advanced sources of

knowledge to enrich their teaching-learning process.

II

Constructivism is an idea based on the understanding that the learners are not merely recipients but the constructors of knowledge. It is important to understand what is meant by constructivism through behaviouristic terrain. This will help us to get a sharper view of the meaning of constructivism. Basically, learning is behaviouristic and this is due to reinforcement of various strategies. In the behaviouristic tradition learning is a process. It is a changing process or conditioning of observable behaviours through the selective reinforcement of learner's responses to stimuli. Teachers can assess the stress placed on the efforts of learners to accumulate knowledge and also in transmitting knowledge. The scope for learners' initiated questions or the independent thoughts of children in classrooms are generally limited. Goal of a learner is to regurgitate the expected explanation or the methodology expostulated by teacher. Preference for learners' manifest behaviour, without looking for changes in mental states is the acceptable standard for identifying learning. Behaviouristic tradition invariably emphasises on observable external behaviours and obviously, avoids reference to representation and thought of the learner. When one examines behaviouristic epistemology, no

one ignore the stress placed on intelligence, domains of objectives, and levels and reinforcement of knowledge.

Constructivism is used in the sense that the learners actively construct their own knowledge by linking new information to the existing knowledge on the basis of materials presented to them. For example, a young learner's initial construction of the idea of Indus Valley civilisation is based on the characteristic features of a civilisation familiar to him such as climate, soil fertility and physical features which greatly contributed to the progress and development of people. Students after listing out various types of information about this civilisation must be able to visualise what could be their social organisations or religious practices. Likewise, after reading the text and viewing a video or illustrations on the text on transport system and human life during a particular age or period, a constructivist learner attempts to build a mental model of the relationship (cause and effect) between transport system and human life.

In constructivism, learning is the result of a learner's mental constructions. A learner learns by fitting new information together with what she/he already knows and actively constructs her/his own understanding of the issues. Learners actively interact with their objects (learning material) and events. Thereby, they gain an understanding

of the features held by such objects and events. What is central to constructivism is its conception of learning. Constructivism helps and shows how the learner arrives at a particular answer. Certainly, it is not a stimulus-response phenomenon. It is a process of building conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction, behaviours, skills and the aims, objectives and goals of instruction. In order that the practicing teachers can implement constructivist pedagogy effectively in their day to day teaching, it is necessary to provide them with appropriate and adequate inputs through in-service training.

The specific aim of constructivism is to focus on the development of concepts and deep understanding of the knowledge. Learning is a process of constructing meaningful representations of external reality through experiences. Construction of internal representation of knowledge depends on the degree to which learners integrate new knowledge with the base of their existing knowledge. Integration demands restructuring and changing the existing knowledge structures. For instance, a learner who initially constructed the idea of Harappan civilisation around the towns and cities of Harappa, now with the support of textual materials and illustrations or video on the text, along with appropriate activities, reconstructs the idea of Harappan or Indus Valley civilisation from the excavated materials such as

pottery, seals, bricks, bones, bangles, metals, import and export materials, agricultural materials, structural aspects like social life, economic life, cultural life and destruction of Harappan or Indus civilisation. In reality, learning is a process of construction and reconstruction of knowledge. Given the right context, a learner becomes an active participant in knowledge structuring, engages in restructuring, manipulating, reinventing and experimenting with knowledge to make it meaningful and permanent. Learning is an internal process and influenced by the learner's personality, prior knowledge and learning goals. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility of their own learning process.

The concept of curriculum entrenched in our system of education is overlooking child's role in constructing knowledge. Certain topics acquire importance for the final examination but nothing gains significance or inscriptional value. Tools of analysis, such as classification of ideas and information and the steps involved in judging evidence are ignored. Syllabus and text book designers assume that teacher's job is to impart interactive life to the long and continuous narratives given in the text book. The idea of enlightened citizenship cannot be achieved with bookish education. Work implies an activity that fulfils a genuine need. It also implies the development of an attitude capable of sustaining self-reliance, initiative and questioning

spirit. Opportunities to infuse work culture into our routine school life should be increased constantly and utilised optimally. The legacy of pedagogic modernism implies the cultivation of questioning spirit and tolerance for differences. Teaching must be viewed as a relational and constructivist activity rather than information-transmission activity. History teachers should see that textbooks should encourage interaction with various activities in the class. Values like originality, self-reliance and tolerance must be inculcated among children. History curriculum should address children's concerns and anxieties about the world they are living in. It should not by pass children and keep them at a distance in the academic world.

History teachers should help children to find out on what basis different historians take different positions to construct knowledge in history. In this way history teachers can effectively train children to look at things historically. This is perhaps the most important and key issue in history education. History teaching at school level in our country is considered backward and out-dated. In science subjects children are given opportunities to experiment. In history, teachers expect children to listen to the narratives, memorise text materials and reproduce it along with names, dates and places. What is required is to accelerate interest in history teaching and a new way of learning strategy along with new

syllabus at all levels. History syllabus should allow children to engage with work that archaeologists and historians do to reconstruct the past. Of course, children cannot be expected to judge all kinds of evidences, but history teachers should inform children that historians need evidence — archaeological, documentary and other forms of evidences. These evidences can themselves be acquainted with.

III

Characteristics of constructivist classroom can be described as: active involvement of learners, democratic environment in classroom, student-centred interaction and facilitation of process of learning where student is made responsible for learning. These characteristics are drastically different from traditional mode of teaching where teacher is information-giver and the students are passive learners. Teacher training therefore focuses on the changed role of teachers in the new pedagogy.

Construction of knowledge is an active process. It involves mental actions of the learner. Constructivism views learning as experience created and discovered. Knowledge is the result of active construction built up by the learner within a social context. Physical actions and hands on experiences are the essential aspects for engaging the learner for thinking.

Construction of knowledge depends upon doing activities. Most of the time teachers talk to the learners.

In History class children rarely get something to do. When students have something to do they are active participants in their learning rather than passive recipients of information. This is the primary message of constructivism. Learners who are engaged in doing activities in history classroom will make their own meaning.

Constructivist learners involve in interactions and collaborations. It promotes interactions with others such as teachers, peers, family members and others in the learning. Children use conversation, discussion and interactions with others. They share ideas. This is an integral aspect of construction of knowledge. These aspects cannot be ignored in history subject. Construction of knowledge is interactive, inductive and collaborative.

Language plays a critical role in constructing knowledge. While structuring various activities teachers should initiate conversations, discussions and encourage questions. Learners talk to themselves while they learn. Language and learning are inextricably intertwined.

Context related to knowledge construction is critical. Learners do not learn actively in isolation. They do not learn isolated concepts, ideas or facts. They relate to what they know. For instance, on a project on environmental pollution, learners read a passage on environmental pollution and then they move on to look at illustrations and later relate

it to what they have already known on the same portion of environmental pollution. They relate it to a variety of reference materials depicting different situations on environmental pollution contextually.

Knowledge construction involves multiple perspectives on concepts and content. Learners interact in groups with various materials. They also generate multiple perspectives. They expose themselves to various ways to interpret data, find how different principles can be used to make sense of knowledge and discover various ways of meaning. Collaborative and cooperative strategies provide conditions for generating and sharing multiple viewpoints. For example, students have been told that we achieved our independence through non-violent struggle. But there were revolutionary movements during the national struggle as well. A discussion on their relative role and importance can help to develop multiple perspectives.

Errors serve as tools for reflection and reconstruction. In constructivism errors committed by children will act in a positive light. This is a means of gaining insight into how the learner forms knowledge construction. They provide feedback on the learners' understanding.

Construction of knowledge is not instantaneous. It does not take place in few seconds. Learners need to revisit ideas, ponder over them, engage with them, reformulate and use them. Children reflect on the ideas they have learnt.

History is the cumulative experiences and efforts of the past generation. There is a mistaken notion that history is filled with wars and conquests. It is the experiences and efforts of the human beings to build a society. It is not the event which is interwoven according to the principle of causality. The states or kings are not divine creations. History is an investigation into the truth of events and happenings on the basis of the principle causality. It is not an investigation into the facts on the basis of usefulness. When historical events are viewed from the angle of usefulness truth will lead to distortion. In this sense, history becomes a fiction not science. History too is a science based on actual facts and their coordination in accordance with their coexistence in space, their succession in time and the principle of causality. Historians reconstruct the past with the help of sources. They find subjectivity or bias in the interpretation of sources. There is a need for verification of accounts and the consultations through a variety of sources. Historians must be free from all biases and prejudices. The subjective interpretations of historians are influenced by usefulness but not the principle of truth. Bias by itself is not harmful if it leads to a further study of investigation. Bias or subjectivity will turn into bad history if historical truth is accepted as indispensable truth. In history, assumptions are the first stage of scientific investigation. Assumptions

must be treated as tentative frame work for further testing.

Individuals themselves do not make history. History is the product of social milieu. It could be understood in the social context of social, economic and cultural forces. Study of human beings cannot be a biographical study. Interpretations of historical movements involve value judgements. Teachers and historians describe how these events affected them adversely or otherwise. Historians, teachers and scholars should not make passing judgements since the study of the subject is a process of social change and development. History deals with revolutions and evolutions. This evolution is also based on the principle of dialectical materialism. Past cannot be swept off. History covers all comprehensive things in nature. It promotes an understanding of national heritage. The growth of this heritage is obscured by rising trends of chauvinism. For example, references of bravery of soldiers of one's own religion and glorification of local chieftains in defence of local independence narrow down our perspectives. History teaching should be made familiar with human heritage. The national heritage should not be isolated from the general human heritage. History deals with the talk of conflicts between chauvinistic distortions of human history. Chauvinistic history prevents the development of international outlook. Development of international understanding is

necessary for promoting cooperation and interdependence in this shrinking world of modern science.

Constructivist teaching learning process in history envisages that the process of learning or constructivism is so different from what children learn from normal class room teaching or what children expect to learn from text books. In schools children learn history from texts books or from the lessons explained by teachers. Constructivist practice of teaching history will provide opportunities for children to learn history in interesting ways with hands on experience. In the process, teachers and students share the pleasure of making and understanding historical facts. Normally, history books and other historical materials are filled with illustrations, photographs of historical sites, inscriptions, monuments, reproductions of paintings, posters, leaflets and immense range of visual materials that will help children reflect on these materials. Learning then will be very different from usual cramped and breathless textual materials.

History textbooks and teachers should teach history in creative ways. Students should be introduced to the basics of historical research. In history class children should be exposed to historical documents and to the basic understandings of historical facts. History is open ended. Constructivism in history is also open ended. For example, in a history class of IX standard if students are exposed

to the contemporary documents of the Indian freedom movement children will be exposed to various issues of contributions and vision of the freedom movement. If history teacher explains French revolution with the help of documents children will be able to reflect on the French society and people, the French declaration of the Rights of man and the views of contemporary writers on the French Revolution.

Students in the history classroom should be exposed to historical questions and various suggested classroom activities. Constructivism visualises creative student-teacher interaction in place of enforced and rote learning. For example, if students are being taught about the agricultural practices in modern times, after reading the textual materials, students might be encouraged to visit open fields and view Indian agriculture from the point of view of the rich farmers, and poor farmers and also from the labour point of view. In this situation children will be able to construct their knowledge about the agricultural system and practices in India.

Constructivism helps history students and teachers to construct themes in history. Due to time and space the entire syllabus of history cannot be completed by history teachers. Selection of themes in the historical ages will save time. Suppose, when students are exposed to world history in Class IX certain themes in world history may be

selected. Students can be asked to select important themes from the selected content. They may be asked to imagine the shopping lists of a country in those times and may be encouraged to study history from the cultural and civilisation point of view. The pattern of examinations and setting of questions need reform in the context of teaching/learning history. Objective type questions and multiple choice questions may be changed to application types in order to encourage constructive learning process in history. Constructivist paradigm of teaching history is pedagogically vital. It breaks the dominant assumption that history teaching and learning must be comprehensive and should cover all relevant facts.

History teachers should stimulate interest and curiosity among children. Children should understand what history is and how it is relevant in today's context. The idea of constructivism in history always suggests broader patterns of learning history. It stimulates further interest among children to pursue subject. For example, students of Class VI study about themes in Ancient India. Students can be exposed to prepare comprehensive lists of archaeological sites etc. But sometimes this may cause a greater burden on the memory of children. Instead, history teachers may ask children to select one or two sites or inscriptions of Indus civilisation and encourage them to observe all the details with

profuse illustrations. Students may be encouraged to have detailed discussions on the selected cities and inscriptions. For example, when history teacher is explaining about the French and Russian Revolutions she/he need not go into every detail of the events of 19th century European revolutions. By going into such minute details of either Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy students do not construct history. Teachers can introduce children to time charts in the classroom. Historical materials relating to contents/units may be divided according to the continents. These materials will indicate for the learners at a glance that they must not assume a single, linear pattern of development for all times and places.

History text books should convey the progressive value of society. Mere teaching of the subject in classrooms will end in listing out facts. Assumptions and stereotypes current in the immediate environment of children will be often retrogressive or obscurantist. Constructivist approach to teaching history is often result oriented. For instance, after learning/hearing about Nazi atrocities and the holocaust, a question is posed about whether students have ever encouraged stereotypes of other communities among people around them, and how they could overcome the problem of narrow identities of every kind. Secular and humanitarian values have to be inculcated in the minds of children through teaching of history.

In constructivist teaching learning process, the students will be able to concentrate on everything which is interested to them. Sports and social history of clothing of people of a particular region or country may be cited as an example in this context. Students get more interested as they discover something on their own. In the process of constructing ideas children discover new issues and ideas. History does not deal with remote and dead matters. It deals with various themes including controversial as well as important issues which no one will ever deny at any point of time. For example, while discussing about decline of handicrafts under the colonial rule, the mills of Lancashire and Bombay cannot be separable from the discussion on clothing. While dealing with Indian Freedom Movement teachers and students cannot ignore studying about the boycott of foreign cloth, wearing of Khadi and Gandhi's conversion to loincloth. So also while teaching social life of Indians, children should be exposed to the life of hunters, food gatherers, pastoralists and the ways in which they interacted with nature. Children should be exposed to such themes so that they can understand the developments in the emerging areas such as environmental history. Constructivism will help children to take to new themes. Children will be trained to work on the identified themes from various perspectives.

IV

During the last few decades there has been an unprecedented debate on history teaching in schools, colleges and universities. This was due to various reasons like the policies of the government. History syllabus had been revised in a variety of ways. The debate on history teaching in schools in particular is with regard to the issue of pedagogy. At a quotidian level, one problem that history teachers acknowledge virtually at all levels of the teaching is lack of interest in the subject. In fact, history along with mathematics has the dubious distinction of being considered dull. Besides, both the teachers and learners perceive history as heavy in terms of its content. It is evident that we need to both rethink the content of the syllabi as well as pedagogic strategies to ensure that we are able to convert the latent interest into an active and informed engagement through constructivist approach.

It is important to devise pedagogical strategies in history teaching. Constructivist strategy involves children in constructing history from simple excerpts from the source, visuals, illustrations of monuments, sculpture, coins, tools, paintings, pots, photographs etc. It involves learners in the process of historical reconstruction. It is likely that development of teacher's manuals in social sciences in general and history subject in particular can enhance and enrich the potential of the pedagogical strategies of the

teachers in teaching the subject. Several historical processes were explained in terms of the implications for children belonging to a particular age group. This allows learners to engage with these developments instead of regarding them as remote events that happened long ago.

There are other possibilities, both in terms of defining the content of syllabi and the development of strategies of constructivism, which need to be evolved. History teachers should collectively engage with the issue of constructivist pedagogical practices as practitioners of history understand the diversities in terms of region, caste, community and gender. The subject of history as it has evolved over the last three decades has the potential of addressing the concerns of constructivism. For instance, the questions and challenges posed by women's movements, Dalit movements and environmental issues have shaped the content of history in recent times. Histories of regions have also been enriched through detailed studies.

Interactive teaching attempts to assist children for a healthy engagement with the world, the way society takes shape and functions from the material and physical foundations. It provides essential skills of comprehension that are fundamental to any activity. It helps self-understanding and fulfilment that can be diverting, exciting and challenging. Knowledge apparatus of children is complex due to

wide range of materials and the nature of problems of everyday life. Constructivist teaching will provide a firm and flexible perspective of history. Children explore to see and understand the historical process which they come across. Constructivism clarifies doubts and disputes through active discussion, questioning and further explorations to the questioning. Group work will help children to negotiate with problems. Project work gives children a sense of locality, region and nation in an interconnected and complex manner. Students need to see history not simply as a set of facts about the past. They need to learn and think historically. They have to acquire the capacity to make interconnections between processes of events taking place in different locations, and see the link between history of different groups and societies. Discussions on case studies, time lines, and historical maps help children to locate the developments of one region in relation to what was happening elsewhere. Children should be encouraged to imagine what it would be like to live in the society that was being discussed and how children of the time would have experienced the events being talked of in the classroom.

Children's life at the school must be linked to their life outside the school. Constructivism marks a departure from bookish learning and bridges the gap between the school, home and community. Given the space, time and freedom

children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed to them. Constructivist method of teaching attempts to enhance the endeavours by according priority to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussions in small groups and hands on experience. Historians who study the past often depend on sources, both primary and secondary. They refer to the information available in manuscripts, inscriptions, archaeology etc. Once sources are found learning history becomes an adventure. They use all these sources like clues to construct historical knowledge.

21st century is an age of exploration of knowledge. The pattern of human life is changing. Children should adjust to advanced scientific and technical knowledge and modern patterns of life. Children should face the challenge of democracy. They should have the ability to understand the problems and face the challenges in the society. Education is a sure remedy to develop independent thinking, critical thinking and construction of knowledge. These traits involve collection of facts, weighing and sifting of facts, formulating hypothesis, unifying and arriving at conclusions. History provides a unique opportunity for this intellectual exercise. History is the barometer of achievements and failures of humans in political, social and economic fields. Content in history offers enough raw materials for critical thinking and to construct

knowledge by exposing children to different pedagogical activities. For example, when a student in the history class is faced with challenging problem like the nature of 1857 revolt, the teacher can take up the activities such as: children should be motivated to read other sources/materials and talking/discussing the problem with peers; encourage children to collect information from different sources; children should be allowed to scrutinise and verify historical information. They should not arrive to final conclusion based on textual information.

Methods and techniques of teaching history must be regarded to achieve the objective of construction of knowledge in history. Conventional approaches encourage dullness, boredom and passivity in learning. They encourage memorisation of facts, debates and content load. Therefore, history teachers should switch over to the effective pedagogical approach which encourages children for joyful learning through the medium of critical thinking and constructivist approach to teaching learning history.

History teachers should encourage discussions in the classroom. For example, while teaching a topic on *Marathas*, Shivaji's character and personality may be taken up for discussion. Extracts from the contemporary *Maratha*, Muslim and English observers could be presented to the class. After circulating details regarding Shivaji's exploits students may be encouraged or asked to find out

why Shivaji was described differently by nationalists, Muslims and the English. Students may be encouraged to express their views based on facts in the discussion. They then will have an opportunity to construct knowledge from the sources given to them. Like the present exercise, other topics too may be broached for critical discussion and presentation of a critique on the same by students. Some of these topics could be: *the seemingly unwise, eccentric policies of Mohammad Bin Tughlaq of shifting the capital; Akbar as a national monarch vs. Rana Pratap as a national hero; the division of Europe into two armed camps; the first division of Indian National Congress into extremists and moderates; Would the Second World War have taken place, if the treaty of Versailles had not been signed?; Although USA and USSR fought together in the later phase of the Second World War, how could cold war between the two begin and develop?* Topics like these provide opportunities in history class to develop the ability to think critically and construct knowledge rather than forcing opinions or finding ready-made solutions or conclusions on them.

Sources form an important tool in historical teaching and research. While teaching about the Asoka's Dharma in the class, various inscriptions of Asoka will serve as the sources which the students should be made to study. The lesson on Asoka should enable them to develop certain major

understandings like: wars cause death, misery and starvation; king is not the master but the servant of people; promotion of welfare of people is the quality of good government; religion is purely personal; everyone has a right to follow his/her own religion etc; Asokan inscriptions such as Minor Rock Edict II, Rock Edict VIII, Rock Edict I, Rock Edict V, Rock Edict XV, Rock Edict XIV etc., will help the teacher to assist students to construct appropriate knowledge in this regard. History teachers can make use the usual lecture method; asking students in the class to read copies of the edicts; group work or group discussion; project method etc.

History teacher should start by explaining theories about various points of controversy. This should be followed by examination of theories supported by evidences. One should try to clarify reasons why the theory supporting region around Caspian Sea as the original home land of the Aryans. History teacher should help students to understand different kinds of sources- archaeological, epigraphic, literary, numismatic etc. The whole lesson may be taught by the history teacher in three ways: through lecture method; distributing two views regarding the original home of the Aryans and providing available evidences asking every student to study them and arrive at their own conclusion. History teacher may divide the class into two groups. Each group is asked to study two different viewpoints with the help of

evidences supplied to them. Each group presents its reports to the class. The reports will be discussed and conclusions will be arrived at. This will enable children to construct their knowledge.

History teachers should act as facilitators in creating suitable learning experiences for children. They should have mastery over their subject and create a friendly and democratic atmosphere in the classroom. They should respect the opinion of students. History teachers should plan and guide student discussions in the class. Teachers should not read history textbooks in the class. Instead they should give a summary of the historical events and controversial problems. Issues should briefly be indicative of the nature of controversy with pointed reference to different exponents. History teachers can cite a few original quotes from history books. Teachers also should help children with a well-equipped history room with source books, reference materials, journals, newspapers, maps, charts, pictures, films and filmstrips. This will attract students to study on their own and pursue their activities in the spirit of construction of knowledge. Evaluation scheme with tools to test different abilities will go a long way in promoting the testing ability of children. Teachers of history should also be conversant with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and exploit technology and its possibilities in the classroom.

V

Future of human race depends on global approach to peace. Since wars began in the life of men, defences of peace must be constructed among the children's mind. Right approach to history teaching through dissemination of knowledge, creation of right attitudes and fostering interest in the welfare of human race will help to develop international understanding. It is with this objective the United Nations Organisation was established. Article 51 of our Constitution reiterates this by stressing the need for promoting international peace, co-operation and understanding. Enormous scientific and technological progress have brought world closer. They also have fostered competition, jealousy and hatred among natives and the power to destroy human civilisation. A single erratic and unwise decision can trigger off a catastrophe for the entire human race. Security against this is the development of international understanding and the idea of world citizenship. During teaching history emphasis should not be on chronological presentation of historical events dealing with wars of conquest, exploits of kings but on efforts of rulers/state on the promotion of peaceful life within the respective territorial limitations. History should be depicted as an evolutionary process contributing to the growth of human civilisation. Discoveries and inventions should be viewed as the cumulative contributions of

human mankind. It should be made clear that no nation can exist in isolation for long. For the progress of human mankind cooperation and mutual help are important. The interdependence of nations is to be stressed particularly with reference to post war developments. Through proper and careful presentation of national history, healthy national and international outlook could be developed. In fact, in today's context national interests are bound to suffer if international interests are ignored. To the extent possible, without destroying historical facts, world's perspective should be kept in view in classroom situations.

How children construct knowledge in history? Construction of knowledge is learning. It is important to note that learning occurs when the learner actively participates in the process of learning. This process of learning often depends upon the practice of drilling. The learner has to represent historical facts in his/her memory. A critical point that needs to be kept in mind is that the process of knowledge construction in history entirely depends on cognitive activities of the learner of history. It does not depend upon the behavioural activities of the learners. For example a lesson on 'the golden age of the Gupta emperors', the learner working on the lesson engages in copying marked portion of a history text book. Here the learner is behaviourally very active since he/she is actively writing in a note book and may not be trying to make sense

out of the materials collected. Later, the learner focuses on the text portion of materials, reads silently and tries to make sense out of the context. In this situation, the learner is cognitively active in trying to make sense out of the text through knowledge construction. They should pay attention towards selecting relevant information, organising information, and integrating knowledge with the knowledge already existing with them. Selection, organisation and interpretation of historical facts are the cognitive processes of construction of knowledge in history. Knowledge construction in history focuses on the learners' working memory. It pays attention to the information collected from primary and secondary sources or materials. It is practically impossible to store all the information that is collected from sources. Only some selected portion of the content of collected information, ideas, and facts is retained or processed. Visually presented materials such as posters, pictures and text materials are initially retained in memory. Verbally presented materials such as lectures, conversations and group discussions are retained in short memory. Learners select only a selected portion of the lesson and its key words, concepts or relevant passages, images and words of the lesson and connect them together based on certain identified relationship patterns. Further children make their mental connections between various kinds of the materials collected with their prior/prerequisite knowledge.

The first step in constructivism is the selection of relevant information for further processing of knowledge in history subject. For example, students see illustrations or video clippings and read the text information on First World War. They represent the scenes and activities in brief words as a sensory memory. They may not retain all the details of the First World War. They recall only some of the important scenes for further processing. A learner focuses on the key issues such as army camps, war tanks, war materials etc. The reading text helps them to foster ideas because it highlights the key ideas and events of the First World War. The important cognitive process is the selection of relevant key information that needs to be retained in the working memory. History teachers are expected to provide guidance in framing of lead questions etc in order to encourage children to construct knowledge.

The second step in construction of knowledge in history is organisation of materials collected by children. Organisation of historical information focuses on how the constructivist learners organise the selected historical materials into verbal representations and selected visual images. This is done based on certain key and relevant ideas identified from the illustrations or from the video texts. They construct relations with destruction of wars, loss of life, and sufferings of people etc. Integration of historical information implies that the learners make one to one

connection between corresponding elements of the pictorial and verbal representations that children have constructed using their prior knowledge. The key component of constructivism in history is how the history teacher has constructed the content in history text book and how children are guided to construct the knowledge. Broad headings, highlights of various terms and concepts, construction of time lines and maps are some of the effective tools that assist teachers and students in the process of construction.

History teachers should provide a learning environment in their class room for children. This is an essential and pre condition for the construction of knowledge in history class rooms in the schools. It depends on various factors in schools. First of all history teachers should be aware of various activities that can be provided to children. Activities constructed for children should be authentic in the sense that they should inculcate interest, real or actual situations and provide opportunity for the construction of knowledge.

VI

There was a wrong notion that children learn only within the four walls of a classroom. This notion has changed over the years. Children learn many things in their life beyond the textbooks and the classroom. For example, they learn social values when they come in contact with their peer group and with adults. Learning does not mean only

textbook learning. On the other hand, learning encompasses all aspects of one's life. During the festivals, national celebrations, village temple festivals and birthday celebrations of the great personalities many values are learnt. Society itself is a big classroom where children come in contact with varieties of persons like doctors, engineers, social workers, historians, scientists, social reformers, sports persons, film heroes, military officers, police, soldiers etc and get an exposure to plethora cross-social experiences of others.

First of all, it is important to know what is presented and what is not available in the history textbooks by the teachers. It is not a great job for teachers to teach what is there in the textbook. The challenging task is to teach them what is not there in the textbook which is known as moving beyond the textbook. There are many things which are available outside the textbooks. Whatever that is relevant to the topic which is not available in the textbooks students should get to know by exposing them to the information available through various information sites. The suggested strategy in this regard could be:

- to encourage children read a few other works written by various scholars. History teachers should refresh their knowledge by an effective use of historical works, journals, periodicals, films, source materials etc; History teachers should develop visual images for

the history topics/themes that are going to be transacted with children. This will enable children to develop a proper understanding and imaginary ideas;

- teachers should give ample opportunities to the children to explore, imagine, express through various tutorials, discussions, debates, seminars, creative writing etc. Students should be provided with well guided tasks and they should be encouraged to complete their tasks. At every stage they should be provided with appropriate feedback;
- well-designed project works will enable children to go beyond the text books. Children should be motivated to present information gathered for the project. This will develop their creativity. For example, when the history teacher teaches modern painting, teacher can ask the children to collect information from the local art galleries etc. In the class the teacher may introduce painting of a particular age as a topic for discussion. In class VII, history teachers can encourage children to gather information by introducing them Emperor Jahangir as a natural painter and ask them to explore what kind of brushes and colours were used by the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir in order to understand the nature of medieval painting. A visit to an art gallery is will be an added advantage for history teachers.

- teachers play a vital role in taking children on educational excursions, visits to important places like historical museum, zoo, exhibitions, bird sanctuaries, science and technology parks, museums, historical temples, rivers, dams, historical palaces etc in order to give them first-hand knowledge about society. Confining of children to the classroom will not improve their mental horizons. Schools may invite experts in different fields like scientists, social workers, agricultural experts, theatre persons, film stars, sport-persons etc to talk to children about their experience which will definitively add a lot of information to the community of children.
- children must be made to understand the concept of gender bias and how to treat boys and girls equally. Attitudinal change will definitely make children better in all aspects of their personal life. Also, children must be taught to give a fair deal to the challenged persons. History teachers can make children interview some of the historians to dig into past and to know the life of people in yester years. Children can be taken to the local historical places to get the glimpse of the past.

The traditional role of teachers as the discipliners of facts has come under scrutiny as envisaged in the *National Curriculum Framework-2005*. The teacher playing a role of

facilitator needs to utilise a wide variety of opportunities and resources in order to meet diverse learning needs of children in a classroom. At primary level, both social sciences and history teaching should relate to the local environment of the learners. The instruction should be appropriately planned to structure students' daily experiences while developing concepts in history so as to make learning a joyful experience. The overall aim should be to stimulate and strengthen scientific attitudes and historical abilities among children by drawing examples from their daily experiences. Too often, this is neglected by assuming that children need more elaboration on their local content. Actually, an imaginative history teacher knows the importance of developing teaching sequences related to every day experiences of the child. For example if a teacher is teaching about the coins the teacher can develop a questionnaire asking questions in order to get the primary information such as:

1. Identify the materials used for a given coin.
2. What are the various type of coins used in the ancient, medieval and modern periods?
3. Can you find out any writings on these coins?
4. Can you identify/infer the authority, the year and value of the coins? What was the language used in the coin?
5. What was the quality of the coin in terms of its design, materials used etc.?

Children should be encouraged to visit school library in order to consult sources available there. History teachers can collect some government papers, original books published by Archaeological survey of India, Anthropological survey of India, Census Reports, Gazetteers, Museum Bulletins, epigraphical Manuscripts, state and national archival material and other primary sources. These sources of information may be carefully preserved in the school libraries in order to encourage children to consult them as and when required in order to assist their learning. While teaching Ancient Indian History materials collected from the Archaeological Survey of India will greatly benefit both teachers and students. Similarly, while the teacher is teaching topics of the Medieval Indian History translated manuscripts of various Museums will assist them. Teachers should be aware of these materials before they lecture or demonstrate to children. While teaching modern Indian history, various documents can be photocopied from the state and national archives like famine reports, diaries of Governor Generals, newspaper reports etc and preserve them in the library. This will invariably assist history teachers in their teaching process of the topics pertaining to the modern Indian History. To get a holistic picture of history one should not get the titbits of history, but rather a complete and continuous picture of it so that

children can objectively study the materials offered to them. This will provide them a bird's eye-view of the past and help them understand the present in a meaningful way.

History teachers have an onus to build the complete picture of historical events and present them with examples and illustrations. Mere teaching history will not help. It should be taught with an understanding of making children realise the modern perspective of history. History should be integrated with other social science subjects such as geography, political science, economics and sociology. The content area of history can be integrated meaningfully if it is based on different topics. For example, in democracy, economic affairs and sociological affairs can go together. In political science, philosophical issues, human rights, education etc can be taken together. Emphasis on these issues is lacking in the text books. For the construction of knowledge history teachers and classrooms should provide natural or real situations or atmosphere for learning. It means that classrooms become the source for learning through experiences. History teachers should provide variety of learning situations such as projects, readings, field visits, field diaries, reports, class discussions for the construction of knowledge in history. Activities provided by the teacher should challenge the learners to reason, question, draw connections,

communicate, evaluate view points, perspectives in history must be identify and use evidences for better linked in the constructivist form of understanding. Multiple ideas and learning.

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