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Constructivist instruction practices in Kosovo primary education: The field of languages and communication curriculum

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Abstract

The constructivist approach aims to change the traditional instruction paradigms in the primary education curriculum of Kosovo. Nonetheless, constructivist practices that aim to ensure success in teaching have not been fully understood by instructors. This study intended to examine how primary school instructors practice constructivist instruction in the field of languages and communication curriculum. The study also aimed to ascertain the differences between instructors who teach at the second curricular stage (grades three, four and five) following the constructivist and traditional instruction and the teaching activities that they develop in this curricular area. In addition, the research aimed to identify and compare practices that determine the constructivist instruction in the subjects Albanian and English languages. A mixed research methodology was used in this research. The content analysis was followed by a descriptive statistical analysis of the data obtained through a questionnaire and observation. The results indicate that the constructivist teaching practices were partially applied due to difficulties faced by instructors in understanding and implementing the constructivist philosophy in the languages and communication curriculum area. The creation of a handbook with guidelines that focus on constructivist instruction and interactive activities, training of in-service teachers in professional development and the provision of technological resources are recommended to enhance the quality of constructivist practices, and are considered key overcoming the present obstacles.

Keywords: *Constructivist practices, teaching activities, languages and communication field, instructor, primary education.*

Introduction

After the war in Kosovo ended in 1999 and the legal base was created, several reforms were undertaken by international and local organisations, bringing significant progress in the design of new curricula following the principles of the European Union. The Kosovo Curriculum

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Framework for pre-university education (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MEST], 2011) is expected to fully transform approaches to teaching and learning. The education system now requires strategies focused on including students in the learning process, whereby the focus is on building knowledge rather than on reproducing it (Shah, 2019). Accordingly, the philosophy of the New Curriculum is based on the constructivist approach, i.e., on 'learning by doing'. Adequate conditions and opportunities for the construction of new knowledge are created through the actualisation of students' skills and knowledge in real-life situations (MEST, 2016).

Constructivism, as a new educational approach, emphasises that students are more capable of comprehending information that they constructed themselves (Muhammad, 2021). The curriculum needs to be organised in a spiral for the students to continuously build upon the already acquired knowledge (Bruner, 1966).

Constructivist learning is a social advancement that includes language, real-life situations, interaction and collaboration among students (Bransford et al., 2000). The field of languages and communication is one of seven curricular fields that involve the Albanian language and English as a foreign language. Recent curricular trends in multiculturalism and conceptualism have surpassed the traditional approach, especially for English language learners, providing transformative and pragmatic models for 21st-century learners (Adams, 2019). Students' perceptions concerning the native language and foreign language acquisition are influenced by the general principles of the theories on overall human cognitive development. The approaches and practices in instruction and learning of these two subjects are valuable for the entire community. The Albanian language is taught at all key curricular stages, from the preparatory until the 12th grade. The English language is the first foreign language taught, being optional in the first and the second grades and a compulsory subject from the third grade forward (Gundara & Peffers, 2006). However, based on the Kosovo Curriculum Framework, English is taught 'from key stage one until the final grade of the upper high school. In key stage one, this language is taught through games, drawings and songs, to be continued with reading and writing in other key stages of the curriculum' (MEST, 2011, p. 38).

Bruner (1960) began curricular changes based on the idea that learning is an active social process through which students constructs new ideas or concepts based on real-life knowledge. Instructors using the constructivist approach will detach students from the mechanical memorisation of facts and encourage them to obtain knowledge by exploring information individually through

interaction in the classroom (Patil & Kudte, 2017). Moreover, constructivist teaching practices are becoming more prevalent in teacher education programs, showing significant success in promoting student learning. Teacher education programs should include reflection in their curricula to ensure practices that foster an increased self-efficacy in teaching (Evans-Amalu et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Instruction involves more than just the transmission of information. Teaching theories have increasingly focused on the learning process, and the constructivist instruction has more to offer. Several authors, have detailed the importance of the theory, prospects and practices of constructivist instruction (e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Bell, 1993; Fosnot, 2013; Fox, 2001; Marlowe & Page, 2005; Richardson, 1997; Stupiansky, 1997; Tobias & Duffy, 2009). Meanwhile, others have explained the application of the constructivist learning theory in classroom settings (Basturk, 2016; Beck et al., 2000; Brook & Brooks, 1999; Forman, 1996; Fosnot & Perry, 1999; Schifter, 1996). Constructivist teaching and learning advocate students' active participation in the process of obtaining knowledge (Sjøberg, 2007). Knowledge is not passively received but actively built by the cognising subject (Von Glasersfeld, 1991). This statement challenged the traditional knowledge concept. Students do not come into a classroom with empty heads. Students have knowledge and experiences that were formed by their past experiences and studies, thus having their own ideas (Wang, 2014). Naylor and Keogh (1999) point out that the core of constructivism is that students actively build knowledge and understanding from their knowledge and experience, and thus learn new concepts and explore their application through tasks.

The roots of constructivism lie in Piaget's cognitive theory, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, and on the integration of the two theories (Aljohani, 2017). Piaget (1976) states in his book that the growth of knowledge is the result of individual constructions made by the student's understanding. Piaget's theories (1972), are the basis of constructivist learning. According to Piaget, children are born with a basic (inherited and evolved) mental structure upon which all subsequent learning and knowledge are based (Plowden, 1967). The cognitive structure (the scheme, the mental models) provides the understanding and organisation of experiences and allows the individual to move beyond the given information (Bruner, 1986).

All human beings are capable of optimally using the abilities provided by the brain and the nervous system. Language is the main means by which this is made possible. The use of language as a tool

to think loudly with others is a step towards the ability of inner-thinking and thinking in privacy (Bernardo-Hinesley, 2020; Keefer & Haj-Broussard, 2020). On the one hand, speech serves the intellect as thoughts are spoken. On the other, experience is also important for constructivism (Hartman, 2001). Hence, teaching and learning processes should be linked with the real world. Lev Vygotsky (1978), in his Mind in Society outlined how thought and language are independent and develop separately, although through similar processes. Vygotsky points out that reflective and rational thinking do not develop accidentally, or as a consequence of a student's genetic richness. The social environment is important for children's development as it can foster or hinder development (Kim, 2005). Vygotsky's theory supports the premise that all students are able to learn, and refers to two levels of development (current and potential) and to the zone of proximal development, highlighting the role of adult intervention in learning (Bermejo et al., 2021).

Many researchers have conducted research studies on constructivist instruction practices concerning native and foreign language curricula (Ahmad et al., 2021; Bo, 2015; Jiang, 2020; Kaufman, 2004; Yang & Wilson, 2006). Some have identified and examined the strategies and activities that are used in constructivist instruction (Baviskaret al., 2009; Henry, 2003), while others have examined the perceptions of instructors on constructivist practices (Çolak, 2017; Kaymakamoglu, 2018; Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015). A constructivist instructor, provides adequate tasks and opportunities for dialogue, and thus directs the students' attention. The instructor should also use several activities that develop the critical thinking process in the classroom.

In a constructivist classroom, instructors and students consider knowledge a dynamic landscape, constantly seeking exert positive changes to our world and to our ability to explore it successfully – not as a factual landscape to be memorised (Berger et al., 1967). Following the constructivist paradigm, knowledge is obtained through a recursive process where new concepts are built on previous ones (Gallardo-Alba et al., 2021). Moreover, classes are designed and formed so that students pose questions, share ideas and experiences, and interactively exchange knowledge (Shaughnessy et al., 2008).

Given the aforementioned context, this study focuses on the constructivist practices applied by the instructors in the primary school, their attitude towards the constructivist approach and the demonstration of learning activities in the field of languages and communication. The purpose of this research was to examine how primary school instructors practice constructivist instruction in

the field of languages and communication. The study also aimed to ascertain the differences related to constructivist instruction and teaching activities developed among instructors who teach the second curricular stage (third, fourth and fifth grades). The research targeted the identification and comparison of practices that are aligned with the constructivist instruction in the subjects of the Albanian and the English languages.

Research questions

The research questions used to guide the research process in this study were:

1. How do primary school instructors apply constructivist instruction in the communication and languages subjects?
2. What are the differences between instructors regarding the constructivist instruction practices in the second curriculum stage?
3. Which teaching activities demonstrate the constructivist instruction practices in the subjects of the Albanian and the English languages?

Method

Research Design

A mixed research methodology and descriptive statistics were used in this study. According to Creswell (2009), this method produces qualitative and quantitative data. However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) emphasise that the mixed methodology aims to maximally benefit obtained from the strong points and minimise the weak points. The content analysis was followed by a descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire and the collection of observation data associated with situations occurring in natural environments (Creswell et al., 2003).

Participants

The participants consisted of instructors and students of two urban schools in Kosovo. The participants were selected randomly since, according to Creswell (2014), the probability sampling approaches most used by researchers is random sampling, which allows representatives (teachers and students) an equal chance of getting selected. The research was conducted in the city of Prizren, in the public primary school 'Lekë Dukagjini' and the private 'International Maarif School of Kosova' (IMS of Kosova). A total of 31 instructors from two schools participated in the research

(Table 1), being 26 female and five male instructors (Table 2). Most instructors were between 20-30 and 41-50 years of age, and most instructors were engaged in teaching the third graders (Table 2).

Table 1

Number of Participating Instructors

School	Total number of instructors	Percentage (%)
Lekë Dukagjini	20	65%
IMS of Kosova	11	35%
Total	31	100%

Table 2

Distribution of Instructors by Gender, Age and the Class Where They Work

	Class	N (n=31)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	26	83.87%
	Male	5	16.13%
Age	20–30	10	32.25%
	31–40	7	22.28%
	41–50	10	32.25%
	51–60	4	12.90%
Grade	Three	12	38.71%
	Four	10	32.26%
	Five	9	29.03%

A total of 62 students participated in the research, comprising students from the third, fourth and fifth grades (Table 3). Two classes from each grade from both schools were included in the sampling procedure (Table 3).

Table 3

The Number of Student Participants

Schools	Class	N (n=62)	Frequency
Lekë Dukagjini	Third	19	31%
Lekë Dukagjini	Third	16	26%
IMS of Kosova	Fourth	17	27%
IMS of Kosova	Fourth	10	16%

Data Collection Instruments

The data for this study were collected using the researcher-created instrument. The instruments used in the research were a questionnaire for the instructors and the control list in the classroom. The questionnaire for instructors included two parts, where one had demographic questions

followed by three closed type questions, and another had teacher's constructivist instruction (CI) and constructivist activities (CA). The questionnaire contained 14 items divided into two sub-dimensions: constructivist instruction (items 1-7) and constructivist activities (items 8-14). The questionnaire for the instructors was closed and designed based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = very frequently).

The control list was used in the subjects of the Albanian and English languages. Initially, the control list data was coded for nine items related to constructivist practices that the students showed in the classroom. The coding system used was comprised the items: student-centred activity (SCA), review of the previous topic (RPT), instructions and encouragement for work (IEW), free expression of opinion (FEO), group work (GW), individual work (IW), student cooperation (SC), peer evaluation (PE) and technology usage (TU). The aforementioned items were observed during the three lesson stages: Prediction (P), Knowledge building (KNB) and Reinforcement (R). During the observation, the number of constructivist practices shown in the third and the fourth grades were recorded, following the determined intervals: rarely=0–10 times; partially=11–21 times; fully=22–32 times.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the content obtained was examined by researchers in constructivist theory and following the literature review. The CI and CA were the first to be validated. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine construct validity. According to the metacognitive and constructivist theory, the instruments were designed to measure four hypothetical constructs associated with the constructivist practices and constructivist teaching activities. To confirm the construct validity measured by CI and CA, a confirmatory factor analysis was used including seven items (X) identified by the literature as part of Instruction (constructivist instruction) and seven items (Y) as part of Activities (constructivist activities). All items were validated through the validity test (see Table 4), once they had *r* values greater than 0.7 with significance levels lower than 0.05.

Table 4

Validity Test Results

X (Constructivist instruction)				Y (Constructivist activities)			
No.	*r*	Significance	Conclusion	No.	*r*	Significance	Conclusion
X1	.737	.000	Valid	Y1	.721	.000	Valid
X2	.859	.000	Valid	Y2	.870	.000	Valid
X3	.830	.000	Valid	Y3	.952	.000	Valid
X4	.954	.001	Valid	Y4	.856	.000	Valid
X5	.723	.001	Valid	Y5	.812	.000	Valid
X6	.804	.002	Valid	Y6	.786	.001	Valid
X7	.974	.000	Valid	Y7	.832	.000	Valid

Data Collection Procedure

The research data were collected in two primary schools located in the city of Prizren that have been involved in the piloting process and implementing the New Kosovo Curriculum. Initially, the permission was obtained from the Municipal Directorate of Education in Prizren. Research ethics was respected in the schools in which the research was conducted.

Survey with instructors

Pilot questionnaires were applied to third, fourth and fifth-grade instructors. Then, the required and necessary corrections were made. The data collection process commenced subsequently through a survey with the instructors.

Classroom observation

The instructors were initially informed regarding the classroom observation. A total of 16 hours of observation was conducted. The observation was carried out in the third and fourth grades throughout for four weeks for one hour per week (i.e., four hours in the third, four hours in the fourth grade in the subject of the Albanian language, and four hours in the third grade and four hours in the fourth grade in the English language classes). The syllabus of the Albanian language for the third grade included: Thematic areas (Language system) and Topics (Proper and common nouns, Forms of nouns and Adjectives). The syllabus for the fourth grade covered: Thematic areas (Linguistic knowledge), Topics (Conjunctions, Adverb, and Adverbials of place, time and manner). The English language syllabus of the third grade comprised: Concept (Literary and non-literary texts) and Topics (Who are we?), including Introduction, describing appearances, Characters and imaginary friends, and Numbers 11 – 20), whereas the fourth-grade syllabus

included the thematic area: Making connections with Topics (number games, role play and matching activities). The data collected were recorded in the control list.

Data analysis

The quantitative data were collected from the Likert scale of the questionnaires. The data were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software version 26.0. A Likert scale was used once it was deemed important to calculate and report Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Items on the rational level were described using descriptive statistics [frequency %, arithmetic mean (M), standard deviation (SD)]. Chi-square tests (t-test and p-values) and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) were also performed.

This study used a structural equation modelling (SEM) with quantitative measurement to assess the relationship between the variables examined. According to the theory and qualitative analysis results, the hypothetical structure equation model was built to examine both constructivist instruction and constructivist activities.

The qualitative research model for teaching and learning (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) allows students to progress through major phases of practice and learning. The qualitative data involves the use of a control list for the nine items related to the constructivist practices that the students displayed in the classroom.

The reliability of the questionnaire for primary instructors was checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliabilities of the subscales were acceptable (see Table 5).

Table 5

Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Standardized items
Constructivist instruction	.766	.775	.775	.872
Constructivist activities	.774	.780	.781	.863

The composite reliability results show composite reliability values for each construct greater than 0.7, indicating that they are all reliable (Table 5). Similarly, all Cronbach's alpha values are also greater than 0.7, indicating that all the constructs are dependable.

Findings

The data from the survey among instructors

Descriptive statistics were used to ascertain the average differences between the items included in the research. The descriptive statistics relating to dependent variables included in the regression model are presented in the table below (Table 6).

Table 6

Constructivist Instruction and Activities in Languages and Communication Curriculum

Item	Mean	SD	t-test	p-value
I organise student-centred instruction	4.81	0.402	2.346	.017
I focus instruction on what students do not know rather than on what they know	3.39	1.116	*6.286*	*.043*
I use meta cognition to increase students' awareness concerning their knowledge	4.52	0.508	-1.531	.301
During my work with students, I am more of a facilitator than a leader	4.81	0.477	6.005	.000
I rely on the principle 'What a student can do'	4.61	0.715	7.963	.000
I support the development of the curricular competencies	4.52	0.508	4.631	.001
I support cross-curricular integration in teaching content	4.32	0.748	0.964	.035
I use technology for an interactive teaching	4.61	0.715	*6.429*	*.011*
I engage students in projects on different topics	3.87	1.231	*5.294*	*.021*
I encourage students to comment on the text they have read	4.90	0.301	-1.027	.301
I discuss and evaluate students' written works	4.94	0.250	*7.069*	*.132*
I use formative assessment in the classroom	4.52	0.508	2.493	.013
I use teaching techniques while working in groups	4.94	0.250	*3.106*	*.212*
Before introducing a new topic, I review the previous topic with the students	4.87	0.341	16.795	.003

Notes: p<0.05

The responses to the statement 'I focus instruction on what students do not know rather than on what they know 'were on average 3.39, which is lower compared to the value of the variables 'I organise student-centred instruction' (mean=4.81), and 'I encourage students to comment on the texts they have read' (mean=4.90), 'I rely on the principle "What students can do"' (mean= 4.61) (see Table 6). The variables 'I focus teaching on what students do not know' (SD=1.116), 'I use technology for interactive teaching' (SD=1.231) had a higher standard deviation, showing a considerable variance compared to other descriptive variables included in the research (Table 6).

Apart from the above-presented statistics on the items of the questionnaire which were analysed through cross-tabulation. The data obtained on the relationship between variables were also tested using a t-test. A total of five out of seven items (except items 3 and 6), concerning the constructivist instruction, were statistically significant (Table 6). In addition, six out of seven items (except item 10), concerning learning activities, were statistically significant.

*The results have shown a high difference between the instructors concerning the items '*Before introducing a new topic I review the previous topic with the students' (t= *6.795,* p = .003), '*Use of*

technology for interactive teaching' (t=6.429, p = .011), 'Focus of instruction on what students do not know' (t=6.286, p=.43) and 'I engage students in projects on different topics' (t=5.294, p=.021) (Table 6).

Furthermore, strong relation or statistical significance between the variable of instructors and the items was observed in the following: I discuss and evaluate students' written work (t-test is 7.069, p = .132 and I use teaching techniques while working in groups *(t-test 3.106, p = .212).*

The results regarding the constructivist instruction indicate that most third-grade instructors (83.3%) focus their teaching on what students do not know rather than on what they do know (Table 7). This impacts students' ability to use previously obtained knowledge which, at the same time, hinders the development of critical thinking. In turn, 80% of the fourth-grade instructors considered that they very frequently act more as facilitators than as leaders, while 40% of them frequently support cross-curricular integration in the teaching content. The fourth-grade instructors very frequently rely on the principle of what the student can do. In addition, 22.2% of the fifth-grade instructors frequently focus their instruction on what students do not know rather than on what they know.

The results concerning the encouragement of students to think about thinking (meta-cognition) are not satisfactory. A total of 66.7% of the third-grade instructors use meta-cognition, which could have been begun by the implementation of the new curriculum, which increased awareness of its importance.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Grades Three, Four, and Five - Constructivist Instruction

Item		Third Grade	Fourth grade	Fifth grade	Total
I organise student-centred instruction	Frequently	8.3%	30.0%	22.2%	19.4%
	Very frequently	91.7%	70.0%	77.8%	80.6%
I focus instruction on what students do not know rather than on what they know	Rarely	41.7%	20.0%	11.1%	25.8%
	Sometimes	25.0%	30.0%	44.4%	32.3%
	Frequently	25.0%	10.0%	22.2%	19.4%
	Very frequently	8.3%	40.0%	22.2%	22.6%
I use meta cognition as a form of increasing students' awareness about their knowledge	Sometimes	33.3%	50.0%	66.7%	48.4%
	Very frequently	66.7%	50.0%	33.3%	51.6%

During my work with students, I am more of a facilitator than a leader	Sometimes	22.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.2%
	Frequently	8.1.0%	20.0%	22.2%	12.9%
	Very frequently	69.9%	80.0%	66.7%	83.9%
I rely on the principle 'What a student can do'	Never	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.2%
	Rarely	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.2%
	Sometimes	16.7%	30.0%	22.2%	22.6%
	Very frequently	83.3%	70.0%	55.6%	71.0%
I support the development of the curricular competences in teaching	Frequently	41.7%	50.0%	55.6%	48.4%
	Very frequently	58.3%	50.0%	44.4%	51.6%
I support cross-curricular integration in teaching content	Sometimes	25.0%	10.0%	11.1%	16.1%
	Frequently	33.3%	40.0%	33.3%	35.5%
	Very frequently	41.7%	50.0%	55.6%	48.4%

The results pertaining the constructivist activities of the third-grade instructors indicate that 50% of the instructors use technologies in interactive teaching while over 90% of the respondents claim that they encourage students to comment on the text students have read and that they evaluate students' written work (Table 8). Furthermore, 90% of the fourth-grade instructors claim that they review the previous topic very frequently, while 30% of them engage students in projects on different topics. A total of 95% of the fifth-grade instructors very frequently encourage students to comment on the text they have read.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Grades Three, Four, and Five – Constructivist Activities

Item		Third grade	Fourth grade	Fifth grade	Total
I use technology in interactive teaching	Never	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%
	Rarely	8.3%	10.0%	22.2%	12.9%
	Sometimes	25.0%	20.0%	22.2%	22.6%
	Frequently	8.3%	20.0%	22.2%	16.1%
	Very frequently	50.0%	50.0%	33.3%	45.2%
I engage students in projects on different topics	Rarely	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	3.2%
	Sometimes	25.0%	30.0%	55.6%	35.5%
	Frequently	41.7%	20.0%	11.1%	25.8%
	Very frequently	33.3%	50.0%	22.2%	35.5%
I encourage students to comment on the text they have read	Frequently	8.3%	20.0%	5.0%	9.7%
	Very frequently	91.7%	80.0%	95.0%	90.3%
I discuss and evaluate students' written works	Frequently	8.3%	15.0%	11.1%	6.5%

	Very frequently	91.7%	85.0%	88.9%	93.5%
I use formative assessment in the classroom	Frequently	25.0%	30.0%	33.3%	29.0%
	Very frequently	75.0%	70.0%	66.7%	71.0%
I use teaching techniques while working in groups	Frequently	41.7%	45.3.0%	55.6%	48.4%
	Very frequently	58.3%	57.4%	44.4%	51.6%
Before introducing a new topic, I review the previous topic with the students	Frequently	16.7%	10.0%	11.1%	12.9%
	Very frequently	83.3%	90.0%	88.9%	87.1%

The data from classroom observation

Third and fourth-grade classes (two classes in each of the participating schools) were observed. The data was collected from the observation of Albanian and the English language classes using a checklist (see Table 9).

Table 9

The Data from Observation in the Albanian Language and the English Language Classes

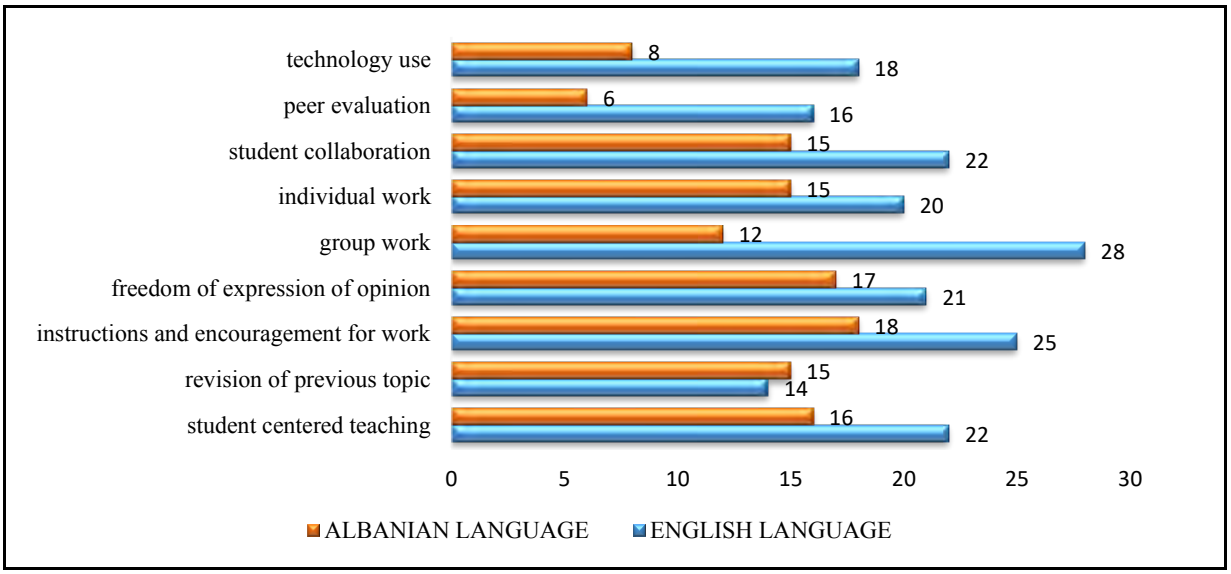
	Albanian language					***English Language***				
	Code	Third grade (no. of times)	Lesson stage	Fourth grade (no. of times)	Lesson stage	Code	Third grades (no. of times)	Lesson stage	Fourth grade (no. of times)	Lesson stage
1	SCI	8	KNB	8	KNB	SCI	10	KNB	12	KNB
2	RPT	7	P	8	P	RPT	7	P	7	P
3	IEW	9	KNB	9	KNB	IEW	13	KNB	12	KNB
4	FEO	9	P	8	P	FEO	11	P	10	P
5	GW	7	KNB	5	KNB	GW	15	KNB	13	KNB
6	IW	8	R	7	R	IW	10	R	10	R
7	SC	7	KNB	8	KNB	SC	12	KNB	10	KNB
8	PE	3	R	3	P	PE	8	R	8	R
9	TU	4	R	4	R	TU	4	R	14	R

Notes: Code*:* student centred instruction [SCI], review of the previous topic [RPT], instructions and encouragement for work [IEW], free expression of opinion [FEO], group work [GW], individual work [IW], student cooperation [SC], peer evaluation [PE], technology usage [TU].
Lesson stage: P=Prediction; KNB= Knowledge building; R= Reinforcement

For the Albanian language classes, student-centred instruction was recorded 16 times, mostly in the knowledge building stage, in both third and fourth grades. At the beginning of the lesson, in the prediction stage, the instructor reviewed the previous unit with the students in the form of a dialogue. Previous knowledge plays an important role in the active construction of knowledge

(Boghossian, 2006). In both grades, repetition was observed 15 times in the prediction stage. The instructions were brief and accurate; hence, rare were the occasions of students asking for clarification. Group work forms of teaching were practised 15 times in both classes altogether, mainly in the knowledge building stage. It is noteworthy that during the observation period, the instructors barely used technology or peer evaluation (3 times in each of the classes) during the reinforcement stage.

For the English language classes, the instructor provided student centred instruction through games and songs as teaching activities, which were frequently of competitive character (22 times) in the stage of knowledge building in the fourth-grade class. Technological tools used in the class were: laptop, PowerPoint and video recordings. Students viewed videos, and sang and danced alongside the instructor (18 times) in the knowledge building stage. The summary of the teaching activities in the subjects of the Albanian language and English are presented below (Figure 1).



Notes: rarely=0–10 times; partially =11–21 times; fully=22–32 times.

Figure 1.

Teaching Activities in the Albanian and the English Language

Most activities, apart from the activities 3, 7 and 9, were partially demonstrated by the instructors, and were conducted by the English language instructors, despite the small difference between the classes. The teaching activities were conducted more frequently in the knowledge building stage and less in the prediction stage.

Discussion

The constructivist approach as a concept and instruction was not very clear for the instructors. Primary school instructors perceive constructivist instruction mainly as an approach that the new Kosovo curriculum aims to apply in the teaching program, solely in the theoretical context and lacking the knowledge to connect to the practice. Constructivist practices are characterised by having many obstacles associated with the instructors' limited professional preparation that hinders the transformation of traditional instruction. These results are similar to the findings of other studies that report the effectiveness of constructivist over the traditional instruction regarding academic achievement (Kim, 2005). In addition to best perform constructivist practices instructors must abandon the classic teaching approach and move towards constructing the holistic outlook implied in the constructivist approach and adapting the instruction to real-life situations (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012).

Instructors demonstrate student centred instruction. However, the issue of the instruction student-centred instruction is the fact that many instructors alleged to have been practicing it, while they were not (Krahenbuhl, 2016). The results related to instructors as leaders, or facilitators are encouraging since the data show that they are making efforts to overcome the authoritative role in the classroom. Instruction is accomplished through self-directed learning while the instructor's task is to facilitate students' learning and act as a guide (Ültanır, 2012). Student centred instruction activities used by the instructors were relatively efficient in encouraging students to freely express their opinions, to give instructions for work and to collaborate in group. The fact that the instructors reviewed the previous topic to form a basis to build new knowledge upon are noteworthy. Constructivist instruction assumes that learning occurs when students are actively engaged in a meaningful process of construction of knowledge as compared to passive receiving of knowledge (Selley, 2013). Students need to be involved in processes such as questioning, informing, supposing, predicting, controlling and reasoning, being aware of what they are doing (Fisher, 2013).

The researchers engaged in the field of cognitive psychology define meta-cognition as 'information and control that children have on their thinking and learning' (Cross & Paris, 1988, p. 131). In constructivist instruction practices the use of meta-cognition is also important. However, this requirement was not clearly understood by the instructors. English language teachers gave instructions to encourage students, to evaluate each other and integrated technology

to develop effective constructivist practices. However, the previous topic was reviewed in the Albanian language classes more frequently to show that previous knowledge has an impact on the learning process (Treagust et al., 1996). The application of this principle helps instructors work towards the change between what students know and what they can do (Gravois et al., 2007).
Technology was more frequently used in English language classes. Technology is used in the classroom environment not only to instruct students to operate computers, but also to help instructors use technology as a learning tool (Sheingold, 1990). Nevertheless, to successfully implement constructivist practices, appropriate professional training, continuous professional development of instructors (in-service training), investments in the physical infrastructure of schools providing equipment with educational technology and required didactic tools in general, and strong institutional support are more than necessary. The findings of this study are similar to those of other studies of similar nature that ascertain that in such constructivist-oriented training, instructors are advised to view students as creators of meaning, challenging the concepts of the subject (Tanase et al., 2012) and enhancing their experience through professional development (Rout & Behera, 2014). Constructivist instruction helps the instructor act more in the role of a mentor and learning facilitator than as a dominant expert of the content (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). We believe that the instructors' interest in accomplishing this is in constant increase, although there is much to be done in this respect.

Conclusion and recommendations

The results of this research study provided answers to the research questions. The research revealed how instructors deliver their instruction in languages and communication, and the differences between the second curriculum stage instructors regarding constructivist practices. Moreover, activities associated with constructivist instruction in the subjects of the Albanian and the English language were identified and compared.

Primary education instructors in Kosovo are seeking to link traditional teaching with student centred instruction. The constructivist instruction practices have been only partially identified in the organisation of the student-centred instruction, and in focusing instruction on what students do not know rather than on what they know. In turn, the instructors encouraged students to comment on the texts they had read and in the revision of the previous topic at the beginning of the lesson,

during the teaching activities. Still, constructivist practices were carried out at a slightly higher frequency in the third grade, while the project-based tasks and students' works were carried out more often in the fourth and the fifth grades. These data indicate that instructors create the learning process and not the learning product. However, in practice, the results were not satisfactory.

The instruction of the Albanian language was aligned with the constructivist instruction approach and principles, whereas the teaching activities that support constructivist instruction were practised at a slightly higher level in the English language subject. The English language teachers carried out slightly more constructivist practices with respect to applying group work and peer collaboration than the Albanian language teachers.

The use of ICT for interactive instruction was not present and technological resources in schools were limited. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the constructivist instruction practices were partially applied in the languages and communication curricula since primary school instructors face difficulties in understanding the constructivist philosophy. They claim to have been practising it, when, in fact, they have shown difficulties in understanding the approach. They lack the necessary knowledge on good constructivist approaches, and, consequently, their activities are somehow limited and not sufficiently compatible with the constructivist approach.

The recommendations presented below are formulated to address the problem that, based on the responses of the participants concerning the practices and activities in the languages and communication curricula faced by instructors, hinder the creation of a genuinely constructivist environment. Accordingly, it is recommended:

(1) To provide opportunities for instructors, particularly of those of the Albanian language, to enhance their understanding of constructivist principles and activities in the teaching process by providing a general guidebook focused on constructivist instruction.

(2) To organise training for in-service instructors supported by the government or by non-governmental organisations that are active in Kosovo, to provide clear information related to comprehending and conducting good constructivist practices.

(3) To motivate instructors to enhance their instruction by using meta-cognition, not simply by transmitting it. Instruction should be related to experiences and contents that enable students to reflect on the knowledge gained.

(4) To provide schools with technological tools and teaching materials that will facilitate the development of constructivist practices.

Constructivist instruction as a new approach in the primary school curriculum in Kosovo, requires the readiness and engagement of all relevant educational factors. Building the capacity of a constructivist instructor in an adequate environment cannot be accomplished within a short period of time. This means that cooperating and adopting the efficient practices of other countries is necessary. The curricular reform of primary education through the development of constructivist practices in instruction will not only strengthen the education system but can also ensure continuous development of the society.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

This research study had two limitations that can be addressed in future research. First, it was limited to two primary schools in the second curriculum stage, and exclusively to one curriculum area in primary education. Future research could be extended to other schools and to other curriculum stages. Constructivist practices in teaching are expected to be applied by all instructors at all curriculum stages of primary education. Secondly, instructors have frequently misinterpreted constructivist instruction, which resulted in learning practices that neither challenge nor they address the needs of the students. Future research could focus on examples that illustrate the effective use of constructivist instruction in curriculum implementation to meet students' needs.

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