Social Reconstruction and its Application to Teaching

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Abstract

Teaching of Indian Language: an NCERT document clearly focussed on the constructive learning pedagogical aspects of Indian Languages. In this concern, the books for primary language teaching were prepared in the light of constructive approach. In the Preface of these books, we find highlights that the present life of students should be correlated to their off-school life. This off-school life, in other words the social life should be subject matter of any language pedagogy. **Second**, the creative and initiative behaviours of students should be enhanced in large scale patterns of learning values with processes and procedures. On above two issues, social reconstruction theory has great implication.

Actually this is time of reconstruction. We observe everywhere the waves of reconstruction: an economic, political, cultural and social reconstruction. In this regards, Concept of Social Reconstruction has its own implications to society and education. This is emerging concept influencing the teaching-learning environment. Social Reconstruction as a theory, not a complete philosophy has an epistemological perspective to teaching methods. In this paper, some selected methods are being discussed as an application of Social Reconstruction. Primary level is selected for this discussion. The main theme for following method is social-awareness and a consciousness to make this global society more peaceful. Methods like Task-based Interaction, Experience-based Experiment, High Order Thinking Skill, Brain-based Learning, Role Playing, and Cooperative Learning are being discussed here as effective application of Social Reconstruction for Language Teaching at Primary Level.

Keywords : Social Reconstruction, Task-based Interaction, Experience-based Experiment, High Order Thinking Skill, Brain-based Learning, Role Playing, and Cooperative Learning

Introduction:

Social Reconstruction is a relevant theory for education which has very relevant practical issues. This theory has a framework for **Holistic Education** and a **Critical Thinking Approach** to individual and social problems. This emphasises on experiential learning. Social Reconstructionism is sometimes regarded as a more radical form of progressivism. Followers of social Reconstructionism see education as a tool to reform society and improve it. This approach is also known as critical theory. The belief is that socialisation can be achieved through the power of an individual's intelligence. Intelligence is felt to be improved through education. According to **Howard** and **Sam** (1976), reconstruction is a social phenomenon potent in progressive talk as progressive educators frequently lay claims to such concepts as curriculum reforms, human experience and cultural renewal.

From a more radical perspective, social Reconstructionism is observed as a way to change society to conform to the ideologies of a political power or the government through education. Critical theorists pursue that education can lead to a change in existing systems in order to overcome oppression and improve human conditions. Though many would see this educational approach as authoritarian, Reconstructionists believe this new order should be achieved democratically.

Social Reconstructionism was conceptualised in the 1930s during the Great Depression; although others follow this approach today to avoid what they believe is the exploitation of the Third World by stronger industrial nations. However, it was **Theodore Brameld** who proposed the theory of Social Reconstructionism with the publication of **Patterns of Educational Philosophy (1950),Toward a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education (1956)** and **Education as Power (1965).**Further he simply criticizes progressivism as "dilatory" and "inefficient" theory. It is, he says that the educational effort of an adolescent culture, suffering from the pleasant agonies of growing up, from the cultural period of trying and erring when the protections of infancy have been left behind but the planned autonomies of maturity awaits future delineation and fulfilment.

Reconstructionism will be limited to some points that Brameld puts forward:

- Education must commit itself here and now to the creation of a new social order that will complete the basic values of our culture and at the same time harmonize with the underlying social and economic forces of the modern world.

- The new society must be a genuine democracy, whose major institutions and resources are controlled by the people themselves.

- The child, the school, and education itself are conditioned inexorably by social and cultural forces.

- Thus education becomes "social self-realization"; through it the individual not only develops the social side of his nature but also learns how to participate in social planning. The means and ends of education must be completely refashioned to meet the demands of the present cultural crisis and to accord with the findings of the behavioral sciences.

According to **Hill (2006),** Social Reconstructionism is a branch of Progressivism which was derived from Pragmatism. Pragmatism developed during the early decades of the twentieth century at a time when society was rapidly changing: great technological advances were taking place, the frontier experiences had inspired new visions of possibility and exploration, and a larger population of diverse peoples brought more social and educational challenges. Reconstructionism is a philosophy that proposes an attitude toward change and encourages individuals to try to make life something better (Kritsonis, 2002). The innovative educators of Social Reconstructionism should pay attention to student interests, problems and accomplishment in social interaction both in and outside of the classroom. The Social Constructive Ideology has been developed by thoughts of some thinkers:

- **Theodore Brameld** (1904–1987): He founded Social Reconstructionism as a reaction to the realities of World War II. Further his proposed curriculum structure included splitting up the classes into different ages with different emphases. He also proposed a longer school day; a year-round school calendar; and open facilities to facilitate adult education, recreation, and counseling. In this way, a new social change becomes a focal point to carry in philosophy, and other leading disciplines.

- **George Counts** (1889–1974): He believed that education was the means to prepare people for a new social order. Social Reconstructionism for creating new society was highlighted to many possibilities.

- **Paulo Freire** (1921–1997): Especially for the countries of third world Freire conceptualised very different educational pedagogical perspectives. Brazilian educationalist Freire was a pioneer of adult literacy programmes, and he believed in dialogue in education and showed concern about the role education played in oppressing the poor. Freire felt teaching and learning were processes of enquiry or questioning in which children were given the means to invent and reinvent the world.

- **Lester Frank Ward** (1841–1913): He is regarded as the father of American sociology and his poverty as a child may have influenced his strong feelings about society and its role. He initiated the new debate for reconstruction of socio-economic scenarios.

Engel and Martin (2005) shows the relevancy of Social Reconstruction in own, different words that in addition, social reconstruction ideology assumes that something should be done to keep society from destroying itself. To save society from self-destruction, **Giroux (2005)** recommended that a vision of a society better than the existing one must be developed. According to **Giroux (2006)**, Social Reconstructionists begin with the assumption that the survival of any society could be threatened by many problems. These problems include among others, racism, war, sexism, poverty, pollution, worker exploitation, global warming, crime, political corruption, population explosion, energy shortage, illiteracy, inadequate health care and unemployment. At this juncture, it might be important to draw the correlation between Social Reconstruction and Education. Social Reconstructionists believed that the current society was in trouble because it was not willing to revision and reconstruct institutions in order to meet the challenges of a changing world.

The need to discuss of Social Reconstruction is very relevant in the time of Global changes and challenges, and other related perspectives. **Breithorde & Swiniarski (1999)** stated that the global economy, international trade agreements, the communications technology explosion, world migration and immigration, mutual environmental and health concerns, are all issues that have connected nations in transnational organisations, alliances and businesses. Sustainable development is about an improvement of lifestyles and well-being and the preservation of natural resources and eco system for the present and future generation (Ukpore, 2009). Both, Globalised Social and Sustainable Development favour the Social Reconstruction to education.

Application of Social Reconstruction

According to **Bleazby, J. (2013),** the fact that members of the classroom Community of Inquiry have a shared interest and goal, common procedures and a recognition of their interdependence is thought to foster the kind of democratic community that Dewey promoted—a community that values inquiry, diversity, inclusivity and the collaborative reconstruction of experience as a means to fostering human flourishing. However, there are two broad approaches to service learning identified in the literature: a traditional approach that focuses on civic duty and charity work and a critical approach focused on reconstructing real social problems. Only the critical approach, which has its

roots in Dewey's educational ideas, critical pedagogy and the curriculum ideology known as social Reconstructionism.

Silva & Silva (2013) pointed out thatthis process of social reconstruction becomes politically and pedagogically powerful in contemporary schooling, in so far as its ideal is transferred to the detailed conduct of schools, as **Dewey (2001)** suggests. According to **Zeichner & Liston,**one of the major issues of debate among Social Reconstructionists was the degree to which teachers and teacher educators should consciously indoctrinate their students with socialist and collectivist values or rely on the methods of experimentalism and reflective inquiry to lead to social improvements. This is directive guideline to application of Social Reconstruction to education.

If teachers were to fulfil their role in Social Reconstruction however, first teacher education would have to be reconstructed. In The Educational Frontier and Pragmatist Kilpatrick (1933) and his colleagues, who included John Dewey, criticized traditional forms of teacher education for their emphasis on technique divorced from consideration of broader purposes, and called for a new social emphasis in the preparation of teachers where the stress would be on helping prospective teachers develop an adequate social and educational philosophy and **a zeal for the betterment of our common civilization**.Now the application of Reconstructive can be understood as following:

- Social Reconstructionism is an ideal way to transform learners in schools into people who encourage and pursue to social change.

- A curriculum that includes elements of social Reconstructionism helps learners to become more aware and cognizant of social issues. As a result, they become more resilient and agents of positive change in their communities.

- Reconstructionists did not believe a person's future was determined by their race, socioeconomic status, gender or birth right – success was determined by intelligence and talent.

- This attitude to education has required revisions of textbooks and a greater sensitivity to language to allow all learners equality of opportunity.

Similarly, Brameld argued that social reconstruction would occur through the dialectical process of ideas promoted through education. Through the process of education social progression is occurring historically, socially, and politically. Education is the forum for the dialectic of ideas and the pushing of society to new realities improved over the previous reality with as a new global order as the final idealistic endpoint **(Brameld, 1971).** Cultural transformation asserts that a culture holds deeply

ingrained patterns of belief that place persistent influence on social events and human disposition; any careful examination of beliefs about reality will reveal a cultural context (Brameld, 1971).

Bode (1933) explains social reconstruction as a continuous reconstruction of experience in daily school practice with the following examples: This reconstruction of experience, if it is to have any significance, must take the form of actual living and doing. In such a community there is no antecedent compartmentalization of values. A social reconstruction curriculum orientation would be 'hands on.' Thus, social reconstruction is all about social transformation of society. Educators who promote the Social Reconstruction ideology view curriculum from a social perspective. For Social Reconstructionists, education provides the means by which society is to be reconstructed. Counts and Giroux put it this way: Today, as social institutions crumble and society is shaken by deep convulsions that threaten its very existence; many persons are proclaiming that education provides the only true road to safety. They are even saying that it should be brought into the service of building a new social order. **(Counts, 1934)**

Educators need to assume the role of leaders in the struggle for social and economic justice. Educators must connect what they teach and write to the dynamics of public life and concern for democracy. **(Giroux, 2006)** To save society from self-destruction, we must develop a vision of a society better than the existing one, a vision of "the most humane and majestic civilization ever fashioned by any people" in which our present society's problems do not exist and in which social justice for all people prevails. Then we must reconstruct our society into the envisioned one "that extend[s] the principles of liberty, equality, justice, and freedom to the widest possible set of institution[s]" and people **(Giroux, 2005)**.

Winitzky & Tannenbaum (2001) sated thepurpose of education is to reconstruct society, and what is needed to reconstruct society to meet new challenges should be taught. Further Reconstructionism holds that the school should modal the solutions to social problems and the role of the teacher is to help students examine major social problems and controversial issues. Conversely, social reconstruction theorists believe that knowledge construction is accelerated as social interrelationships become increasingly interconnected in complexity. Consequently how learning occurs is an essential ingredient for intellectual development and sound knowledge construction through social dialectic **(Friere,1982; McLaren, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998; Wink & Putney, 2002)**.

The role of the educator is to facilitate social change and transform the consciousness of learners. Thus global education is an educational agenda to raise the consciousness of learners who desire to participate in social action advancing collective global cooperation (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Again, educational theorists Howard Ozman and Samuel Craver (2011) state: Concern for social values, humane justice, the human community, world peace, economic justice, equality of opportunities, freedom and democracy are all significant goals for Reconstructionism, things in which the world is sadly lacking. Simply stated, in Brameldian sense, to change society we must first change the individual and education is the most effective social institutions to accomplish this task. Brameld's brand of social Reconstructionism has flowered into a strong arm of the movement.

This is remarkable that we are in a time of great cultural change. The world has grown smaller ceaselessly. To consider the twin dangers of reactionism and social instability, the debate in education and teaching-learning setup must be resolved. Against the problems of changing demographics, rising consumerism, and worldwide competition, the society, and its teacher-leaders, are making choices in the voting booth and on the streets. The Social Reconstructionists believed that educators' work should initiate programs and practices that can lead to reform in society. Social Reconstructionism focused on the discrepancies between wealth and poverty in society, the social and economic reforms needed, and the possibilities of schools who, with the help of other cultural agencies, could become agents of reconstruction and reform in society (Gutek, 1997).

Many of the Progressives believed that, due to school practices, schools and society were caught in a dualistic relationship which separated the school from mainstream society and created an isolation of the schools (Zuga, 1992). Thus, according to LeoNora and Gelbrich (1999) social reconstruction is a philosophy that emphasises the addressing of social questions in order to create a better society. In this regard, education observed Schavan (1998), will help the people to understand the ills of their society, develop a vision of a better world based on a conception of social justice, religious tolerance and improve human rights, tackle poverty, and reduce the spate of corruption in the society.

Here the teaching-learning processes are based on cultural, social and ethnographical values. The teaching learning process under Social Reconstruction theory is a process of discovery to fine out the problems and effective solution. This is innovation possessing problem-solving, creativity and

sociality. In this application, two assumptions are denied. One, the teacher should have all the social knowledge to communicate. Second, a teacher can teach everything.

Today the communication skills of a teacher are more emphasized rather than the mastery of a subject. Under Social Reconstruction theory, teacher facilitates the learning, doesn't create the learning. In this theory learning means one should considers his/her social environment more comprehensive. A learner creates own meaning whatever he or she comprehend **Virginia Richardson (2003)**. Practically this theory is learning-oriented, rather than teaching oriented. But in the terms of application we can analyse its utility **(Thompson, 2000).** Now step by step, we are going to understand the application of Social Reconstruction theory to Language Learning at primary level:

Methods to Social Reconstruction

Practically to understand the application of Social Reconstruction, we should believe that education is great instrument to positive and qualitative social change and transformation. This is another issue that education has not yet succeeded for this purpose. We can succeed with some socio-constructive methods. The focal features of these pedagogical strategies are as we can understand through following points:

- Easy methods to develop a social awareness to locality and diversity
- This method implies Interpersonal or group communication as effective tool
- Personal contact to conscious and unconscious self
- Learning through target-oriented and logically correct information processes
- Better amalgamation of Stimulus-Response and cognitive theories.

The *main theme for these methods is to develop a social-awareness and a consciousness to make this global society more peaceful.* Six Methods based on Social Reconstruction Theory like Task-based Interaction, Experience-based Experiment, High Order Thinking Skill, Brain-based Learning, Role Playing, and Cooperative Learning are being discussed here as effective application of Social Reconstruction for Language Teaching at Primary Level.

1. Task-based Interaction

For language learning, this method has its effectiveness. Under Communicative approach, Task-based Interaction is practically useful to Second Language Learning **(Oliver, Philp & Mackey, 2000)**. In this method, teacher facilitates the tasks, and monitors the interaction **(Cambridge English: Teaching Knowledge Test, 2015)**. Here a teacher makes teaching activities to specific tasks for Second

Language Learning. These tasks are intended to develop the productive and comprehensive skills (**Herris & Duibhir, 2011**). In 1990s, some important experiments were accepted. **Jacques & Ferrell (2003)** proposed a modal including eight crucial elements: Learning Autonomy, Social Nature of Learning, Curriculum Integration, Meaning Centralisation, Diversity, Thinking Skills, Alternative Assessment and Teacher as Co-learner. In this context, task can be formulated society-oriented and the interaction can be implemented social.

2. Experience-based Experiment

The discrimination between relevant and irrelevant experiences is also a specific learning. The students learn from their life experience. This is a way to be social too. On these experiences, students should understand that individual experiences are co-related to socialexperiences. If learners experience related to outer society, they should have skills to correlate these experiences to local and social world. In this method, learners pursue to examine own experience relevant or not to the society which are subject matter of school curriculum.

In learner-centred education, we care of the teaching methods which indirectly communicate the content and carry a sharing on to different type of experiences (**Westbrook & others, 2013**). In this method, we respect personal experiences. Some methods based on pragmatic learning are so good examples of Experience-based Experiment i.e. Project Method and other activity-based methods.

3. High Order Thinking Skill (HOTS)

This is important for analytic and evaluative skills at high cognitive level that learners should learn own society through Problem-Solving. **High Order Thinking Skill means to develop a decision capacity and critical thinking ability.** This is very relevant to Social Reconstruction and Social Reforms. For example, when a teacher asks that what are our fundamental social problems? Why in the long time period we could not solve these totally? What is basic diagnose that may be helpful to design new strategies **(Robin Collins, 2014).** Forwe haveopen mind and inquisitiveness to learn, we simultaneously play a crucial role for social development.

4. Brain-based Learning

This method is based on patterning of learning experiences. Patterning means a brain can only accept whatever is logically meaningful. Simply illogical information is not the matter of information processing that like a brain functions (**Lee Chapuis, 2003**). Learners naturally organise the information and observe difficulties when information are not systemically appeared. This method emphasise on

brain as processor which functions at multitasking way **(Cane & Cane, 1995)**. In this method, making information meaningful and adjustment with dynamic learning environment, both are crucial (**Lee Chapuis, 2003**).

5.   Role Playing

This is multifaceted method for Social Reconstruction. Role Playing is itself a constructive way to develop skills and values among the learners. This method is realistic situation where the structuresare play-based and processes are experience-based. This is not mere an artificial, but very innovative and creative to all learners. Learners play life real life. This is real to them. They fulfil the gap between contents with imaginations and conceptions. Role Playing is natural method for primary learners **(Deshmukh, 2009)**. This method is useful even for small class. This is easy to demonstrate that this stimulates the imaginative abilities and provides responses to unsolved social problems. In short Role Playing is an investigation especially to Social Problems **(Deshmukh, 2009)**.

6.   Cooperative Learning

This is very innovative and reconstructive teaching-learning pedagogy which is effective to language teaching **(Olsen & Kagan, 1992)**. The theories propagated by Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and John Dewey are bases for this learning pedagogy (**Melina**). This method is also called Peer Learning and Social Learning. The learners work together, and interact cooperatively, not competitively. To pursue for group assignment and to evaluate for self-learning, both make cooperative learning more important.

This method works as an approach consisting five basic aspects: *Positive Interdependence, Personal Accountability, Interpersonal & Social Skills, Group Development & Group Process, and Structure Formulation & Structure*. **More significantly this method focus on 'Context', and for Social Reconstruction this context should be accepted society-centred.** This method is useful if learners get proper autonomy, think critically and meta-cognitively.

Conclusion

These methods are deeply related to social contexts of teaching-learning situations. New constructive learning pedagogy generally talks about these methods. Social Reconstruction is then very expending term to cover-up the present education. In democratic and globalised scenario, this is most relevant education theory. By its deep correlation with ethnography, anthropology and other

social sciences, educationists review its implications. In this paper we discuss only methods to understand the application, but this theory is useful in many educational aspects.

Now it can also be considered the Reconstructionist Approach practicable to curriculum development, focusing on the learners' abilities and potentialities towards taking social action regarding to real problems such as violence, hunger, international terrorism, inflation, and inequality. These are biggest question marks on humanity and sustainable global life. Second, teachers should adopt educational strategies to discuss the controversial issues, problems and developmental concerns in such a way that will be helpful to peaceful and harmonious co-existence. This is really advantageous approach to use of multiple perspectives of individual and social life settings. Third, this is remarkable that learners should be given the chance to apply their learning and critical thinking skills to challenges beyond the classroom walls, where their real life settings exist.

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