

Abstract

This study begins by outlining that while the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* is heavily constructivist in nature; it does however advocate that both didactic and progressive/constructivist approaches be used, where appropriate, by teachers. In the literature review a clear picture emerges that a mixed approach to teaching methodologies is perceived as best practice by authorities in the field of education who regard the argument of traditional/didactic versus progressive/constructivism as a false dichotomy.

Bearing this in mind, this mixed methods study uses both the questionnaire and interview to gauge the extent to which a mixed approach to teaching methodologies, as envisaged in the 1999 Curriculum, is being implemented in daily classroom practice; the study goes on to present the results of both qualitative and quantitative data elicited from thirty-five primary teachers and four principals in four different primary school types in County Cork. The views, attitudes and methodological practices of the respondents are analysed and discussed. Contradictions are evident however between teacher beliefs and what they claim to do in practice. The results of the study would appear to indicate that most teachers while professing their allegiance to the values of progressivism and constructivism, however when faced with the reality of curriculum overload, large classes and lack of in-service, time and resources, regularly opt to implement didactic practices and methodologies in their classrooms rather than a mixed approach to teaching methodologies.

The study concludes with a discussion of the factors, which appear to be preventing a more faithful implementation of a mixed teaching methodologies approach and makes recommendations for the redevelopment and reform of the 1999 Curriculum which is currently underway.