

# **Pedagogy of the History Classroom**

Scott Graham Lancaster

Master's Thesis in Educational Sciences

Spring Term 2018

Department of Education and Psychology

University of Jyväskylä

## **ABSTRACT**

**Lancaster, Scott. 2018. Pedagogy of the history classroom. Master's Thesis in Education. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Education and Psychology, 73 pp.**

The purpose of this study is to uncover what specific role constructivist pedagogy has within the history classroom, and whether it is perceived as useful from both a student and teacher perspective, to best inform future history teaching practice. The study was conducted within four secondary schools across the south and east of England, focussing on students in both years 7 and 10. The research process involved lesson observations, questionnaires and interview process to uncover perceptions, reflections and opinions regarding the implementation of constructivism in secondary history classrooms.

The results of the study were that constructivism was perceived as useful by both students and teachers, though both parties acknowledged difficulties in the implementation of the pedagogy within the classroom. Further themes emerged which discussed teacher understanding of the pedagogy, as well as students focus on individual written pedagogy, given the English context. The research projects conclusion uncovered that constructivist pedagogy is perceived to be no more or less important within the history classroom than any other practice, and indeed finds itself most useful when employed in addition to other pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: Pedagogy, history classroom, constructivism, England.

## **Acknowledgements**

With thanks to all the staff at JYU for their support and encouragement over the past two years, as well as to my friends and family for the drive to carry on when it was needed most. I would also like to thank my fellow history teachers who participated within the study, as well as their schools and students, for allowing me an insight into their lives.

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>THE RESEARCH TASK.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1	The participants.....	20
4.2	Research methods .....	21
4.3	Ethical considerations.....	24
4.4	Pilot Study .....	25
4.5	Final methodological approach.....	27
<b>5</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
5.1	Relating to our first research question .....	30
5.1.1	Regarding the value of constructivism .....	33
5.1.2	The existence of a ‘teaching gap’ .....	35
5.1.3	Implementation within the classroom .....	37
5.1.4	Teacher understanding of constructivism .....	40
5.1.5	Concluding analysis on teacher themes.....	41
5.1.6	Values and issues relating to working with peers.....	44
5.1.7	Teaching methods employed .....	46
5.1.8	Development of own historical skills .....	48
5.1.9	Concluding analysis on first research question .....	49
5.2	Relating to our second research question.....	50
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>61</b>
7.1	Published sources.....	61

7.2	Online Sources .....	63
8	<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>65</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

History, can be a difficult subject to teach. Given that it is a linguistically rich and linguistically dense subject, it requires competent linguistic skills (Kitson, Husbands & Steward, 2011). Yet it also requires key analytical skills, persuasive and writing skills, as well as dedication to research and reading. Given this wide scope, history teaching can employ a wide range of pedagogical approaches; indeed, during my own time as a student of history I gained first-hand experience of the wide range of pedagogical approaches different teachers use. As a history teacher, I'm interested in finding out if my own ideas on what history teaching should look like are similar to those of other teachers, and perhaps more importantly, the students themselves. This form of normative approach should help us to uncover what exactly 'ought to be' within the history classroom

In teaching history, I've enjoyed giving students the opportunity to explore the subject material and come to understand it together; and this is something I want to continue in my career. Finding a pedagogical approach which works for my own style of teaching has been important, but discovering whether the students agree that this is an appropriate way of teaching will be even more so. This will enable me to develop a rationale for my teaching style in terms of my future work within the profession, especially considering the pressure OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) and a results-drive system puts upon teachers within England.

Further to this, investigating the impact of this pedagogical approach on students and teachers could help to alleviate the uncertainty and stress currently surrounding the profession. Over the past eight years, the English education system has faced a barrage of changes. Since Michael Gove began pushing traditionalist teaching methods, removing the arts and reforming the grading system (Brown, 2016), to budget cuts of nearly £3bn forcing schools to close early, drop subjects from the curriculum and even ask parents for money (Adams, 2017) ("Schools asking parents", 2017). All of this has made the education

sector more difficult to work in, with almost a quarter of UK teachers qualified since 2011 no longer teaching and a workload on average of around 50-60 hours a week (Carr, 2017). All of this has led to a rise in unqualified teachers in the UK system of 62% in the past four years (Turner, 2017).

The significance of this research then, lies in seeking to find whether students and teachers agree on a pedagogical approach for history. Through finding common ground between both students and teachers, as well as an approach which works, I hope to inform my own future teaching and that of others to make our time smoother despite the current climate. Indeed, it is imperative that we place our emphasis on the development of students and finding an approach which helps them and their journey through school to become historians, or to at least improve their skills therein.

This project will seek to investigate two primary research questions. Moving through these we will uncover both perceptions of constructivism within the history classroom, as well as some insight into application and success.

1. How important do students and teachers perceive constructivist pedagogy to be, in the history classroom?
2. What kinds of pedagogical approaches do teachers employ in their history classroom?

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

When studying constructivism, and especially given the nature of the classroom as a social environment, we should first look to Vygotsky (1960) who suggested that “All higher psychological functions are internalized relationships of the social kind” (Daniels, 2005, 198). Vygotsky has widely been seen a founder of social constructivism, in suggesting that learning and knowledge are developed through social activity to construct meaning. As explained by Larochelle and Bednarz (1998) it “reintroduces what objectivism has always sought to leave out, namely, properties of the observer within the description of his or her observations”. Thereby, constructivism is the process through which meaning is made within oneself, by both the surrounding context and social interaction with others who facilitate and participate in learning. Within the classroom, constructivist learning might be shown through group work, a curriculum which emphasises a wider concept rather than a narrow focus, and teachers who act as facilitators of learning rather than experts and leaders. If we were to give it a historical example, we could consider a lesson on the holocaust. Consider the depth of learning and understanding that could be made through a student working from a textbook and articles with their teacher. Then consider the same lesson, but instead focussed around a discussion with holocaust survivors. The unique context and social aspect would, in constructivist theory, lead to deeper and more meaningful learning and knowledge acquisition as students explore together.

This project will also look to assess how effective constructivist pedagogy is in the history classroom. Because of this, we should examine whether there is an acknowledged history pedagogy, and what best practice might look like. Kitson, Husbands and Steward (2011) have written an extensive overview of teaching history in secondary schools in England. Whilst much of their work is focussed on educating teachers on the importance of history teaching and how best to implement this in a practical sense, towards the end of the book they begin to pose this very question – is there a history pedagogy? Whilst they



touch on some of the implications of constructivism and the importance of quality teachers in dialogic learning, their main conclusions are less clear. Stating that although in a history classroom, activities may be presented with different pedagogical techniques, they are “not the principal purpose of the lesson, but a means to an end” (Kitson et al., 139). Through this we can understand that for Kitson et al., history teaching should make use of many pedagogies depending on materials, teachers and students. They continue to suggest the pedagogical approaches of a history classroom are not characterised within the framework of a single lesson, but by a wider scheme of work; fitting this singular lesson into a sequence to achieve a longer-term aim which might involve the use of varying pedagogical approaches.

Although their work is somewhat lacking in depth, given that it is meant as a broad introduction to teaching history, rather than an academic text, it provides some good context for this study. First, in understanding that history as a discipline can employ a wide range of pedagogical approaches, Kitson, Husbands and Steward affirms an understanding that constructivism has a place within the history classroom, even if it is as part of a patchwork of pedagogical approaches. Second, their brief exploration around the importance of Vygotsky and constructivism, in helping students contextualise history themselves (Kitson et al., 27), further points to its usefulness within the classroom. It will be interesting to see whether the authors affinity for this, is borne out in the practical classroom setting. Yet, it does pose an important question – if history pedagogy is focussed on the long term aims and values (the historical *longue durée*), is there relevance in applying a single approach to our lessons or should our focus be on the wider picture of several weeks, months or even years of learning?

Given that history is a subject which is framed extensively by language, it is surely important that we allow students the use of their own language. For Husbands (1996) “Words ... are the most powerful tool we have in thinking about history” (Husbands, 97). Husbands refers to not just the written word, but also the spoken. History is inaccessible but through those who experienced

it, and as such it is framed by the language and messages of the day. Consider an account of the Viking raid on Lindisfarne in 793AD. These painted a view of the Vikings as barbaric slaughterers with no morals. This view persists because of the language used by the people who recorded history, and their opinion has been passed down through history.

It is then, surely of importance to allow students their voice to give a rounded discussion of history. Giving students the opportunity to express themselves, and pick up on fragments of historical evidence using their own interpretive lens will only add to the historical record, and by giving them the platform in the history classroom to create the understanding in their own language we can give them far more power than through being the all-knowing expert teacher.

Indeed, there could be an entirely different thesis project on the language of the history classroom. But to briefly consider what Silver and Marlar Lwin (2014) have discussed, is relevant to our project. Firstly, if we remember the importance of words to history as our main source of knowledge from the past, we can recognise that it is easy for students of history to understand words, but not the context (Silver and Lwin, 2). To give a historical example, a student might have a definition and understanding of the word 'slave', yet to read a piece of text from Ancient Rome with the same word would have an entirely different meaning. A student working alone would have nobody to challenge their definitions and understandings, to adapt the word to fit the appropriate context and to understand the meaning has shifted over time. We should also consider the importance of discussion through the various modes of 'talk' present in the classroom.

Under the umbrella of constructivism are the various modes of 'talk' which take place within the classroom, encompassing discussion between the many different power relationships in the learning environment. Mercer and Hodgkinson (2008) cite the need for a better understanding of how talk functions in the classroom, to improve its quality. Nevertheless, they identify some key processes which social learning can help to develop. The first is that allow-

ing students to make mistakes, can be beneficial. Through exploratory talk, in which students often reach dead-ends, hesitate, question themselves and others whilst considering the validity of what they're saying, students can reach justifiable answers in which all known knowledge has been shared and many viewpoints considered. Through this method of allowing students the freedom to explore understanding together in conversation, it also allows there to be multiple answers under consideration (an important aspect of historiography).

It will therefore be important in this research project to pay attention to whether the teacher allows, or makes room for students to struggle, to hesitate and backtrack as well as explore materials together. But perhaps the most pressing application regarding talk comes from Mercer and Dawes (2008). The series of questioning which is common in classroom goes as follows: the teacher will ask a question, a student will answer, and the teacher will comment on that answer. Known as IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback), they note it remains extremely common because of developments in assessment for learning, to check attention and provide immediate feedback (Mercer and Dawes, 57). But they question the need for an immediacy in the response to teacher initiation. Instead, they argue that the second phase should be discussion of the question between students. This will not only give students the confidence of having previously discussed ideas with their peers, as well as trying out some 'wrong' answers, but also allow for the teacher to involve a wider audience and give them a clearer idea of student thinking (Mercer and Dawes, 61-62). In our observations, we should note how much opportunity students are given to undertake this discussion and exploratory talk, as well as how keen they are to take part in it, as a gauge to how valued discussion based learning is.

Paul Light and Karen Littleton (2000) have written extensively on the role of social processes in Children's learning. They provide a summary of the transformation of understanding through time, discussing what Piaget summarised as the importance of inequalities of power and status. By this, they mean that when children are exposed to the thoughts and ideas of adults, they are less likely to question and develop their own ideas, instead taking on the adult's

response as truth. As part of historical skill development, students should be encouraged to form their own arguments and opinions. If we agree that social processes avoid the inequalities of power, students who explore material with other students will be more likely to form their own historical ideas rather than simply agree with the teacher's interpretation of the material. In my own experience teaching history, I've seen this to be the case. Students can often interpret sources in new and creative ways that I hadn't thought about, indeed if I had not allowed them to explore together and stuck to a more didactic approach then they, and I, would have not considered these different viewpoints. Herein lies the importance in allowing children to discuss their own ideas and answers, however 'wrong' they may be, as this discussion between children, debating their own opinions and resolving the differences in their own answers may allow children to think deeper and reach a higher level of understanding than before (Light and Littleton, 2-3).

For one of their studies, Light and Littleton sought to apply previous evidence that the cognitive processes of planning, would be significantly aided by social interaction. For this, they produced an adventure game (given that the decisions made within such an environment lend themselves to peer discussion) which ensured this study was not only well structured, but had a variety of completion methods (Light and Littleton, 32). The software was also designed to produce several obstacles (in this case, pirates and bandits) to develop problem solving skills amongst participants and force them to think in depth about the moves and actions taken within the game. The study was designed to elicit whether children working in pairs would have any advantage over those working alone, and then whether this potential advantage would carry over into a subsequent assessment. Through this, they hoped to show that constructivist learning not only had a positive impact on the task itself, but was carried through in later learning. A total of 39 students participated split into 13 pairs and 13 individuals. They had two attempts before all students were separated and set to the task alone. Of those who had worked in pairs, 72% successfully completed the programme, whilst only 31% of those who worked alone could

do so (Light and Littleton, 37). From the computer logs of this study they also noted that many children began with no clear plan or real understanding of how to complete the task, and that this developed over time. Further studies using similar software found similar results, but also posed questions when their observations suggested that symmetrical pairs (that is pairings on an equal ability level) produced better results than asymmetrical (Light and Littleton, 50), which is something that other researchers like Tolmie, Howe et al. (1993) or Kagan (2013) disagree with, in suggesting that groups and pairs of differing abilities produce better learning construction. This is clearly something that could be thought about in our questionnaire as to how teachers design their student groupings as there is some discussion on this topic, Goos, Galbraith and Renshaw (2002) whose study into creating collaborative group problem solving found that students who could not critically engage with one another were less likely to succeed, and so suggests that learners should be grouped with peers of a similar level.

Whilst this study is important in its suggestion of a clear link between peer social work and progress, particularly when considering historical skills, progress which can be carried through to subsequent learning and testing. There remain a few points to consider.

Primarily, is that these tests were conducted using computer software and repetition of tasks. Given the speed at which the curriculum in England is run through, repeating material isn't likely to be an occurrence. After all, the current curriculum has students learning roughly 4000 years of history in 11 academic years. Thus, any advantage co-operative learning may have on the same subject over time is diminished by the fact the same subject is rarely studied over a long period of time. Yet, if we do not consider the repetition of subject material, and instead that of subject skills it could be of some importance. Students repeatedly utilise source analysis and argumentation skills, and so repeated student co-operative learning using these skills would take place in our classroom. It is interesting to think then, that by using pair work when using the history

skills, we could be further preparing students later in their history work, even if the subject matter has changed, to make better use of their skillset.

Neil Mercer (2007), focuses on the importance of dialogue and talk between both students, and teachers and students. Presenting us with an overview of research on this area. Discussing a project from the 1970's called ORACLE, Mercer summates:

In a large number of British primary schools ... just because several children were sitting together at a table (as was common) this did not mean that they were collaborating. Typically, children at any table would simply be working, in parallel, on individual tasks. (Mercer, 23)

Although this particular study is now somewhat dated, he continues to note that further studies in the early 2000's affirm this problem that children work in groups rather than as groups, leading to interactions which never realise their full potential (Mercer, 23). Citing early studies into the effectiveness of collaborative learning, such as Littleton, as having variables which are too easily manipulated (for example, the size of groups) and instead emphasises a shift to a more process-orientated research looking at the influence of group composition or task design (Mercer, 24), as having the most significant impact on learning. This continues the previous discussion led by researchers like Kagan (2013) in suggesting that the makeup of student groupings is of paramount importance to learning progress.

Mercer continues to discuss the importance of time and the classroom in the learning journey. He notes that, as other researchers such as Barnes (1992) have surmised, understanding is not suddenly grasped from the abyss. It is a journey, one which is usually undertaken with classmates and teachers across academic years with the feeding in of new information and the application and development of problem-solving skills (Mercer, 102). Mercer also notes this to be particularly applicable to British schools, whose assessments are designed to assess cumulative understanding, and not just recall specific data. A student's history assessment at the end of year 11 will test writing and analysis skills

learnt over the duration of their academic life, as well as historical knowledge and facts which have been picked up more recently. Therefore, the teachers designing of the learning journey, the language and relationship between teachers and students is important in understanding the success and failure of learning over time (Mercer, 102-103).

For this research project, Mercer introduces some important considerations. Chiefly, the necessity to differentiate between students working as a group, and those working in a group. For this, the emphasis of implementation should be on task design. In our research, we could look to identify tasks where learners are required to work together, in tasks that are of an adequate difficulty and composition to necessitate co-operative learning (Mercer, 28). It will be necessary to look beyond the obvious and understand whether students are really working together to reach a goal, and when interviewing students and teachers it will be necessary to make this distinction clear, as the lines can be easily blurred. Continuing this, Mercer's discussions on the role of language and relationship will also be important to remember. For Mercer, it was through language that a teacher could emphasise how knowledge gained today could be useful in the future, as well as building on the shared classroom experience from the past. For example, double checking group working guidelines alongside vocalising the important aspects of the task builds a relationship based in the past, present and future (Mercer, 107) and highlights to students where they have come from, what they are doing and what they'll take with them to the next step. We could also then, during our observations examine how language and the relationships in the classroom are used to help construct learning and understanding, drawing knowledge from past experiences to take forward.

The history classroom is a place where, although learners require hard facts, there is room for interpretation and opinion. Historiography is the study of historians' opinions and the trends in history over time. Students should be encouraged to interact with these, as well as form their own evidenced argument. A broad study on dialogic group discussions in the US by Reznitskaya,

Cuo, Clark, Miller, Jadallah, Anderson and Nguyen-Jahiel (2009) sought to understand individual outcomes following participation in group collaboration. But first, it is important to note that the researchers agreed there to be shortcomings of this collaborationist approach. The main shortcoming being that teachers can, with best intentions, try to apply this theory through an endless loop of open ended questions, thus never really allowing students the opportunity to form conclusions and make certainties of knowledge, instead the potential of authentic classroom constructivism is lost in a quagmire of meaningless questioning (Reznitskaya et al., 29-30). Their research was based on the belief that students need the ability to use reasoned arguments when dealing with complex problems – like our setting of the history classroom, and historiography. Through genuine social interaction, students can enhance and find new meaning together whilst not diminishing the role or expertise of the teacher. Students can be allowed to explain themselves, question others and defend their own viewpoint, all of which enhance their reasoning and argumentation skills (p. 32, 42) – ultimately key skills in history. Their study focused not on the ability of a student to recite knowledge, but on the change in quality of student responses when a dialogic pedagogy is employed, and students are enabled to discuss and form knowledge with one another.

But what alternative pedagogies exist that could take place in the history classroom? Though Raina (2011) writes from an Indian perspective, the emphasis on multiculturalism within the classroom is a growing area of awareness in the UK. He writes,

It is contented by many that a constructivist approach, particularly approximating the ideas of Vygotsky, can accommodate the specific cultural roots of the child, particularly linguistic, and aid in assimilating the child's knowledge into a larger knowledge system, rather than replace and substitute it completely (Raina, 10).

Yet whilst acknowledging the importance of this approach, Raina does note the dangers of a purely constructivist approach in a multicultural society. In the search to find a national identity and voice after the colonial period of behaviourism within education, constructivism can appear to be the answer. But for Raina, simply making use of this pedagogy brings a danger of cultural



relativism, in the sense that critical knowledge (such as that found in the sciences) is replaced by the dominating discourse in a society – for Raina this being the modern popularity of faith-based knowledge (Raina, 23).

Perhaps another pedagogical approach which we may encounter within the history classroom is cognitivism. Yilmaz (2011) discusses cognitivism on a pedagogical spectrum as the opposite to behaviourism, and yet not quite the same as constructivism. The cognitive approach relates to making knowledge meaningful to individual learners by relating new information to prior learning. Instruction should be based on existing structures to be most effective (Yilmaz, 205). Within the history classroom this could be exhibited by reflecting on the previous lesson and through repetition of skills. A consistent structure for lessons could also be a fixture of a cognitive pedagogy. Yilmaz does little however to discuss the differences between constructivism and cognitivism, beyond stating that they are similar yet different.

Many of the implications for classroom practice which are written about “explore instructional materials ... become active constructors of their own knowledge ... students learn by receiving, storing and retrieving information” (Yilmaz, 207) could all be features of constructivism. The main difference being that teachers in cognitivism are aware beforehand of the needs and learning characteristics of their students and adapt materials, whereas in pure constructivism it is the interaction between pupils which does the hard work. Cognitivism then, is more likely than not, already a part of the patchwork of pedagogies previously discussed – a mixture of constructivism and awareness by the teacher of the learning needs of their pupils.

### 3 THE RESEARCH TASK

As we are focusing our research on teaching styles, and personal perceptions, the research methods used for this project will be qualitative with a focus on an ethnographical approach given the human element. We'll be undertaking the research through observational fieldwork within history classrooms, as well as through interviews and questionnaires to understand our participants perceptions of history teaching. To begin, let us consider each of the research questions, how we will aim to answer it and what place it serves in the overall aims of the project.

1. How important do students and teachers perceive constructivist pedagogy to be, in the history classroom?
2. What kinds of pedagogical approaches do teachers employ in their history classroom?

Our first research question is related to how important students and teachers perceive constructivist pedagogy to be in the history classroom. This information will be collected through semi-structured interviews with the teacher and select students as well as a questionnaire. In both, the participants will be asked to identify teaching methods they feel work best for them (given that students may not understand the pedagogical theory) in the classroom, and what else could be done to help them progress in their skills and understanding. From this, we can ascertain whether students and teachers place a greater emphasis on constructivist backed strategies, or elsewhere. It will also allow us to straight question both teacher and students on what they feel is the importance of dialogue and communication within their learning. Investigating perceptions of constructivism is important for our project, as it will enable us to understand how much this approach is already in use within the history classroom, as well as gain student and teacher insight into how much it works in their given context.

Secondly, we are looking at the kinds of pedagogical approaches employed by teachers in their history classroom. Continuing from our first ques-

tion, wherein we examined the perceptions of teaching methods, next we will seek to understand the kinds of teaching methods used. This will help us to determine if there is a gap between desired pedagogy and implemented pedagogy, to discover if the application of constructivism is appropriate in the history classroom context. This will be assessed through several methods. The first being observational fieldwork of a sample of history lessons in which we can note the pedagogical approaches used, secondly through the discussion and questionnaires given to both teachers and students we can make some conclusions of their experiences over time, and thirdly perhaps even through looking at the longer-term schemes of work in place in the schools.

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 The participants

The participants in this study are four history teachers and their classes from across the East of England. They are teaching in a range of schools including state maintained, private and academy chains. The students involved will be from the secondary education age group, ranging from Years 7 to 11; or ages 11 to 18. To ensure continuity across the project we will attempt, wherever possible, to interview and observe classes with students of similar ages and at similar places in their academic journey. For example, four groups of students undertaking their GCSE's, and four groups of students still undergoing Key Stage Three. We have asked the teachers to select students themselves to take part in semi-structured interviews and answer questionnaires. The reason for this is that the teachers will be best placed to select students who are likely to engage with the material and provide us with engaging and useful responses. Although not as rigorous as providing responses from every student in the four classes, the questioning and interview of over 200 students would be, perhaps, too time consuming and we can presume that not all the responses would be as rich and detailed as those provided in a smaller, more intimate research process. Teachers are encouraged to select pupils from a wider background rather than just those who would typically volunteer to help.

Our participant teachers, and their classes, have been selected from a range of school types, so we can hope to draw conclusions about the general history classroom and not simply contain our evidence to one mode of schooling, following (or not) the national curriculum. It is also important to note that most of the teachers participating have qualified in the past five years, so are more likely to be resistant to the impact of curriculum and educational change on their teaching ideology (Eisenbach, 156). We can therefore reliably assume that we are researching the ideal pedagogy of history teachers through those who are most likely to be sticking to their favoured teaching style.

## 4.2 Research methods

The research method for this project will be qualitative, with a focus on ethnography. The reason that this approach has been selected, is that the topic we are dealing with relates strongly to perceptions and opinions, observing students and teachers in their day-to-day schooling. As such, the qualitative approach will allow us to uncover these much more than a quantitative study, which might give more focus to more specific and narrow data. As well as this, the reason for giving the project an ethnographic focus is, as Serrant-Green (2007) notes, that our “aim is to conduct the research in the ‘natural context’” (Serrant-Green, 4). Conducting our research project with the express desire to observe and interview staff and students on their real-life experiences lends itself to ethnography. But further to this, an ethnographic approach will allow us to explore further the issues which can arise within the natural environment, in summarising this, Rhodes (1993) writes

One of the great virtues of ethnographic research is its potential to reveal the tensions and contradictions that emerge from everyday life and reveal, if we let them, the stress points and underlying fracture lines of the larger society in which it is embedded. (Rhodes, vii)

The ethnographic approach will allow us to explore the contradictions between, perhaps, teacher ideology and practicality. It will allow us to see differences in opinions between staff and student as we explore them in a more realistic environment for our participants. A different approach which removed this, may create data which was not grounded within the actuality of daily schooling. It will allow us to take the ideas explored in our literature review and examine their application within the classroom – to see the successes and failures and their applicability.

Alongside this, an ethnographic approach will allow us to take into consideration our own relationship with the data. Being a history teacher, it would be impossible to suggest that there is no personal connection with this research project, or that its conclusions may be shaped – in some way – by this relationship. An ethnographic approach will allow us to take these facts into considera-

tion in a critical and reflective manner whilst maintaining the imperative qualitative nature of the study.

We should also aim to follow Tracy's eight criteria for quality qualitative research (2010). Amongst others, Tracy notes the importance of rigor, sincerity, credibility and ethical considerations (Tracy, 840). These are mostly what are to be expected of a research project. But to ensure we meet these criteria, our data samples will all be taken from schools, though differing in location and funding, in similar educational contexts. That being, that they are all schools in the East of England with similar aged students at similar places in their academic journey, being prepare for the same exam process. The analysis will follow a thematic approach, and questioning should not be done so in a way to guide responses, this is particularly important given my own position as a history teacher. We will take care to reflect carefully on the research process, highlighting errors and discrepancies in the data and its collection, as well as challenges we have faced throughout.

The chosen methods for data collection are threefold: A structured questionnaire for both teacher and students, an open-interview process and observational fieldwork of a history lesson. Though some researchers have raised concerns about the reliability of questionnaires in gathering data which is consistent over time (Hubbard, 502) or that participants in pencil and paper questionnaires have a response bias, in which they inflate their answers in relation to previous questions (Peer & Gamliel, 5). Still, questionnaires can ensure validity when they are constructed using, as Kember and Leung (2008) describe "naturalistic qualitative research to establish the validity of constructs to be included in a questionnaire" (352). Simply this means that through first exploring your research with target groups you can establish themes and principles upon which you can later create valid questions. As such, a pilot study in which we can make initial decisions over the questions and themes to focus on will be undertaken before commencing the research project proper.

As well as the questionnaire there will be an open-ended interview process with both students and teacher separately. The reason for this is protect both

parties from the influence of the other, as well as for their own confidentiality. It will also allow us to explore more in-depth than the questionnaire and go deeper into responses than the paper and pen methods will allow us. The interviews will be fairly free-form, with open-ended questions to gauge deeper thoughts on the role of constructivism within the classroom. It is hoped that, at least, within the group interview the presence of other students and their responses will help encourage others to reflect and contribute further than they may have done so in the questionnaire. The interview process is an interaction between researcher and participant, and as such we should consider our own flaws in the duration of the interview process. Having a pilot study interview will enable us to reflect much more on the way we have posed questions and how we can take them forward to better enhance our interview process (Roulston, 363).

Finally, to help answer whether teachers actively apply constructivist pedagogies we will undertake observational fieldwork of history lessons with the students we have interviewed. For this, the tasks and teaching style will be documented and later analysed to determine what kinds of approach the tasks can correlate to. This should give us some understanding of how history is taught, and how this compares to how our teachers believe (through the interview process) they teach.

Once our data has been collected, its analysis will take place through a thematic network approach. This approach will enable us to filter through our data and develop clear themes and ideas which are recurrent. The creation of thematic webs will then allow us to give a clear overview of our data for easy comparison of the themes present in both teacher and student responses. This will enable us to analyse both perceptions and application of constructivism in the classroom from both perspectives. Through this methodology, we can notice the patterns which emerge by grouping similar responses and grounding them to further thinking.

### 4.3 Ethical considerations

A further important aspect of any research project is the implementation of proper research ethics to protect both ourselves and our participants, as well as to ensure the correct scientific conduct and integrity of our project. As such, we have consulted both the European code of conduct for research integrity (2017), BERA ethical guidelines for educational research (2011) as well as the TENK responsible conduct of research (2012) to ensure the integrity of our project.

To protect our participants, it will be necessary to ensure the proper safeguards are in place. To this end, we will ensure we treat both students and staff with respect and manage the potential conflicts which could arise (for example, if a student were to discuss a teacher and their methods in depth). To overcome this, it will be important to “manage data securely, and keep data as open as possible but as closed as necessary” (EU code of conduct, 6). Keeping data closed will require us to preserve the anonymity of our participants, to this end no names of participants or schools will be used throughout the research and will be removed from data after analysis. Participants are also under no obligation to take part within the project and will be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time, even after the collection of the data (BERA, 6). Indeed, even before collecting the data, it will be important to gain voluntary informed consent from participants to continue, as well as explain thoroughly the extent of the project, so that all participants are completely aware of the process and how their responses will be analysed and used for research (BERA, 5).

Having ensured our participants are aware of their rights to privacy, and fully aware of the entire research process it will be important to return and share the results of the research project, so our research subjects can see the full circle of their participation and the outcomes of their involvement within the project (BERA, 8).

Alongside our duty of ethical considerations to our participants, are research ethics related to the construction of the research paper itself. Primarily in this is the importance of recognising results which do not agree with the ex-



pected outcomes of our research question. Negative results are as valid as positive (EU Code of Conduct, 7) and it is important that these results are published and not manipulated through omission or suppression, even if the data negates the purposes of this research project.

Overall, TENK summarises our duty as to follow the principles of “integrity, meticulousness, and accuracy in conducting research, and in recording, presenting, and evaluating the research results” (TENK, 30). This research project will take full consideration of these ethical guidelines and adhere strictly to them. Through discussion with out participants regarding the purpose of the research task, their rights and ensuring their anonymity, to a thorough and accurate reflection and dissemination of the data collected – whether it agrees with our personal expectations or not. Following these guidelines, we will ensure a thorough and ethically conducted research project which will protect all participants throughout.

#### **4.4 Pilot Study**

Following on from the development of our initial questionnaire, the decision was made to run a pilot study to assess the suitability of the questionnaire for use in the project, and the feasibility of both the interview and observation process for future use. The pilot study was conducted in a fifth school, a state academy school of some 1,200 students aged 13-19 in Bedfordshire, United Kingdom. This school was chosen as it is typical of most schools in the area, in terms of pupil and staff numbers, OFSTED rating and exam results, with a strong uptake in the history department and so gave us the opportunity of an excellent reference point in which we could conduct our pilot study.

Our pilot study took place across two lessons with the same teacher. The first class observed was a Year 9 group (aged 13-14), and the second was a year 10 group (aged 14-15). The teacher was given a short questionnaire which asked them to explain their understanding of the key terminology – constructivism, and also to discuss the pedagogical approach they employ in their teaching. The

responses indicated that our pilot teacher could easily define constructivism and the sorts of tasks this pedagogy might employ, but that their own approach to teaching was not limited to one teaching style. The responses to the questionnaire were also demonstrably short, especially in comparison to the wealth of information discussed at length during the interview process. This could be attributed to several factors, the first of these being the time that filling in detailed answers on a questionnaire can take, only certain individuals are willing to do so (Flanagan, 10) and that teachers, especially, are short of time – particularly in the vital hour of final preparation before students arrive.

A similar experience was found during the student questionnaire and interview process. Because students were encouraged to complete the questionnaire without my interference, some students left questions blank due to an inability to comprehend specifically what the question was asking. For example, a question focussed on whether listening to other responses to historical themes could have an impact on another student's understanding was poorly phrased as "Have any other students ever said something during your history lesson that has made you change your mind about something?". Out of the six questionnaires, only two students responded to this question, yet when a similar theme was posed in the group interview, students could recount classroom discussions where they had seen things from a different angle. Much like with the teacher's questionnaire, the quality of data collected was not as rich as in the interview process and students were less likely to elaborate than in a group discussion.

To answer our second research question, related to the methods employed by history teachers, the pilot study also included observational fieldwork of the two classes. The objective of this fieldwork was to record the tasks set, teaching style and methods used by the teacher through the duration of the lesson, these could then be analysed to discern what sort of pedagogical approach they aligned with. For example, in our year 10 pilot study observation, the teacher initially began by setting historical context through a short form of mini-lecture to set the scene, before giving students resources and setting them on a further

research task. In this case, the teacher followed a much more behaviourist theory at first with a chalk and talk method, followed by encouraging students to engage in exploratory learning on their own. This part of the pilot study was successful in that it allowed us to begin to answer our second research question, and also engage with the literature which suggested that the history classroom is more of a patchwork quilt of pedagogy.

Our pilot study has enabled us to identify areas of data gathering which are likely to be successful and areas which need refinement to better answer our research questions. The lack of deep engagement with the questionnaire, its responses and comparisons to the interviews have led to the decision to alter slightly this part of the methodology. Other researchers have noted the difficulty participants may experience through the misinterpretation of questionnaires (Harris & Brown, 11), and even that there may be inconsistencies in data collected through a combination of highly-structured questionnaires and more open-ended interview processes (Harris & Brown, 9). But whilst Harris and Brown advocate that there should be a similarity in structure and format for both the questionnaire and interview process in a mixed-methods approach, they accept that this may force a project to lose its methodological richness.

Taking all of this into account, there is a clear need to alter our methodology to produce a much more aligned, structured and rigorous mixed-methods approach to better answer our research questions.

## **4.5 Final methodological approach**

Our final methodological approach will therefore be as such; the observational fieldwork in our pilot study was successful in enabling us to properly analyse the pedagogical approaches of a teacher, and compare these to the responses given within the questionnaire. Through this, we can hope to identify any patterns in teaching styles and any patterns regarding differences in actual teaching pedagogy and desired teaching pedagogy. So the observational fieldwork section of our data gathering requires little change.

However, our questionnaire and interview process will undergo some alteration. As per Harris and Brown (2010), the need for similarities in approaches to remove inconsistencies in the data (p.9) is clear. To this end, the questionnaire and interview sections of data gathering have been merged, to give the structured questionnaire an accompanying semi-structured interview. To be clearer, the questionnaire will now be filled in alongside the interview allowing us to retain the structured nature of the questionnaire whilst also giving the interview a form of structure. This will allow participants to expand upon their responses and ask questions, whilst also giving the interview the opportunity to divert away from the questionnaire when required. This approach will solve the problem of limited time for both teachers and students in school, as well as enable us more accurate comparison of responses to the questionnaire with verbal feedback.

As well as this, the questionnaire responses will divert away from qualitative to more quantitative methods, the use of a Likert Scale on 1-5 will allow us to compare immediate numerical responses with much more detailed qualitative feedback. Likert scales are not without issue, Watson (2012) writes about the response bias of participants and the problem with assessing Likert data accurately. Similarly, Robertson (2012) also states that respondents to Likert scales can see greater differences in the scale responses than exist (p.6). For example, a participants may feel there is a greater distance between a 'strongly agree' and 'agree' than there is between 'neutral' and 'disagree'. There are also questions over the statistical reliability of small sample sizes, such as in our research project.

Nevertheless, simplifying the questionnaire into a Likert scale whilst retaining the question feedback through an interview will allow us to delve into why teachers or students have selected their response and how strongly they truly attribute their feelings. We will also be removing the 'strongly' term from the scale to hopefully nullify as much of the psychological bias as possible. Similarly to the thematic approach, the Likert Scale and a mini-mixed methods approach will allow us to create thematic maps and graphs to articulate and

compare the responses to our research questions. Hesse-Biber notes that many mixed methods research projects can suffer from an over-certainty of their outcomes due to the employment of different methods, without adequate reflection on their own biases and influence on the project (p. 784-785). Yet our ethnographic approach, allowing myself as a history teacher to reflect critically upon myself and my own input on this project, should allow us to overcome these concerns.

Our final methodological approach therefore, is a linked interview and questionnaire process in which the participant will undertake the questionnaire and explain their responses immediately to the researcher, allowing them to reflect and expand upon their immediate responses, an example of which is available within the appendices. Alongside this will continue the observational fieldwork of the teacher's lessons to uncover the pedagogical approaches employed and allow comparison with both the questionnaire and interview responses, to allow us to accurately answer our research questions, it is also useful to note that following the pilot study we were successful in securing students of similar ages to undertake this research project, each school involved will be providing both a year 7 (aged 11/12) and year 10 (aged 14/15) class.

## 5 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

### 5.1 Relating to our first research question

Our first research question was: How important do students and teachers perceive constructivist pedagogy to be, in the history classroom? To best answer this, we should consider the responses of our students and teachers from our interview and questionnaire data. When going through the transcriptions, we can begin to pick out the core themes which arise most often, as well as several subthemes developing within these. We shall first consider our teachers responses to the question, and the themes that develop from them before continuing to our students.

The four key themes which appeared in our interviews were;

1. The individual teachers understanding of constructivism.

This major theme related to individuals own knowledge and ability to comprehend and explain back to the interviewer their interpretation of constructivist pedagogy. This theme would be important in answering our question, because if teachers do not understand the pedagogy it would be difficult to suggest they were actively employing it

2. Actual implementation of constructivist principles within the classroom.

This theme evolved from our teachers' descriptions of the methods and practices implemented by them which are related to constructivism. Yet it also allowed us an insight into what our teachers saw as negative impacts of the pedagogy, as well as their own emphasis on constructivism.

3. A 'teaching gap' between desired pedagogical approaches and implemented approaches

This theme developed from a set of questioning and discussion within the interview in which teachers were asked about the sort of pedagogical approaches they would like to use, versus the approaches they truly employ. The

theme relates to the notion that teachers are employing alternative approaches to those they might otherwise, because of some outside issue.

#### 4. Value of constructivism within the classroom.

The final major theme which emerged from our interview data was the notion of the value of constructivism within the classroom. Closely related to many of the other themes, this area enables an insight into understanding how our teachers feel constructivism can be useful within their history classroom.

To understand how important teachers perceive constructivism to be within the history classroom, we should look at each of these four major themes and analyse the interview data surrounding them and the minor themes which emerge from them.

On the following page is the thematic map of our teachers responses through the interview and questionnaire process - Figure 1. This graphic illustrates our teachers main thoughts and ideas relating to the topic and how they connect with one another. From it we can interpret their understanding of constructivism and the value they place upon it within the classroom. Within this graphic, the major themes to emerge are placed within rounded rectangles, and the minor themes which occur in relation to these branch off within ovals. We shall consider each of the major themes and what they mean in relation to constructivism within the classroom.



Figure 1



### 5.1.1 Regarding the value of constructivism

The first theme which we will look to analyse, is the perceived value of constructivism within the classroom. This theme gained clarity through the emergence of several smaller sub-themes within the data. One of which was our teachers' belief in the capacity for constructivist teaching methods to encourage a passion for historical learning within the students. There are several key points from within the interview and questionnaire process which point to an acknowledgement within teachers of the importance that constructivist principles can have in empowering students to love to learn.

"And you think that's [allowing students independence] important?"

"Yeah, definitely [pause] some of them really get on board, last year we had some great surgery ones... they find something as a group that excites them and the work... well you can see some of it on the wall over there... some pupils create some great... really great stuff when you let them."

T01

Here, the teacher is describing the implementation of a group research project. Within this project, students are separated into groups and given free rein over the historical topic they want to investigate, as well as how to present this back to the class at the end of the project. In this instance, some student posters remained on display within the classroom as exemplar work. Our teacher remarks that allowing students the opportunity to work together, alone, can enhance student outcomes through giving them ownership of a project. The design of this particular task itself also lends itself well to constructivism as students are forced to build dialogue between one another to determine and explore the chosen topic. Yet it is important to note the emphasis on the word 'some'. For within this emphasis, it must be recognised that for some pupils, this individual responsibility is not well taken. It can be difficult for some students to take control of and appreciate the independence of such a project with the teacher as a guide rather than the sole leader. Other excerpts from the interview data compound this understanding of constructivism enabling a passion within the students:

"... okay... why do you like to get them to... to discuss about these things?"

"you do... you do hear things that you never thought of... and you know that history is about interpretations... so it's nice for me to hear their opinion... because I maybe hadn't thought of it before and... and then they feel like they're really onto something"  
T03

Continuing with the subtheme of the perception of how constructivism can instil passion in students, here our teacher refers to the capacity of constructivist principles to not only empower students to participate, but also to develop their historical thinking. If we recognise the importance of opinion and justified argumentation is within the discipline, then it is easy to understand why our teachers believe that giving students a voice within the classroom can create a vastly different and legitimate viewpoint which can empower a student to feel as though they are really contributing, despite their interpretation differing from the teachers or from other students. It is through this lens that the major theme of value of constructivism within the history classroom has emerged. This notion of instilling passion through constructivism continues to emerge within our research data:

"well... in history it [constructivism] is [important]... because history is about taking on multiple viewpoints... and you see it for example, we had a historical debate a few... well... back in November... and the kids really got into character... they loved it"  
T02

Our teacher is discussing two subthemes within the notion of value. Here, the teacher describes their utilisation of historical debate within the classroom, not only a practical example but also the impact it has upon students. For this teacher, this teaching method in which students are encouraged to communicate and interact with one another and the history has proved a good teaching method to encourage participation. Through giving students a discursive platform in which they explore and re-create an historical argument, they were motivated and engaged with the subject material far more than they may have been with an alternative pedagogical approach.

"When do you think your students are enjoying themselves the most in your class then?"

"certainly when... when they are talking... I don't really believe that any student enjoys working in silence... I don't believe that when they are talking they're always... doing what I wanted them to... but they like the freedom... and then they can talk about the

work... whether they do or not.”  
T03

Our core theme is the value of constructivism within the history classroom, and for this teacher it is clear to interpret that giving students the ability to discuss the subject matter with one another, leads to enjoyment within the classroom. Our teacher continues to question whether all students remain on-task within constructivist styles but acknowledges that students enjoy the freedom to discuss the work with one another when it is given.

These excerpts of data are symptomatic of the general feeling of our theme – the value of constructivist pedagogy within the history classroom. For many of our teachers, it has become clear that constructivist principles can encourage participation and, in some cases, a real participation within students for the study of history. Yet one of the subthemes which we have identified within the ‘value of constructivism’ is teachers acknowledgement of its value alongside other approaches.

### 5.1.2 The existence of a ‘teaching gap’

For this, we should begin to look at the second major theme emerging from our research data; the notion of a teaching ‘gap’ between desired and implemented pedagogies.

“do you think you employ a wide range of pedagogical approaches in your teaching ... or do you like to keep your style quite similar?”

“after this chat... and thinking about it... I do [employ wide range of pedagogies] ... Sometimes pupils work in silence or I’m the one telling them what to do... and others... others they’re off doing research projects or having pair chats... so... I don’t think that it can be pinned down to one pedagogy... If I have to get firm and do some rote learning because my students are... are nearly at their GCSE’s and they don’t know what they... need... to know [pause] then I’ll do it. But I think in my lessons there are lots of different strategies... and I’d say it’s by using different strategies we keep things interesting for the pupils... otherwise they would always know what to expect from... you know... from me and my lessons”  
T01

This teacher, reflecting on their own practice during the interview, though constructivist principles are utilised within their classroom, they are not the sole pedagogical approach. Indeed, it is seen as equally important to make use of

other teaching methods. In this sense, the approach is determined less by philosophy and by perceived importance, but instead by necessity; citing the need for much more structured and rigid teacher-led learning for example, in the build-up to the exam period. We can also see that the use of multiple pedagogical approaches is used from the opinion of not only necessity, but also to encourage engagement. By mixing teacher methods within and across lessons, this teacher believes that students can be kept 'on their toes' as it were, and unable to fall into a routine monotony of learning. From this we can understand that constructivist principles are certainly seen as having a place within the history classroom, but their importance is no more or less than other approaches, and indeed they are valued alongside them. It would be impossible to suggest that without the concern of examinations, our teacher may employ one style more readily over another, yet it is clear to see that necessities have some impact on their chosen pedagogy. Indeed, this is further exemplified within another interview in which a respondent teacher confirms that they don't often follow one style but teach according to the needs of the subject.

"It would be difficult for me to say I followed one style... that I followed one approach... I certainly agree that students need the opportunities... but I teach history in the way I learnt it... It is right to give students an opportunity to give their opinion of course... but should we you know, be giving an opportunity to discuss things which are historical fact? It becomes very difficult... some things do not need this... exploration... they just need... knowing"  
T04

Here, our teacher explains that they do not follow a single approach within their teaching, instead employing different strategies when dealing with different topics and to address differing needs. This notion of a gap between practices which could be employed and those which are is further emphasised by other responses which stress this gap in relation to the necessities of teaching to examinations:

"We're almost finished the course content and then... it'll be a month or two of revision lessons... they usually follow the same structure with a recap quiz and a table or a worksheet to complete. Revision lessons are tough for everyone... trying to recap two years of work in two months is very tough going. So, it does become monotonous for me teaching and for them as well... but these exams are important, it has to be done."  
T04

"So, when I want to try something... it's usually with them [the younger students] ... because if the lesson goes badly... and they don't learn what I wanted them to learn... it's okay because there's time at the end of the year, or it doesn't really matter... because it's only me assessing them. And I can hold my hands up and say... I messed up in this one lesson... now in the upper years... there is that pressure and so they don't get the games or the independent research projects... or to go and learn outside. It's a lot more stressful... especially soon because they're going ... on study leave and they have to have it all done by then."

T01

What emerges from these responses is the subtheme of 'exam necessities' within our major theme of the teaching gap. For both these teachers, the existence and the drive to pass exams significantly alters the pedagogy employed. In our first respondent, learning is described as becoming 'monotonous' and 'tough going'. We can understand that the style used within these lessons is most likely to be teacher-centred and individualistic as opposed to more dynamic and interactive as with constructivism. Our second teacher then affirms this by noting that in lessons with younger students (who do not share the exam pressure) there exists the opportunity to utilise different approaches and try out interesting pedagogies – outside learning, gamification and interaction – whilst those with exam pressure do not receive these sorts of approaches. We can understand from this data that teachers enjoy employing constructivist and more creative pedagogies but can sometimes be restricted by the needs of the exam period and the education system in which we teach.

### 5.1.3 Implementation within the classroom

Another key theme emerging from the data was the ways in which teachers understood constructivism could be implemented, and the ways in which they sought to do so. As previous data has mentioned, this has been noted to be achieved through things such as independent group research projects. Yet further data would suggest that teachers seek its implementation in historical debates and to tackle large historical questions. Meanwhile the data also acknowledges an appreciation of behaviour management issues that could potential arise.

As we have previously explored, historiography is the art of historical debate. It is engaging with historical materials and arguing a viewpoint on the

past. For many of our secondary teachers, this was an important implementation for the constructivist pedagogy, and would help students' historiographical skills.

"I remember at university the whole world of historians caught me a bit off-guard... but there's so much more done at A-level today... they study historians as much as... the actual events... So, I do encourage them to become involved in class discussion... maybe not much when they're younger... but in the sixth form, definitely... it can help them write essays because they hopefully understand the concept of multiple viewpoints"  
T02

As this teacher explains, introducing this important historical skill can be achieved through constructivist pedagogy and giving students the opportunity to express their own viewpoint, whilst arguing against others using the same evidence. We can understand that asking students to use the same materials and present their own interpretation of it, could encourage students to understand that individuals can, with the same facts, produce different interpretations. What is important to recognise however is that this skillset is, for this teacher, much more important for older students than those we have been studying in this research project – A-Level students are aged 16-18. A similar theme of utilising constructivism for classroom debating emerges from another of our teachers;

"class debates are good fun... we have big class discussions... discussions about you know, the big question of the class or... what they think something might mean... but talking about other historians... it's important they have their own opinion and they can... you know, argue it... but more important than that, is their understanding of famous historians and historical positions... and usually that involves a lot of simple reading"  
T03

Here, our teacher acknowledges that big group discussions of key questions and sources can be regarded as 'fun' and thereby useful in allowing students to be both engaged as well as allowing the grounds to develop their own opinion. Yet they also suggest that historiography is best served through other pedagogies and through individual work and reading. After all, although it can be useful and engaging to debate historical matters with peers and through this understand the idea of multiple viewpoints, what is more pressing in an exam situation is that students can recognise and list famous historians and historical schools (developing relationships with our previous themes). Whilst these

could be explored within class through constructivist means, for this teacher the best way to achieve understanding for their students is for them to undertake a depth of historical reading.

Yet for many of our teachers the major implementation of constructivism within the classroom comes because of sharing resources amongst students. With many students sharing sources and textbooks in pairs and small groups, co-operation and discussion can be encouraged.

"If you use textbooks ... how do you encourage students to work together with that, or... do you encourage them to?"

"Well... The department only has so many books ... and I only do so much printing ... usually it's one between two. Sometimes they'll work on their own from the sources but I think if they're sharing it... then they can help each other with what they're looking at"  
T04

What we should understand from data such as this, is that constructivist principles of communication and co-operative learning are not necessarily at the forefront of a teachers mind when handling resources. But they can become an unexpected aside as a result of their planning. In this case, the lack of materials is used by the teacher to encourage one another to seek other students support before asking the teacher to intervene.

"Every lesson has starts with a learning objective... something that everyone should know or be able to do, by the end of the lesson... I like to end the lesson by going to ... going back to the objective and saying... okay, can you answer this or can you do that... and give it to them... so if it's a big question then it's... can the class answer this? Can they come together ... tell me what they've spent the last hour doing?"  
T01

A further subtheme within the uses of constructivist pedagogy was its utilisation to answer 'big questions'. In some cases, it was used by the teacher to allow students to interact alone with large historical questions. Yet in this case, it related to reflecting on learning goals and making the students reflect together on their progress over the lesson. Using constructivism to open up class questioning and allow students time to think together on an answer before giving feedback.

### 5.1.4 Teacher understanding of constructivism

A final key theme to discuss is the teachers own understanding of the term constructivism, and of constructivist pedagogy. There were differences in understanding, mainly dependent upon how long our teachers had been in the profession, but this is something which will be discussed further later. It certainly seems that our teachers agree there is a rationale and a value to the inclusion of constructivist pedagogy within the history classroom, but it was also important to investigate what this specifically meant to them – do they understand it the way that the research suggests? Teachers acknowledged that constructivist pedagogy mostly centres around the learner and much of the classroom work will be undertaken by them and with their peers.

“Okay... so... we’re talking about a pedagogy which emphasises interaction between students as... the method to achieve or... let’s say... to enhance their learning.”  
T02

Some of our teachers understood the emphasis that constructivism places on communication and interaction to develop understanding in students, and this example emphasises that. However, it is important to note that a further subtheme develops from this – that is, that many teachers frame constructivism not alone, but as the antithesis to behaviourism. Some understanding comes from knowing that it is not the input-output method, but rather one where students must develop, contextualise and engage with knowledge on their own.

“I know about Vygotsky, I remember looking at his work... the zone of proximal development... getting students together to, develop one another... As a teacher I can’t do all the work, so constructivism is about giving the students the work.”  
T03

Again, this teacher notes an understanding of at least one of the key theorists behind constructivism and its implementation within the classroom, but furthermore the pedagogy is seen as being one which allows the teacher a chance to do less work. By this, we can interpret that teachers acknowledge that constructivism can take off some of the workload burden on teachers being experts and leaders, and instead places learning responsibility back into the hands of students.



"What can you tell me... that you understand or think of when I talk about constructivist pedagogy. What does that mean to you?"

"Oh wow... okay... if I think about it... it's about building knowledge in students?"

"... So how does... how might that look in the classroom?"

"I guess it's making learning more long term... like not just learning facts or... dates. It would be making students... work with materials... and understand what they are seeing"

T04

It is clear to see that for some of our teachers who have been out of academia for a while, that there is a weakness in research knowledge – yet this is something which requires further discussion later, as it would be difficult to suggest this is the case across the board with such a small sample size. In this instance however, our teacher struggles to explain clearly constructivism – there is some awareness that constructivism is more exploratory than simple information retention but understanding remains weak. This may indeed have an impact on their assessment of the implications of constructivism and indeed how they believe they are implementing it within their classroom.

### 5.1.5 Concluding analysis on teacher themes

We should understand then, that from our research data, our teachers acknowledge that constructivism has a value within the history classroom. Nevertheless, this is tempered by other themes at play, such as the necessities of teaching placing constructivism alongside other pedagogic approaches. It is also important to recognise that the uses of the pedagogy are fairly similar amongst our teachers – that is that it is used to encourage historical debate, engage groups of questioning and allow support through the sharing and discussion of pair resources. Finally, our teachers understand of constructivism varied, but it was suitable enough to suggest that they do have an understanding of the approach as well as how and why it should be implemented within the classroom, even if the justification for this is more results driven than research driven.

If we continue now to consider our student responses to our questionnaire and interview process, we can see on the following page the thematic map of their responses - Figure 2. Similarly to our teachers, we can plot the core themes and ideas which are most pressing to them when presented with a discussion around constructivism in their classrooms. Again, the major themes to emerge are represented within the rounded rectangles and the minor themes which emerge within these categories can be found branching off within the ovals.

What is interesting, in comparison to the thematic web for our teachers, is that much of the student discussion is centred on their opinions and reflections of working with peers and less on how this may develop their learning. It is also interesting to note that from these discussions, only three major themes emerged. These were as follows;

1. Values and issues relating to working with peers

Within this theme were student responses, opinions and reflections on their experiences working with their peers. As students are the recipients of the pedagogic approach selected by the teacher, it was interesting to analyse their thinking around this kind of pedagogy.

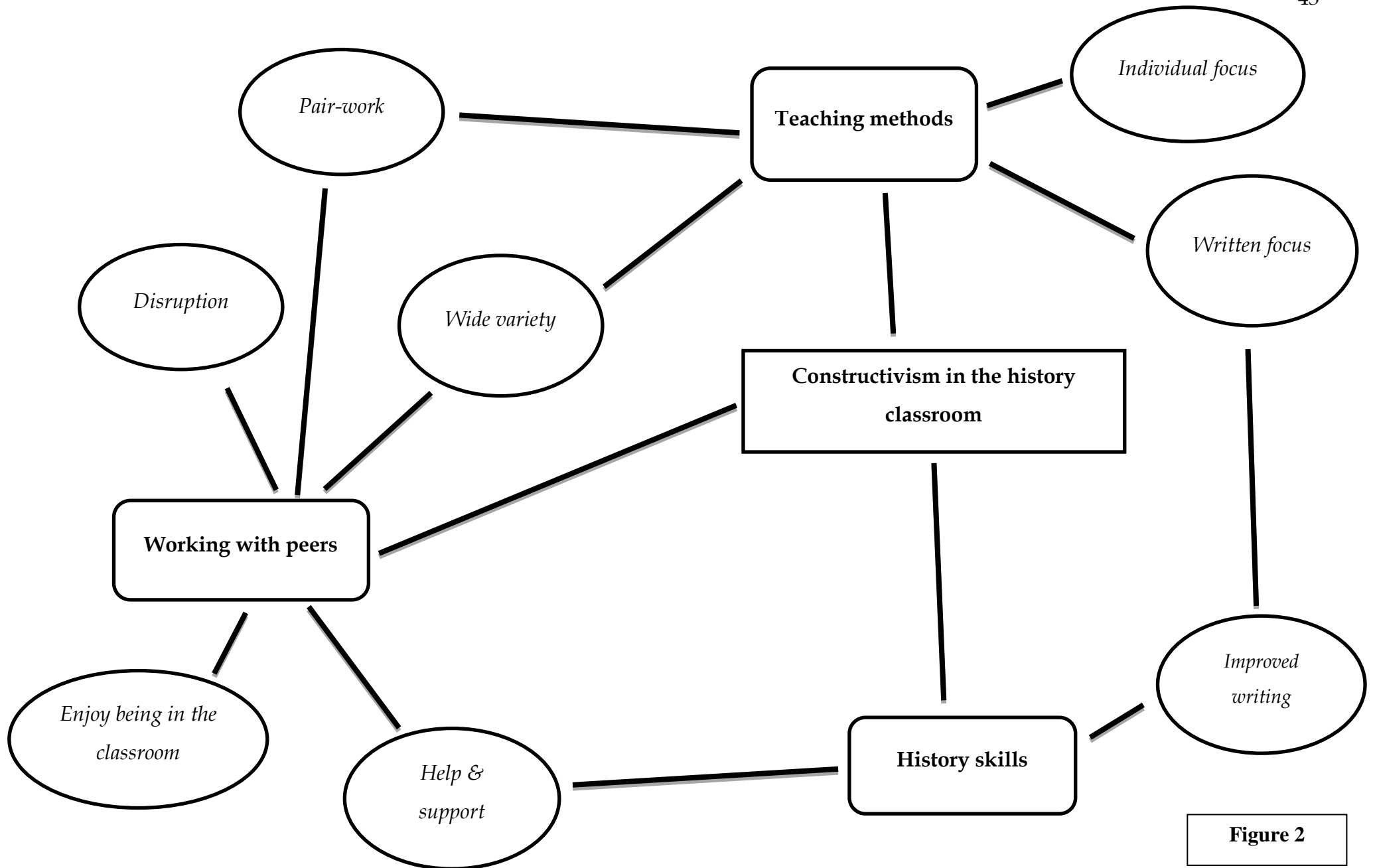
2. Teaching methods employed

Another theme which emerged came from discussion in which students were asked to reflect on how much genuine discursive and constructivist work they undertook and what this looked like within their history lessons.

3. Development of own historical skills

The final theme was related to perceptions from students of how working with peers had supported their learning, as well as how the overall approaches of their teachers had helped to develop their historical skills over the duration of their academic life.

Again, to best answer our research question we will focus on these three key themes and their associated subthemes to interpret how important students perceive constructivism to be in supporting their learning within history.

**Figure 2**

### 5.1.6 Values and issues relating to working with peers

Within the major theme of student reflections on working with peers, comes a subtheme which, prior to the data gathering, was one I was not expecting to see too much of within students. That is the student acknowledgement of the disruption that themselves and other students can create when given responsibility for their own learning.

“The boys that sit behind me just do not shut up... like even when we’re working normally... they’re always in trouble... I don’t even want to think about if they were allowed to talk more.”  
S01Y10A

The emphasis on constructivism within the classroom and its allowance for discussion and interaction between peers, undoubtedly more power is given over to the students. In this case, the pupils are questioning whether some members of the classroom can handle increased responsibility, let alone that which they currently have. The question is raised then, about how we can implement constructivism to allow peer development and learning, without allowing some students to take this away from their classmates. Even utilising constructivist principles would, for some students, require stringent ground rules to ensure a focus on learning.

“We’re really good at working together... it’s nice to have someone next to you who you like and you can work with, but there are some lessons where I’m sat with someone who I couldn’t work with and then I don’t want to talk to them at all because they just put me off”  
S01Y07A

Continuing with the notion that some students may not be responsible enough to take charge of their own learning, is the idea of classroom dynamics. It is impossible to escape the fact that the classroom is a social space, and as such students will have peers with whom they share stronger connections with. For this student, who is referencing another pupil who is in the interview group, there are some students with whom they can develop a strong working relationship. One where they can successfully collaborate and work together, as

well as having a social dynamic. Yet, they accept that there are other students with whom they do not share this relationship and attempts to make them work together would, if anything, be counter productive as they would be put off working with their partner. In this case, we see constructivism as an effective force for some students in the classroom, but only when pupils are engaging peers with whom they share some sense of commonality – whether that be friendship, work ethic or otherwise. Several other students also noted that in group discussions the classroom can become “quite loud” (S03Y07B) and that “some people say everything in the group, but then you have people who will sit there and do nothing” (S04Y10C).

But student reflections were not entirely negative, indeed there was a wealth of positive responses to the opportunities constructivism can present. Amongst those was the enjoyment and engagement within the classroom, as well as the help and support peers can offer.

“In Mr [X]’s class he like... doesn’t want us to talk so we get told off a lot... I don’t want to go to his lessons... he’s just really rude about it... I prefer it when like here, like we can talk to each other... nobody can do it in silence for like an hour it’s mad... you know”  
S03Y07B

For this student, the scope to discuss and talk to other students in comparison to lessons in which silence is expected, creates an atmosphere in which students do not dread going to lessons. From this we should understand that students appreciate the opportunity to not only discuss the topic at hand, but also to relax more within the classroom, encouraging engagement and confidence.

For those students who do continue to experience constructivist pedagogy within the classroom, with further opportunities for interaction and exploration, how do they perceive its benefits? A further theme to be explored is that of the help and support that constructivism offers students in the classroom.

“I don’t really like answering questions. I don’t usually put my hand up because... because if I get it wrong, I think I look stupid in front of everyone, and I don’t want to look stupid.”  
S04Y07A

Researchers like Hunt and Sweeting (2014), have noted the importance of school based social status in the health and wellbeing of adolescents (p.39). It should come as no surprise then, that for many students the issue of face is a pressing one. Standard initiation and feedback sessions as much questioning in the classroom can be, can be an issue for students who are acutely aware that their peers are watching them. As this student notes, there exists a genuine fear of being wrong in front of others. The importance of constructivism for these students then, lies in taking away this pressure and allowing students the opportunity to explore answers together in a much safer and more equal discussion before, potentially, returning to the whole class.

Students then, appear to have some appreciation for constructivist pedagogy within the classroom – in so much that it can empower them to gain support from peers, as well as generally enjoying group work situations. They are however, aware of the problems of disruption that can be caused by constructivism, and indeed that much of their focus and skill development has revolved around a much more individual and written approach. Still, the opportunities it presents in many situations, are appreciated. As one student summarises,

“I have fun in history, yeah. [Our teacher] gets us excited about it... we do lots of different stuff every lesson... we can talk about things... we watch videos... sometimes we have to do a lot of writing but it's better than other lessons”  
S03Y07C

Therein lies the student analysis of constructivism in the history classroom: it can provoke engagement and enjoyment, but its deployment is regularly alongside other styles depending on the teacher and the lesson itself.

### **5.1.7 Teaching methods employed**

Another key theme which has emerged from our discussions with students, and one which has some relationship with the values and reflections of our students, was the teaching methods employed by our students' teachers. It is interesting to note then, that one theme which emerged from interviews with students was the emphasis on individual work, and especially written work.

"I like group work but if we are working in a group, it's usually like... into my book... everyone has to write the same things on their own."  
S04Y10B

This again, emphasises the important distinction between students who are working in a group, and students who are working as a group. This is something which we have touched upon through reading the literature and is arguably one of the hardest things to properly implement into teaching, especially when given students from a wide variety of backgrounds and wide range of abilities. Designing a group task with all this in mind is challenging. As such, as this student alludes to, group work becomes more about sharing resources whilst still working alone. There exists the opportunity for discussion of the source material, sharing ideas and opinions, but each student must still complete their own task – usually written in nature. This is something which is particularly stressed in the UK, the emphasis is on a written pedagogy and that students should have written evidence of everything they have learnt.

"Our lessons um... they are quite similar. We will be told a bit about something, and then we'll write something. Maybe we'll also talk about it together. But every lesson we're writing, yeah. Learning objective, title, date and then at least a page of writing."  
S02Y10B

The focus on written work in the UK, may be another reason as to why purely constructivist methods are not employed as much within the classroom. After all, constructivism moves the focus into the social sphere and the knowledge which can be created through interaction with others. This returns us to the teachers concerns about the demands of an exam-focused curriculum, students similarly notice the emphasis on written work above their discussion.

"Before we started our GCSE's things weren't as difficult. Do you remember we spent that lesson building bridges?"  
"Oh, yeah! That was so good... we don't get to do those things anymore... the lessons have changed since we started the exams"  
"... Yeah, it's a lot more about [the teacher] telling us what we need to do to improve, a lot of essay writing and such"  
S03Y10A/C

A clear shift of focus being noticed by the students in year 10 is that teachers are much keener to stress the importance of individual progression and written skills in the run up to exams. As such, it is clear to understand that the

allowance for discursive work begins to dissipate as student's progress towards their exams. For students, we can see that they look back on (and continue to enjoy) the ability to explore and interact with peers with fondness, continuing to hold these interactions in high regard, even though their lessons take on a much more individual and written approach.

What we can see within the data is that discursive pedagogy, when employed, is usually still associated by the students with individual work alongside these opportunities for discussion. The approaches allow students to interact with one another, but the emphasis is not on such, and all students are still expected to follow the written requirements of the English system.

### **5.1.8 Development of own historical skills**

A final key theme to emerge from the discussions with students was the extent to which their teachers, along with their pedagogic methods, had developed their historical skills over the course of their academic life. This devolved into two key subthemes. One of which was the notion of support, which fits into both development of skills and students' reflections on the pedagogy in the classroom

"Working together... they sometimes keep me going, or remind me of things from other lessons that I've like, probably forgot about..."  
S01Y10C

It would be difficult to escape the reality that within the history classroom, there is not only the analytical and historiographic skills at play, but also a great deal of information to be learnt and retained. For students, the opportunities presented through interaction can be affirmation of prior knowledge as well as expanding their own understanding. As this student notes, working with others is a useful tool for both and well received within the history classroom. Similar ideas emerge within the rest of our interview participants, that constructivism and working with peers can help to grow support networks within the classroom. Students also noted that removing the teacher from the leadership role at the front of the classroom made it easier to approach them for help and support.



Restricting teacher-led instruction and focussing more on student led methods, with the teacher as a guide, gave students more confidence to ask for support.

"You know when the teacher asks if anyone has any questions, and like nobody says anything... I've waited before... until I can have them to myself and ask them... it's just easier when they're talking to just you, and not everyone"  
S04Y10C

With the teacher acting as the learners' guide, in activities where students have the freedom to undertake the learning themselves, students can be more inclined to ask for help and support as the teacher can come across as more equal than in more traditional teaching methods. Giving students the responsibility for their own learning seems to have helped to develop students' own abilities to deal with issues and learn from one another.

Alongside this is the development of students written skills, which almost all our participants said had progressed throughout their time in the history classroom.

"Do you think you're any better at history now, than you were... say a year go?"

"I can definitely write a lot more... the essays we did in year nine were about a page or so... now I'm writing double that. I'm not saying that it's... any easier... but I can think of a lot more to write and how I should write it"  
S04Y10B

The focus on written work within the English curriculum means that when respondents were discussing the improvement of their skills, many went along similar lines to this student and focussed upon their improved written work – in this case, the growing strength in structuring and writing extended pieces of work. It is questionable that a constructivist pedagogy has improved this particular skill given that it is a fairly individual one, however if our teachers have employed constructivism alongside other pedagogies for the duration of these students' academic lives then it will play a part alongside the other pedagogies.

### **5.1.9 Concluding analysis on first research question**

Let us consider an answer for our first research question, that being, how important do students and teachers perceive constructivist pedagogy to be, within the history classroom.

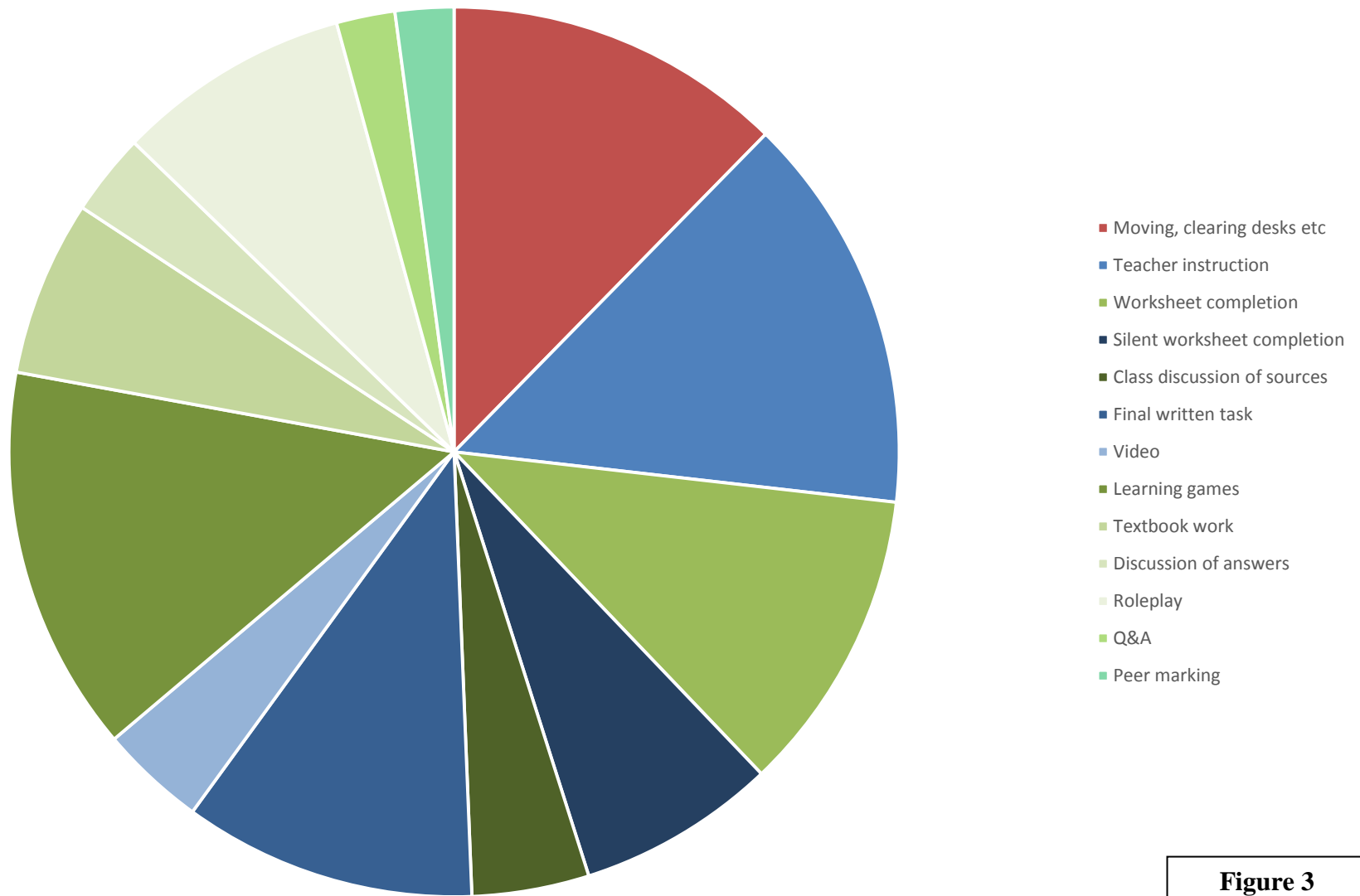
It is clear to see from our data that for both students and teachers, constructivism forms a part of the history classroom. But it is important to recognise that role is not a dominant one. Its implementation is done alongside alternative teaching styles which emphasise either student written work, or teacher-led lessons. The reason for this is that within the education system there is a clear end goal, and the purpose of teaching is to help students reach that end goal. Whilst constructivism may be a tool, it is one of many teachers will utilise to achieve their ends. For students, there is an awareness of the pitfalls of constructivism in some students' inability to take personal responsibility, but also an appreciation for the experiences that such an approach can create – for the enjoyment of group working and social interaction. They also seem to appreciate the more personal learning environment it can create, one in which teachers are a part of the learning and not outsiders who students may struggle to connect with.

Overall then, constructivism is seen as important, but no more or less important than other pedagogical approaches in delivering a quality history education for students. Further examples from the transcripts, relating to each of the themes, are available within the appendices.

## **5.2 Relating to our second research question**

Our second research question is – what kinds of pedagogical approaches teachers employ in their classrooms. To best answer this, during our lesson observations we noted the types of activities undertaken by students and their duration to create a form of lesson timeline. From this, we can ascertain how much of each lesson is spent on tasks which follow a constructivist pedagogy, and those which follow other styles. The results of these observations are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 on the following pages. In both graphs, red colours indicate activities of an administrative nature – such as entering the room, handing out books, assignments and tidying up after activities and the end of the lesson. Blue colours indicate teaching methods which are either primarily teacher-led

or allow no room for student discussion or interaction (non-constructivist pedagogy). Finally, green hues are assigned to activities in which there exists the possibility for student interaction and communication throughout the task. It is important to note though, that just because a task has the opportunity for constructivist influence, it does not mean the emphasis is on such. Many of the tasks involved, as we have previously alluded to, group work in which students can discuss historical sources but ultimately must complete an individual worksheet.



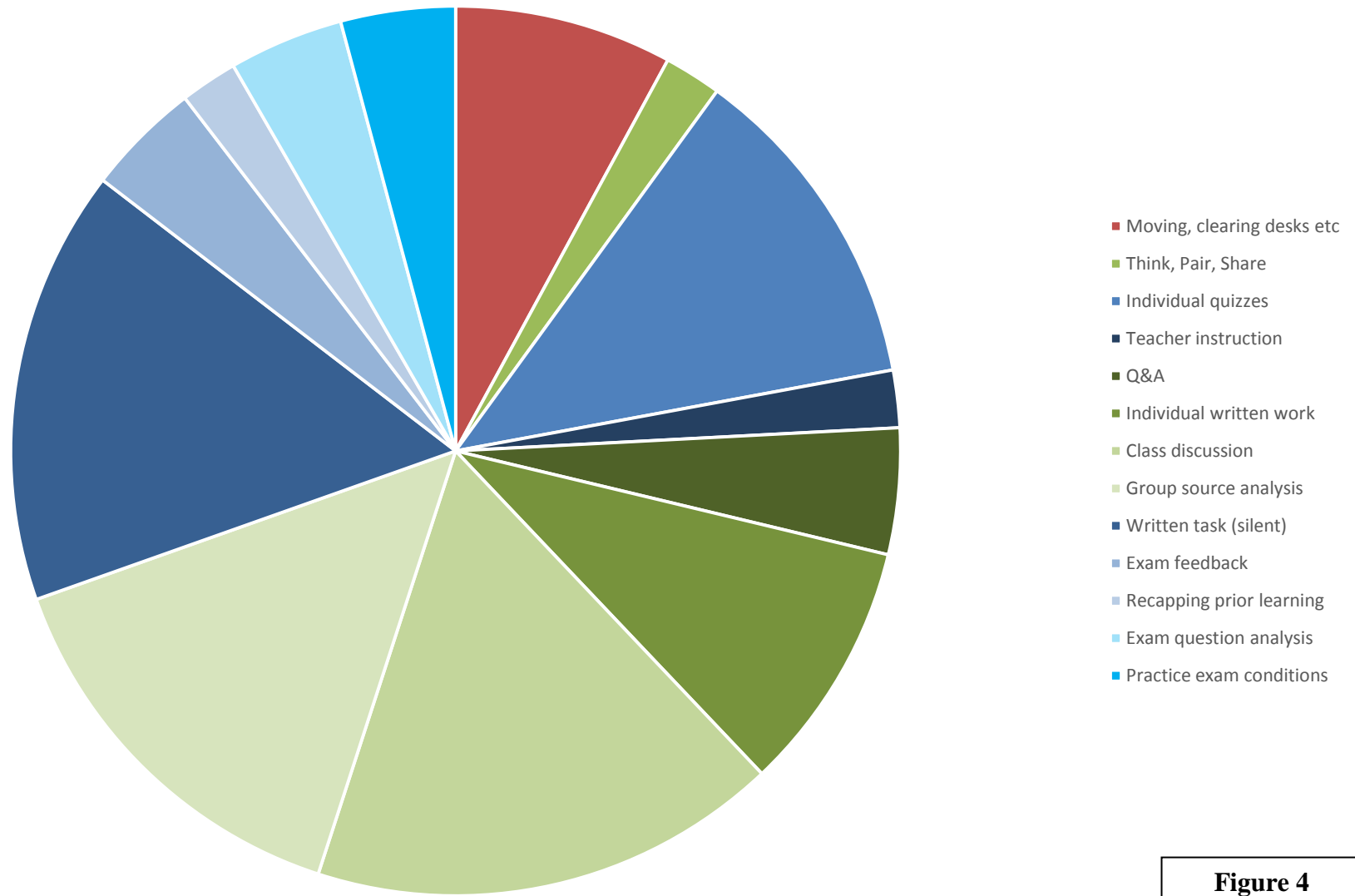


Figure 3 on the page 50 is the spread of activities within our four year seven lessons and figure 4, represented on page 51, is indicative of our four year ten lessons. As we have seen in answering our prior research questions, our history teachers suggested that they feel they take a pragmatic approach to their teaching. Changing their style according to the needs of the lesson and the longer term aims. This certainly appears to be borne out within our results, as we can see in evidence the 'patchwork pedagogy' that our literature alluded to, as well as no real dominance of one specific pedagogical approach in the history classroom.

For our year seven classes, it appears at first glance that constructivism is the dominant pedagogy for teachers. This is partially true, as there did exist ample opportunity for students to talk to one another during most written tasks. There was also roleplay and learning games which encouraged students to explore history together. Yet again, it is important to recognise that many of the tasks such as worksheets and textbook work, did not emphasise constructivism. We have coloured them in with the rest of the constructivist pedagogy only because there were examples of students discussing the work. These tasks would have been completed just as well alone or in silence, as the emphasis was on individual work and not on collaboration. So, whilst it would be easy to say that constructivism dominates our younger group, it is more realistic to say that the opportunities for constructivism are more widely available for our year sevens than our year tens.

As for our year ten group, Figure 2.1 indicates much more teacher-led pedagogies in play, and much more silent individual work than our year sevens. The reason for this, we could put down to the kind of exam necessities we uncovered whilst answering our first research question – students are ultimately being prepared for their final individual exams. This is reflected in the composition of tasks, some of which involved silent recap quizzes, exam condition practice and assessment feedback. Much like our year seven groups, where constructivism does exist, again it is not emphasised, merely allowed to exist

alongside individual work. For our older groups, the roleplays and learning games do not seem to have any place within the lessons we observed.

How then, can we begin to answer this research question? From our data, it is clear to see that teachers use a range of approaches in teaching history. They appear to take the style which they feel will allow them to best help their students progress. For older years, this seems to be more teacher-led than the younger years who have more freedom to engage in constructivism. Indeed, constructivism does appear within the classroom alongside these other pedagogies – but tasks in which the emphasis is on collaboration and communication is rare. Therefore, we can say that constructivism within our history classrooms mostly features as the opportunities presented to students to discuss one another's work and the topic at hand.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Reflecting upon both our results and the literature, it is interesting to see some direct connections. Firstly, when considering Kitson, Husbands and Steward (2011) with their assertion that pedagogy within the history classroom is more of a means to an end than a focus, we have seen some evidence in supporting this. Many of our teachers and students expressed views that there should exist within the history classroom a range of teaching styles and activities to enhance learning, and that the diversity of approaches can help students in terms of growth together and individually. In terms of tasks within the lesson, again they seem to point to supporting this statement that constructivism exists within the classroom alongside other approaches.

Within our literature review, we tried to identify which other pedagogical approaches may appear alongside constructivism if this idea of patchwork pedagogy does exist. One of which we identified was cognitivism. For Yilmaz, (2011) cognitivism relied upon making learning meaningful for students by relating new information to previous learning and experiences as well as through teachers actively targeting students with an understanding of their learning needs. Within our data, cognitivism shows through as a little-understood but key part of the learning. For example, especially for our year ten groups we see the implementation of revision and recap activities designed to reflect and expand upon prior learning as well as provide context for new material. It is also evident in the way teachers targeted key students for support and challenge within the lessons – whether that be through key questioning, writing frames or one on one help. Rather than relying solely upon discussion and interaction to extend pupils' knowledge, teachers use their own understanding of each student to better their learning experience. In this sense, cognitivism is another important facet of the history classroom.

Another interesting study to reflect upon is Mercer's work on talk within schools. Despite reflecting upon a 1970's project which is now over forty years old, Mercer (2007) noted that students were often working individually when



placed in groups. It was Mercer's assertion that this was often the case, which inspired this research project to include questions about such within the research process. The results therefore were interesting to identify that this practice was, for the most part, still the case. Students could still identify that group work would be undertaken into their own book, and teachers as well would give everyone the same task within group work. The reasons for this are complex and revolve around difficult issues such as accountability within British schools, yet despite education moving forward significantly since the 1970's these practices are still common and may indeed be detrimental to the expansion of constructivism within the history classroom.

Nevertheless, as Husbands (1996) alludes to the importance of words in history, and Lwin and Silver (2014) note with regards to the importance of talk within classrooms, it is clear to see from our data that history teachers appreciate the role that discussion has within the discipline. In our examples of lesson activities there are a wide variety of times in which students are either simply allowed to discuss or actively encouraged to do so. As Husbands relates to the importance of all words – spoken and written – indeed history teachers make writing a key aspect of all their lessons.

It certainly seems then, that our results would justify what the literature was suggesting. That language is an important aspect of the history classroom, that it can be used to help develop students skills – both soft and historical. Yet it is important to recognise how we arrived at these results.

Most importantly to note, is that it would be impossible for myself as a history teacher to disconnect myself from the research process given that I was the interviewer and the observer. Looking, in many ways, to justify my own teaching practice I undoubtedly subconsciously picked up on things than a more independent researcher may have done. It should also be considered that in the process of conversing with interviewees I would respond and direct the conversation – though still, not to make implications on others behalf. It is my own connection with the data which may have resulted in interviews with more of an emphasis on this idea of mixed-pedagogic approaches and so, in future a

much more independent process may be required to ensure higher validity of the research project.

Furthermore, the small sample size of our research project threw up unexpected issues. For although we interviewed some twenty-six students, giving us a good range of students and their responses, these were spread only across four teachers. In this way, the depth of data retrieved from history teachers was somewhat weaker than that from the students. As a prime example, was the creation of a Likert-scale in the questionnaire following the pilot study. With some immediacy after the interview process, when entering in this data, it became apparent that trying to draw conclusions from statistical data with only four participants was impractical and unreliable. The Likert scales data was dismissed for the depth of information otherwise available in the interview process, instead serving only as a barometer which was used by both interviewer and interviewee throughout the conversation to elicit further thoughts and opinions based on their immediate responses.

Because of the small sample size of our teachers, it is difficult to make generalisations and form valid conclusions from our results. Perhaps the best example of this, is in the theme of 'teacher weakness of research knowledge' which emerged from our interviews. Our four teachers were comprised of two teachers at the start of their teaching career (less than three years teaching experience) one with less than five years and a final teacher who had been teaching for around ten years. What became clear from our interview data was that for those teachers who had recently qualified there was a much clearer picture of educational research – presumably given that they had recently qualified and conducted their own research projects in becoming teachers. Whilst for those teachers who had been in service longer their understandings of pedagogies were usually vaguer and without reference to specific researchers or principles. This could have presented interesting findings for the importance of constructivism and indeed, educational research within teachers. However, with such a small dataset and only one or two teachers to back up these findings such conclusions are often difficult to suggest. It would be unwise to suggest that such a

research weakness existed across all long-service teachers, rather than such a weakness existed in the case of the teachers we have worked with.

We should also recognise that teachers in the UK are seldom observed as they are here in Finland, usually teachers are observed up to only three times in an academic year (NUT, 2014). So, for our teachers and students to have researchers within the classroom is an exceptional thing. As such, we should expect there to be some margin of error with regards to normalcy. By this we mean that although our lessons observed showcased the existence of multiple pedagogies, with examples of good group and independent work it would be difficult to suggest that our teachers did not attempt to showcase the very best of their classroom practice rather than the normality of day-to-day schooling.

A final important point to note, is the issues that arise from the selection of teachers to participate within this study. All of whom are teachers I know personally or have had working contact with throughout my time as a history teacher. It is entirely possible therefore that this sample was not representative of wider trends, and the outcomes were therefore affected by the selection methods implemented by myself for this project.

This research project has been a labour of love for myself as a history teacher. I have sought to understand the place that constructivism has within the classroom, to justify and inform my own future teaching practices. What we have instead discovered is that both teachers and pupils acknowledge that discussion-based learning has an important role to play within history teaching, but that one pedagogy alone is not suitable nor preferable for either party. Many students enjoy discussion but also work well under structures which give them space to think clearly, many teachers enjoy giving students free rein to take themselves where they choose but also need control to guide students through difficult examinations. What we should take from this project is that history teaching requires a mixture of pedagogical approaches, none more important than the other. Though relationships between students and teachers are vital on the learning journey, what a teacher should focus on within the history

classroom is the longer-term goals of the learning and design it so it may suit both the learners and these aims.

## 7 REFERENCES

### 7.1 Published sources

All European Academies. (2017). *The European code of conduct for research integrity*. (ISBN 978-3-00-055767-5) Berlin: Germany.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, 1, 385-405.

Barnes, D. (1992). *From communication to curriculum*. Penguin: Portsmouth.

British Educational Research Association. (2011). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. (ISBN 978-0-946671-32-8). London: UK.

Daniels, H. (Ed.). (2005). *An introduction to Vygotsky*. Routledge: Hove.

Eisenbach, B. B. (2012). Teacher belief and practice in a scripted curriculum. *The clearing house: a journal of education strategies, issues and ideas*, 85, 153-156.

Goos, M., Galbraith, P. & Renshaw, P. (2002). Socially mediated metacognition: creation collaborative zones of proximal development in small group problem solving. *Educational studies in mathematics*, 49, 193-223.

Flanagan, C. (2014). *OCR Psychology. AS revision guide*. Psychology Press: Hove.

Harris, L. R. & Brown, G. T. L. (2010). Mixing interview and questionnaire methods: practical problems in aligning data. *Practical assessment, research & evaluation*, 15, 1-19.

Hesse-Biber, S. (2015). Mixed methods research: The “thing-ness” problem. *Qualitative health research*, 25, 775-788.

Hoppitt, W. & Laland, K. N. (2013). *Social learning: An introduction to mechanisms, methods and models*. Princeton University Press: Woodstock.

Hubbard, F. W. (1939). Questionnaires. *Review of educational research*, 9, 502-507.

Husbands, C. (1996). What is history teaching? Language, ideas and learning about the past. Open University Press: Buckingham.

Kember, D. & Leung, D. Y. P. (2008). Establishing the validity and reliability of course evaluation questionnaires. *Assessment & evaluation in higher education*, 33, 341-353.

Kitson, A., Husbands C. & Steward, S. (2011). Teaching and Learning history 11-18: Understanding the past. Open University Press: Maidenhead.

Larochelle, M. & Bednarz, N. (2010). Constructivism and Education. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Light, P. & Littleton, K. (2000). Social processes in children's learning. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Mercer, N. & Dawes, L. (2008). The value of exploratory talk. In Mercer, N. & Hodgkinson, S. (Eds.). (2008). Exploring talk in schools. (55-72). Sage publications: London.

Mercer, N. & Hodgkinson, S. (Eds.). (2008). Exploring talk in schools. Sage publications: London.

Mercer, N. & Littleton, K. (2007). Dialogue and the development of children's thinking – a sociocultural approach. Routledge: London.

Peer, E. & Gamliel, E. (2011). Too reliable to be true? Response bias as a potential source of inflation in paper-and-pencil questionnaire reliability. *Practical assessment, research & evaluation*, 16, 1-8.

Raina, V. (2011). Between behaviourism and constructivism. *Cultural studies*, 25, 9-24.

Reznitskaya, A., Kuo, L. J., Clark, A. M., Miller, B., Jadallah, M., Anderson, R. C. & Nguyen-Jahiel, K. (2009). Collaborative reasoning: a dialogic approach to group discussions. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39, 29-48.

Rhodes, L. A. (1993). Ethnography. *Social science and medicine*, 37, vii-viii.

Robertson, J. (2012). Likert-type Scales, statistical methods, and effect sizes. *Communications of the ACM*, 55, 6-7.

Roulston, K. (2011). Working through challenges doing interview research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 10, 348-366.

Serrant-Green, L. (2007). Ethnographic research. *Nurse researcher*, 14, 4-6.

Silver, R. E. & Marlar Lwin, S. (Eds.). (2014) *Language in education*. Bloomsbury: London.

Sweeting, H. & Hunt, K. (2014). Adolescent socio-economic and school-based social status, health and well-being. *Social science & medicine*, 121, 39-47.

Tolmie, A., Howe, C., Mackenzie, M., Greer, K. (1993). Task design as an influence on dialogue and learning: primary school group work with object flotation. *Social development*, 2, 183-201.

Tracy, S. J. (2010) Qualitative quality: eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16, 837-851.

Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta. (2012). *Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö ja sen loukkausepäilyjen käsitteleminen Suomessa*. (ISBN 978-952-5995-06-0). Helsinki: Finland.

Watson, C. N. (2012). Likert or not, we are biased. *Anaesthesiology*, 116, 1160.

Yilmaz, K. (2011). The cognitive perspective on learning: Its theoretical underpinnings and implications for classroom practices. *The clearing house: a journal of educational strategies, issues and ideas*, 84, 202-212.

## 7.2 Online Sources

Adams, R. (2017 October 16). English school budgets facing 'breaking point', warn headteachers. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/16/english-school-budgets-facing-breaking-point-warn-headteachers>

Brown, Z. (2016, July 2). Michael Gove butchered the education system – we can't let him do the same to the country. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/michael-gove-butchered-the-education-system-we-cant-let-him-do-the-same-to-the-country-a7115381.html>

Carr, F. (2017, July 10). Schools at 'crisis point' as one in four new teachers hired since 2011 quit. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/07/10/schools-crisis-point-one-four-new-teachers-hired-since-2011/>

Kagan, S. (2013, Summer). Kagan Cooperative structures promote language acquisition. *Kagan online magazine*. Retrieved from [https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/dr\\_spencer\\_kagan/414/Kagan-Cooperative-Structures-Promote-Language-Acquisition](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/414/Kagan-Cooperative-Structures-Promote-Language-Acquisition)

Kagan, S. (2013). Cooperative learning structures. *Kagan online magazine*. Retrieved from [https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/dr\\_spencer\\_kagan/426/Cooperative-Learning-Structures](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/426/Cooperative-Learning-Structures)

National Education Union (2014). Appraisal and classroom observation. *Teachers.org.uk*. Retrieved from <https://www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/appraisal>

Press association. (2017 July 16). Schools asking parents for 'money via direct debit' owing to cuts. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jul/16/uk-schools-forced-to-ask-parents-for-money-due-to-cuts-mother-says>

Turner, C. (2017, July 26). Unqualified teachers rise by 62 per cent in four years as schools struggle amid recruitment crisis. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/07/25/unqualified-teachers-rise-62-per-cent-four-years-schools-struggle/>



## 8 APPENDICES

Example of student questionnaire showcasing inputted Likert scale and space for additional comments alongside interview (rarely utilised):

### Pedagogy of the history classroom

#### Student questionnaire

*All information recorded on this questionnaire and throughout the subsequent research process will remain confidential. I undertake participation in this research task willingly and understand that I may withdraw myself from the process at any time.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Group \_\_\_\_\_

*All questions are assessed on a 1-5 scale (1 being strongly disagree, 5 being strongly agree). If you have any questions regarding the survey, please do not hesitate to ask. There is room under each question for comments, but your verbal responses will be recorded.*

1. I learn best when I am working on my own

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree				Agree

2. It's important to me that I can talk to other students about the lesson

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree				Agree

3. I have changed my opinion based on someone else's response in a lesson

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree				Agree

4. My teacher often sets us group work

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree				Agree

5. My history classroom is a loud classroom

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree				Agree

# Example of completed lesson observation form:

5 mins movement

Pedagogy of the history classroom  
Observational fieldwork sheet

Dataset: 02 Y7  
Date: 20/02/2018

much of the time on task! Teacher regularly moving around classroom to interact with groups of students.

12.25 - 2nd

12.30 - Bell rings Lesson Start  
few late → class enters slowly  
↳ talking on entry  
generally up and in class  
greet @ door

12.33 - Start even though some still talking  
↳ instructions  
↳ on recap on yesterday's lesson.  
↳ Teacher-led No Q's

12.38 - T.P S on Previous L.O. — many students discussing + willing to answer

12.43 - reflections + Answers gathered  
↳ T. starts to outline new topic + task  
become involved in class

12.49 - Students left to task → conquest of water  
↳ T. Available for support

13.07 - class returns to discuss sources much on task late  
together. Students willing Students taking time to still participate in general get into rhythm

13.17 - Students return to silent write up of day

13.29 - Some have sensed impending bell, teacher takes in books and asks to pack away items  
↳ enforced.

13.30 - Bell rings → lunch begins.

### Further data relating to teacher themes:

Theme	Source	Data
<b>Understanding of constructivism</b>		
Antithesis to behaviourism	T01	" I remember looking at two really... the first was the dog one... behaviourism, that's it... It's where you do something right and you get a reward... but constructivism is different... it's about getting to the right through working together"
	T04	"I remember reading about behaviourism, of course... that's the one where I'm in charge and I hold all the cards, right?"
Student focussed	T02	"Okay... so... we're talking about a pedagogy which emphasises interaction between students as... the method to achieve or... let's say... to enhance their learning."
	T03	"I know about Vygotsky, I remember looking at his work... the zone of proximal development... getting students together to, develop one another... As a teacher I can't do all the work, so constructivism is about giving the students the work."
	T01	"Instead you turn to the students and say, okay. You work this out... you work that out... what have you learnt together today?"
	T02	"Communication between students to... look at what they each think and then expand one another's understanding... through exploring that together."
Teacher weakness in research knowledge	T04	"Oh wow... okay... if I think about it... it's about building knowledge in students?"
	T04	"I guess it's making learning more long term... like not just learning facts or... dates. It would be making students... work with materials... and understand what they are seeing"
	T03	"But honestly, it's been a while since I did much reading of... into educational research, so... I might be wrong on this"
<b>Classroom implementation</b>		
Historical debates	T02	"well... in history it is ... because history is about taking on multiple viewpoints... and you see it for example, we had a historical debate a few... well... back in November... and the kids really got into character... they loved it"
	T02	"I remember at university the whole world of historians caught me a bit off-guard... but there's so much more done at A-level today... they study historians as much as... the actual events... So, I do encourage them to become involved in class discussion... maybe not much when they're younger... but in the sixth form, definitely... it can help them write essays because they hopefully understand the concept of multiple viewpoints"
	T03	"class debates are good fun... we have big class discussions... discussions about you know, the big question of the class or... what they think something might mean... but talking about other historians... it's important they have their own opinion and they can... you know, argue it... but more important than that, is their understanding of famous historians and historical

		positions... and usually that involves a lot of simple reading"
	T01	"It's good for them to understand it... so we do make them argue their point of view... whether that's in a group or in front of the whole class or in writing"
	T01	"things such as, activities where they move around the room... And then I'll ask a student or two to explain their point of view... then another, and another"
Shared sources re-	T04	"Well... The department only has so many books ... and I only do so much printing ... usually it's one between two. Sometimes they'll work on their own from the sources but I think if they're sharing it... then they can help each other with what they're looking at"
	T02	"I think... much of what we do in terms of peer interaction... is mostly in the pairs... they are given a question together or a source together and they have to work with the person next to them or the people around them. It's easiest to manage that way"
	T01	"think pair share, there's a lot of pair work"
	T03	"The... most of it comes from the pairs... I think a lot about who I want to sit next to who... so I can make sure they'll work well together"
The big questions	T01	"Every lesson has starts with a learning objective... something that everyone should know or be able to do, by the end of the lesson... I like to end the lesson by going to ... going back to the objective and saying... okay, can you answer this or can you do that... and give it to them... so if it's a big question then it's... can the class answer this? Can they come together ... tell me what they've spent the last hour doing?"
	T04	"I don't think I do it with these students, but with my older ones we will discuss historiography together and look at big historical issues together"
	T02	"small things maybe they can do by themselves... but when it comes to an important point, or source... it's useful to stop and talk about it together to really drive it home"
Behaviour management	T04	"Some classes... I simply cannot trust to behave the way I want them to"
	T01	"when you give students the freedom to discuss then of course there's a natural concern about where that might go"
	T02	"I structure it very firmly... to keep on top of it all"
	T04	"A few weeks ago I had them in groups working together... when it came to the time to... present back to the class... one group had barely anything... they hadn't worked on anything... all that time and effort and they had wasted it... I was not happy"
	T03	"Behaviour management is something we have to keep on top of so it is always pressing in your mind about... what to do and where to be in the classroom"
<b>Teaching 'gap'</b>		
Variety in teaching	T01	"after this chat... and thinking about it... I do ... Sometimes pupils work in silence or I'm the one telling them what to do... and others... others they're off doing research projects or having pair chats... so... I don't think that it can be pinned down to one pedagogy... If I have to get firm and do some rote learn-

		ing because my students are... are nearly at their GCSE's and they don't know what they... need... to know [pause] then I'll do it. But I think in my lessons there are lots of different strategies... and I'd say it's by using different strategies we keep things interesting for the pupils... otherwise they would always know what to expect from... you know... from me and my lessons"
	T04	"It would be difficult for me to say I followed one style... that I followed one approach... I certainly agree that students need the opportunities... but I teach history in the way I learnt it... It is right to give students an opportunity to give their opinion of course... but should we you know, be giving an opportunity to discuss things which are historical fact? It becomes very difficult... some things do not need this... exploration... they just need... knowing"
	T02	"I like to change things up and introduce different tasks. Sometimes it gets boring doing the same thing every week... I've had that before with my GCSE students... filling in tables every week"
	T02	"If I can just go back... well... you know... putting in different tasks is so important, so they don't get bored... because if they're bored then they don't take the information in"
	T03	"I teach according to... you understand... the needs of my students and the topic... so sure, maybe if I had a class of all A-star students I would do whatever I wanted... but that's not the case!"
Exam necessities	T04	"We're almost finished the course content and then... it'll be a month or two of revision lessons... they usually follow the same structure with a recap quiz and a table or a worksheet to complete. Revision lessons are tough for everyone... trying to recap two years of work in two months is very tough going. So, it does become monotonous for me teaching and for them as well... but these exams are important, it has to be done."
	T01	"So, when I want to try something... it's usually with them ... because if the lesson goes badly... and they don't learn what I wanted them to learn... it's okay because there's time at the end of the year, or it doesn't really matter... because it's only me assessing them. And I can hold my hands up and say... I messed up in this one lesson... now in the upper years... there is that pressure and so they don't get the games or the independent research projects... or to go and learn outside. It's a lot more stressful... especially soon because they're going ... on study leave and they have to have it all done by then."
	T03	"It's exam-season... you know how it is... It is what it is"
	T03	"Even if they have an in-school assessment coming up... I have to change my teaching... I mean, part of our curriculum is interpreting questions"
Behaviour management	T04	"A few weeks ago I had them in groups working together... when it came to the time to... present back to the class... one group had barely anything... they hadn't worked on anything... all that time and effort and they had wasted it... I was not happy"
	T02	"It is disheartening... when you make these tasks and put a lot of effort into lesson planning... if they don't take to it... so it becomes easier to do things a certain way, a safer way"

Value within the classroom		
Passion students in	T01	"Yeah, definitely [pause] some of them really get on board, last year we had some great surgery ones... they find something as a group that excites them and the work... well you can see some of it on the wall over there... some pupils create some great... really great stuff when you let them."
	T03	"you do... you do hear things that you never thought of... and you know that history is about interpretations... so it's nice for me to hear their opinion... because I maybe hadn't thought of it before and... and then they feel like they're really onto something"
	T02	"well... in history it is... because history is about taking on multiple viewpoints... and you see it for example, we had a historical debate a few... well... back in November... and the kids really got into character... they loved it"
	T03	"certainly when... when they are talking... I don't really believe that any student enjoys working in silence... I don't believe that when they are talking they're always... doing what I wanted them to... but they like the freedom... and then they can talk about the work... whether they do or not."
	T04	"I mean... when you give them the chance... you can see them light up a bit"
	T01	"For the ones who love history especially... the ones who want to go on to do it at GCSE and A-Level, when they can use the stuff together... and they have the freedom... they are let loose a little more, and they enjoy that"
Part of wider pedagogical aim	T01	"I wouldn't ever... I don't think... just do one thing with my students... I'm not sure how that would even work?"
	T04	"If they do get to discuss and interact with one another... work in groups and what not... it'll be with other tasks in the lesson"
	T02	"I couldn't imagine a genuine secondary classroom with the use of just one pedagogy... especially one like this... I think kids need the structure as much as they need the freedom... So we do the discussions and the exploring... but it's alongside the essays and the written work"

### Further data relating to student themes:

Theme	Source	Data
<b>Working with Peers</b>		
Disruption	S01Y10A	"The boys that sit behind me just do not shut up... like even when we're working normally... they're always in trouble... I don't even want to think about if they were allowed to talk more."
	S02Y07A	"Last week I got sent out for talking too much, like... I do chat, I can't help it"
	S03Y07B	"if everyone is chatting it gets quite loud"
	S01Y07A	"We're really good at working together... it's nice to have someone next to you who you like and you can work with, but there are some lessons where I'm sat with someone who I couldn't work with and then I don't want to talk to them at all because they just put me off"
	S04Y10C	"some people say everything in the group, but then you have people who will sit there and do nothing"
Enjoy being in the classroom	S03Y07B	"In Mr [X]'s class he like... doesn't want us to talk so we get told off a lot... I don't want to go to his lessons... he's just really rude about it... I prefer it when like here, like we can talk to each other... nobody can do it in silence for like an hour it's mad... you know"
	S03Y07C	"I have fun in history, yeah. [Our teacher] gets us excited about it... we do lots of different stuff every lesson... we can talk about things... we watch videos... sometimes we have to do a lot of writing but it's better than other lessons"
	S01Y07B	"I like it here, it's better than some other lessons"
	S01Y10C	"I remember we did some group projects last year and they were so much fun. I got to work with my mates and you never do that really, so I actually wanted to go to lesson"
Pair-work	S04Y10A	"It depends who I'm sat next to, some classes I like it and others I don't... teachers don't really listen to who we want to sit next to"
	S02Y10B	"If we've been given pictures and stuff, it'll be between two of us to work together and look at them. It's important who you sit next to... because they're gonna be who you have to work with the whole year"
	S03Y07C	"I get on really well with [X] so it's great because I'm working with her but I can just like talk... about the work and stuff"
Help & support	S04Y07A	"I don't really like answering questions. I don't usually put my hand up because... be-cause if I get it wrong, I think I look stupid in front of everyone, and I don't want to look stupid."
	S01Y10C	"Working together... they sometimes keep me going, or remind me of things from other lessons that I've like, probably forgot about..."
	S03Y07C	"and then I don't mind asking her for help, because she's my friend and we have talked so much that it's okay"



History skills		
Help & support	S01Y07A	"We're really good at working together... it's nice to have someone next to you who you like and you can work with, but there are some lessons where I'm sat with someone who I couldn't work with and then I don't want to talk to them at all because they just put me off"
	S04Y07A	"I don't really like answering questions. I don't usually put my hand up because... because if I get it wrong, I think I look stupid in front of everyone, and I don't want to look stupid."
	S04Y10C	"You know when the teacher asks if anyone has any questions, and like nobody says anything... I've waited before... until I can have them to myself and ask them... it's just easier when they're talking to just you, and not everyone"
	S02Y10B	"I think our teacher does a pretty good job of making everyone comfortable... I know a couple people who don't like to ask questions but when you do, it's not like you get singled out for being an idiot"
	S03Y10A	"We're supposed to do this thing where we ask people around us for help first, it's bit stupid but I think it kinda works... I don't mind asking the people I sit near for help... they're all pretty nice"
Improved writing	S04Y10B	"I can definitely write a lot more... the essays we did in year nine were about a page or so... now I'm writing double that. I'm not saying that it's... any easier... but I can think of a lot more to write and how I should write it"
	S01Y07C	"I can write a lot more now than I did at primary... the teachers here want more and more from you"
	S03Y10A	"Essay structure is something that I think I've gotten better at in this class... when we look at pee paragraphs and all that... it makes things a bit clearer"
	S04Y10A	"Me too, it's mental how much more I can write, and bring in other stuff as well"
Teaching methods		
Pair-work	S01Y10C	"Working together... they sometimes keep me going, or remind me of things from other lessons that I've like, probably forgot about..."
	S02Y07C	"Our teacher wants us to chat about stuff together usually... especially when like... he's asked a question and nobody wants to answer... he'll tell us to think about it together and then he'll pick on someone"
Wide variety	S03Y07C	"I have fun in history, yeah. [Our teacher] gets us excited about it... we do lots of different stuff every lesson... we can talk about things... we watch videos... sometimes we have to do a lot of writing but it's better than other lessons"
	S01Y07B	"We do a lot of stuff, we've made some posters and like... done some acting and videos... but a lot of lessons are just like usual lessons it's just every now and then we do something really weird"
	S04Y10C	"I feel like we could do more stuff, because some lessons get a bit samey... but everyone is talking all the time about exams so what else are we gonna do"



Individual focus	S04Y10B	"I like group work but if we are working in a group, it's usually like... into my book... everyone has to write the same things on their own."
	S01Y07A	"I like to read my green form and see what I have to do to improve. We did an assessment just before Christmas and now I know how I need to improve"
	S03Y10C	"we actually sat down in assembly a few weeks ago and she told us that it's up to each of us to get the grade we deserve. There's a lot of pressure on each person"
Written focus	S04Y10B	"I like group work but if we are working in a group, it's usually like... into my book... everyone has to write the same things on their own."
	S02Y10B	"Our lessons um... they are quite similar. We will be told a bit about something, and then we'll write something. Maybe we'll also talk about it together. But every lesson we're writing, yeah. Learning objective, title, date and then at least a page of writing."
	S03Y10A/C	"Before we started our GCSE's things weren't as difficult. Do you remember we spent that lesson building bridges?" "Oh, yeah! That was so good... we don't get to do those things anymore... the lessons have changed since we started the exams" "... Yeah, it's a lot more about [the teacher] telling us what we need to do to improve, a lot of essay writing and such"
	S01Y07A	"I'm on my third workbook of the year... I write so much every lesson"
	S04Y07B	"I hate writing and we have to do so much of it. Even when we talk about everything we have to write everything it's the worst"