

PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS

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The pedagogical internship is one of the vital steps of teacher development programmes conducted by the National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) in Sri Lanka. Here, the constructivist approach is one of the most commonly used teaching-learning theories as it develops advanced skills among students. During the internship year, the prospective teachers are allowed to experience a real classroom environment. This research aimed to determine prospective teachers' perceptions of constructivism as a learning theory and its implementation in government schools in Sri Lanka. The mixed-methods approach based on the explanatory sequential design was used in this study. The sample included 100 prospective teachers following the secondary mathematics internship from two NCoEs. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted only with 10 prospective secondary mathematics teachers in three schools who taught mathematics for Grades 6 to 9. Interviews were recorded, and transcripts were prepared. The responses were examined by descriptive and content analysis. The questionnaire findings revealed that 95% of prospective teachers were aware of the theory of constructivism, and 98% were optimistic about that approach in the teaching-learning process. However, despite their theoretical knowledge of constructivism, most prospective teachers (98%) faced issues while implementing it in schools due to the lack of practical experience during their training. Responses to the semi-structured interviews revealed that the prospective teachers were not given sufficient hands-on training in using the theory of constructivism during their time at NCoEs. The lack of motivation by the lecturers of NCoEs in implementing constructivism was also noted as a drawback. The research concludes that teacher development institutions should organise programmes for prospective teachers to develop and improve their hands-on skills in using the theory of constructivism during their internship to enable them to use it in schools more confidently.

Keywords: Internship, National Colleges of Education, Secondary Mathematics, Teacher Development, Theory of Constructivism