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University students' perceptions on developing constructivist learning approach in classroom settings

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated tertiary students' perceptions regarding constructivist learning in the context of higher education in Vietnam. It aimed to examine the general perceptions of university students towards constructivist learning and the effects of constructivist learning on students' learning outcomes. It also examined the conditions that make students more likely to embrace or resist these approaches. The study evaluated the engagement of students in problem-solving activities through the use of constructivist learning methods. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, the study involved a survey of 384 students from Hanoi Law University, using a researcher-made Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews of 20 students from the sample. While descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data, the qualitative data were thematically analyzed for common themes and patterns. The results indicate that although the participants acknowledge the benefits of constructivist methods, particularly in fostering critical thinking and problem-solving, there is still uncertainty about their ability to engage in a self-directed learning approach. The findings suggest that while the constructivist approach has been recognized, practical efforts have not been made in teaching practices, teacher training, and assessment methods to create an interactive, student-centered learning environment in Vietnam.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the landscape of education worldwide has undergone significant transformations, with a growing shift towards more student-centered, active learning environments. One of the most important factors for this paradigm shift is the constructivist learning theory, which highlights the active role of learners in constructing their understanding through experiences, interactions, and problem-solving [1]–[3]. Constructivism, as a pedagogical philosophy, is a departure from conventional pedagogies, which typically rely on rote memorization and passively engaging students in the learning process. The central tenet of constructivism is that knowledge is not simply transmitted from teacher to student but is constructed through engagement with content, collaboration with peers, and real-world application [4]–[6]. Constructivist principles have been successfully applied in many educational systems globally, particularly in Western countries, where education systems are often more flexible and innovative. Meanwhile, progressive

pedagogical practices prove challenging in developing countries such as Vietnam. Like many other developing nations, Vietnam has a deeply entrenched traditional education system that emphasizes teacher-led instruction, large class sizes, and standardized assessments [7]–[9]. The transformation towards constructivist learning is, therefore, considered a pedagogical change and a socio-cultural transformation as it requires changing educational standards, institutional infrastructure, and teacher preparation. These factors have to adapt to meet the demands of more interactive and dynamic learning requirements. Vietnam, with its rapidly developing economy and a growing emphasis on higher education, stands at the crossroads of educational reform. The nation has made significant strides in improving academic outcomes in recent decades, yet many higher education institutions still rely heavily on traditional teaching methods [10]–[12]. Even though university students need to be equipped with critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, the education system is still struggling to develop them. In this context, the introduction of constructivist learning approaches in university classrooms presents both opportunities and challenges.

In fact, the rationale for studying the implementation of constructivist learning in university classrooms in Vietnam is multi-faceted. First, there is a greater awareness that the traditional education model based on rote memorization and passive information intake is not fully equipping university leavers for the high demands of the modern workforce [13]–[15]. The emerging job market in Vietnam requires graduates to have specialized skills along with soft skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and adaptability. Constructivist learning, which emphasizes hands-on, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning experiences, can help students develop these essential skills [16]–[18]. Second, while constructivist learning has been successfully implemented in various Western educational systems, it remains relatively underexplored in developing countries like Vietnam [19]–[21]. While Vietnam has been progressing towards academic modernization, it still retains a traditional format of education with a heavy focus on lectures, examinations, and passive student roles in its universities. This conventional approach usually restricts students from engaging deeply with course material or developing critical and reflective thinking skills that will help them succeed in their academic and professional lives. On the other hand, the implementation of constructivist learning in university classrooms might promote active learning for students, allowing them to better engage with academic material on a deeper level, as well as acquire skills that are more relevant to the rapidly changing world today. Through approaches such as problem-based learning (PBL), group projects, case studies, and experiential learning, students can gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter and how it applies to real-world situations [22]–[24]. In addition, constructivist learning fosters collaboration, peer learning, and communication skills that are essential in the modern workforce.

Although constructivist learning has the potential to offer several advantages, its practical implementation in Vietnamese universities has encountered various obstacles. One of the most significant challenges is the entrenched nature of traditional educational practices [5], [25], [26]. For years, Vietnam's education system has been teacher-centered, with the teacher being the principal authority in the classroom, while students are expected to take in information passively. This model is deeply rooted in the culture of education and is reflected in the content and structure of university courses. A necessary renovation from the deeply embedded traditional model to a more constructivist model requires significant changes in terms of pedagogic practices, curriculum design, and institutional policies. In addition, many Vietnamese universities (especially public ones) are facing large class sizes and limited resources, which interferes with the successful implementation of such student-centered constructivist methods [3], [11], [27]. Group work, interactive discussions, and hands-on learning activities, which are core elements of constructivist pedagogy, often require smaller class sizes and more resources, which may not be readily available in many universities. Additionally, many instructors may not be trained in constructivist teaching methods and may lack the experience or confidence to adopt more interactive and student-centered approaches in their teaching [5], [6], [28]. However, the application of constructivist learning in Vietnamese institutions of higher education is imperative and has very significant potential.

With a focus on developing its human resources and enhancing the quality of graduates, adopting increasingly modern teaching pedagogies as a best practice will be crucial for students to graduate with competencies fit for a globalized market [6]. Moreover, the integration of constructivist approaches could contribute to a competitive advantage in the growing competition for high-quality education at a global level as Vietnam further integrates into the global educational field. This study explored constructivist learning in the university educational context in Vietnam in terms of students' constructivist learning perception, instructors' challenges in implementing constructivist pedagogies and the advantages of applying constructivist pedagogies at universities. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

i) What are university students' general perceptions of a constructivist learning approach in the classroom?
ii) How do students perceive the impact of constructivist methods on their learning outcomes?
iii) What factors influence students' acceptance or resistance to constructivist practices?

This research is important because it offers the potential for a holistic understanding of ways in which constructivist learning methods may be tailored for and applied to university classrooms in Vietnam. It can help policymakers and educators understand the potential advantages of constructivism in improving student learning outcomes. The study would inform more effective teaching strategies by exploring students' perceptions and experiences, which would, in turn, represent the changing demands of higher education in developing countries like Vietnam. Most importantly, the study has significant ramifications for other developing countries with similar educational systems, as it offers a practical solution for bringing philosophy into action and further strengthening constructivist practices in resource-constrained environments. In an era of globalization with a high demand for a skilled workforce, the successful implementation of progressive teaching methods (e.g., constructivism) can significantly improve the competitiveness of universities and their graduates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Perspective relating the definition of constructivist learning theory

Constructivist learning theory, deeply rooted in the work of cognitive theorists, such as Piaget [29], Vygotsky [30], and Bruner [31], emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own understanding of the world through experiences, social interactions, and problem-solving. Unlike traditional, teacher-centered models of education, constructivism posits that learners do not passively absorb knowledge from instructors but rather actively engage in the construction of knowledge based on their prior experiences, interactions with others, and the contexts in which learning occurs. This process of "knowledge construction" occurs through inquiry, exploration, and active problem-solving, which allows students to make sense of new information in ways that are personally meaningful and contextually relevant. Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that learners go through distinct stages of development and that their ability to understand the world evolves as they engage in activities that challenge their current understanding. According to Piaget [29], learners actively build knowledge through assimilation (incorporating new information into existing schemas) and accommodation (modifying existing schemas to integrate new information). Vygotsky [30], on the other hand, introduced the concept of the zone of proximal development, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. He argued that learners can achieve higher levels of understanding when they engage in guided interactions with more knowledgeable peers or instructors. Vygotsky's ideas highlight the importance of scaffolding - the support provided by teachers or more capable peers to help learners bridge the gap between what they can do independently and what they can do with support.

Constructivism's application to education has been further developed by Bruner [31], who emphasized the discovery learning process in which students actively construct knowledge through exploration and problem-solving rather than being passive recipients of information. Bruner [31] highlighted the importance of scaffolding in the learning process, where learners are provided with support that gradually diminishes as they become more proficient in the subject matter. Constructivism states that learning takes place through active learning, shared learning, and solving real-world problems. As such, it contrasts sharply with traditional pedagogies that focus on memorization and passive learning. Unlike direct instruction, which emphasizes rote memorization and surface-level understanding, constructivist teaching practices emphasize questioning, exploration, hypotheses creation and context-specific meaningful application of knowledge that aims at more profound understanding and the cultivation of critical, non-localized thinking skills.

2.2. Some viewpoints on constructivist learning in higher education

While constructivist learning principles have been widely applied in primary and secondary education, their adoption in higher education settings-particularly in developing countries-has been more gradual [5], [25], [26]. Nonetheless, universities around the world are increasingly adopting constructivist approaches to meet the growing demand for graduates who possess not only technical skills but also critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. One key area in which constructivist learning has been implemented is PBL. PBL is an instructional method where students work in groups to solve real-world problems, often with minimal direct instruction from the teacher [3], [11], [27]. This approach encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and to engage in collaborative problem-solving. Studies have proved that PBL enhances student engagement, knowledge retention, and critical thinking skills.

Similarly, inquiry-based learning (IBL) is another constructivist-based model that posts questions to students, requiring them to search and develop their knowledge through exploration and experimentation [7]–[9]. In higher education, IBL has been found to enhance students' ability to think critically, conduct research, and apply knowledge to real-world situations. Previous studies [5], [27] demonstrated that inquiry-based methods might result in more involvement and meaningful learning experiences compared to traditional lecture-based formats. Although the theory and benefits of constructivist learning as practiced in higher education institutions are generally accepted, using these methods in higher education institutions,

especially in developing countries, has its own challenges. Among the major obstacles to adopting constructivist approaches in university classrooms are large class sizes, limited resources, and inadequate teacher training [19]–[21]. Such problems become even more acute in developing countries, as traditional, teacher-centered instruction often takes our focus and leaves little space for active, student-centered learning.

2.3. Constructivism in developing countries: challenges and opportunities

Educational reforms based on constructivist principles confront tremendous challenges in developing nations such as Vietnam. One of the main barriers is the cultural preference for teacher-centered learning, which is often deeply ingrained in the educational system. In countries with large class sizes, the traditional lecture format remains dominant, as it is seen as the most practical and efficient way of delivering content to large number of students [32], [33]. Teachers in these contexts may get accustomed to "transmitting" knowledge to students rather than engaging them in the active, collaborative learning processes central to constructivism [5], [25], [26]. Furthermore, in Vietnam, there is a lack of teacher training in constructivist methods. The majority of university professors were trained in conventional academic frameworks and may have had little exposure to a student-centered approach. This lack of pedagogical training makes it difficult for instructors to adopt more interactive and inquiry-based teaching strategies [19]–[21]. Furthermore, the fact that most of the current evaluation methods revolve around memorization and standardized testing is not consistent with the goals of constructivist learning, further hindering the adoption of such methods.

Moreover, socio-economic factors may impose serious difficulties in enabling constructivist learning in developing countries. Group work, hands-on activities, and other student-centered teaching methods require resources such as classroom materials, technology, and smaller student-teacher ratios [7]–[9]. In many universities in developing countries, these resources are often scarce, limiting the ability of instructors to implement effective constructivist strategies. Furthermore, large class sizes, a feature of universities in many developing countries, including Vietnam, may create challenges for teachers to provide individualized assistance or develop interactive, student-centric learning settings [3], [11], [27]. First, constructivism's emphasis on collaboration and solution-oriented learning aligns with the demands of developing economies. Constructivist strategies promoting critical and creative thinking are essential for universities in developing countries to train students to overcome these issues. Moreover, many developing countries have embraced technological globalization in education, including Vietnam, which creates more opportunities for constructivist learning [34]–[36]. Online learning platforms, digital collaboration tools, and multimedia resources can facilitate IBL and enable students to engage in collaborative activities beyond the classroom. Technology can also help alleviate some of the logistical challenges associated with large class sizes by providing students with access to personalized learning materials and self-paced study resources.

2.4. Researching tertiary student perceptions of constructivist learning

Understanding students' perceptions of constructivist learning methods is one of the most important aspects of their adoption. Constructivist beliefs, attitudes of students, and perceptions of the learning environment significantly influence student engagement [16]–[18]. When constructivist approaches are perceived as interesting and relevant to students and their personal learning goals, they are more likely to engage in the process of learning actively. In contrast, students who are accustomed to traditional learning methods may resist constructivist approaches, particularly if they perceive them as less structured or more challenging to navigate. In a study by Chuang [32], it was found that students who were introduced to more interactive learning methods, such as cooperative learning and IBL, reported higher levels of motivation, engagement, and satisfaction [19]–[21]. Constructivist approaches can pose a challenge to students from more traditional educational backgrounds who often struggle with active learning practices as they may be unfamiliar to them. These students usually prefer teacher-led instruction with significant roles and expectations. In these contexts, instructors must provide clear guidance, support, and scaffolding to help students transition to a more active role in their learning. In the context of Vietnam, students who come from an educational background where exams and memorization are the main focus, sometimes perceive the constructivist approach as something different [5], [25], [26]. Therefore, understanding how students perceive and respond to these changes will be crucial to the development of strategies to help support the successful adoption of constructivist teaching practices.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

The research was a cross-sectional study, using a mixed-methods approach to investigate university students' perceptions of the use of constructivist learning approaches in classrooms in Vietnam. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, and challenges with constructivist methods. To ensure sample diversity, convenience

sampling was used to select students from different faculties at Hanoi Law University, Vietnam, to capture a broad range of perspectives. For the convenience of the research, 384 students were chosen to participate in the study. The survey questionnaire assessed students' attitudes toward constructivist learning, their perceptions of its effectiveness, and the challenges they confronted. There are 45 Likert scale questions were used to quantify responses to get deeper insights into students' experiences. A subset of 20 students was selected for semi-structured interviews. Individual interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of students' perceptions, their specific challenges, and suggestions for how the implementation of constructivist methods could be improved. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify trends and correlations. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were coded and analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and patterns in students' feedback. Statistical applications such as SPSS v.27 and NVivo v.12 were implemented to address the data analysis.

3.2. Participants

The participants were randomly chosen from Hanoi Law University during the 2024-2005 academic year by randomly floating the questionnaires. The demographic distribution of a sample was collected using convenience sampling, a non-scientific sampling method. The sample comprised 384 students, with a significant gender disparity, as 73.4% were female and only 26.6% were male. Regarding academic year distribution, sophomores (38.0%) and juniors (38.3%) constituted the majority, while freshmen (15.1%) and seniors (8.6%) were underrepresented. Additionally, student residence was predominantly rural (44.0%), followed by urban (33.1%), and mountainous/remote areas (22.9%). The higher proportion of female students in Vietnam is typically favored for social sciences. The similarity is for the senior sample as these students are usually in the internship period to prepare for graduation.

3.3. Research instruments

The process of designing the survey questionnaire followed a structured approach to ensure reliability and validity. At first, 60 five-point Likert scale statements were carefully designed to assess university students' perceptions of constructivist learning approaches in classroom settings. These statements were formulated based on attitudinal criteria [37] and categorized into five key dimensions: student engagement and motivation (10 statements), critical thinking and problem-solving (10 statements), learning experience (10 statements), teacher's role (10 statements), and assessment and evaluation (5 statements). Each statement required the respondents to express their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale, with response options within five scales, such as 1 (strong disagreement), 2 (disagreement), 3 (neutrality), 4 (agreement), and 5 (strong agreement). A pilot study was implemented to ensure the questionnaire's reliability, and the results revealed strong internal consistency. The research statements were only selected Cronbach's alpha values [38], which ranged from .71 to .91, to confirm the questionnaire's effectiveness in measuring the intended constructs. Another six aspects of semi-structured interviews were designed to gather in-depth insights from university students about their perceptions and experiences with constructivist learning approaches in the classroom. They examined the participants' viewpoints of engagement and learning experience, active learning and critical thinking, teacher's role, self-directed learning, perceptions of assessments, and motivation and interest. These topics encouraged the participants to express their personal experiences, challenges, and the benefits they gained from constructivist learning methods. The two research instruments were sent to three experts on educational psychology for content validation before the actual implementation.

3.4. Research procedures

The research procedures were carefully conducted to ensure ethical and methodological rigor. Initially, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the university administrators to confirm that the research was in accordance with institutional requirements. In this regard, printed copies of the survey questionnaire were hand-delivered to the respondents, and the collected data were thoroughly screened to verify their validity and ensure quality responses. The 384 expected samples were selected correctly, and the rest were set aside. Simultaneously, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants who expressed a willingness to participate and consented to recorded interviews. These interviews were carried out directly with each participant, allowing in-depth exploration of their stances. Both data collection methods were designed to complement each other, contributing to the overall reliability and depth of the research findings.

3.5. Statistical tools

The study used quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches to provide thorough insight into the findings. Quantitative data from the survey questionnaires were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics v.27, utilizing descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies and means. Additionally, means and standard deviations were calculated to provide a summary of the data according to the interval scales, such as

1.00-1.80 (strong disagreement), 1.81-2.60 (disagreement), 2.61-3.40 (uncertainty), 3.41-4.20 (agreement), and 4.21-5.00 (strong agreement). The independent-samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare means and evaluate differences between groups, allowing for a recognition of statistically significant differences between varying categories. For the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews, NVivo v.12 was used to facilitate thematic analysis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' responses. This mixed-method approach ensured a balanced analysis by integrating numerical insights with qualitative interpretations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides a detailed analysis of students' perspectives on the constructivist learning approach. The data is derived from a sample of 384 participants. Concerning the levels of engagement and motivation, the data describe how the subjects perceive the efficacy of different constructivist approaches in improving their learning process. Specifically, the results reveal a general disagreement with the statement that constructivist methods lead to greater engagement and interest in the subject. For example, the item "I feel more engaged when I am actively involved in the learning process" has a mean of 2.49 (SD=.850), and "constructivist learning methods make me more interested in the subject" has a mean of 2.48 (SD=.620). These low mean scores, accompanied by moderate standard deviations, indicate that students are primarily unconvinced that constructivist strategies-such as active participation and IBL-improve their interest or engagement. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Kantar [35], who noted that students accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered instruction might initially struggle to adapt to the more student-centered approach of constructivism.

However, the data also reveals agreement with certain aspects of the constructivist learning approach. For example, the statement "I enjoy learning through group discussions and collaborative activities" has a mean of 3.53 (SD=.750), and "I find learning through hands-on activities more interesting than traditional lectures" has a mean of 3.52 (SD=.698). These results indicate that the participants acknowledge collaborative learning and hands-on experiences. Such activities, which are central to constructivist theory, have been found to foster deeper engagement by encouraging students to participate actively in their learning. On the other hand, several items reflect uncertainty among students, particularly regarding self-direction and personal responsibility in learning. Statements such as "when learning in a constructivist environment, I feel motivated to explore topics on my own" (M=2.95, SD=.841) and "constructivist learning makes me feel more responsible for my learning" (M=2.92, SD=.796) suggest that students are unsure about their ability to take full ownership of their learning. This uncertainty is consistent with findings from Pritchard and Woollard [3], who argued that students often struggle with the autonomy required in constructivist environments, especially if they have not been prepared for self-directed learning.

Regarding the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which provide insight into their perceptions of how constructivist methods impact their ability to think critically, solve problems, and connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, the data reveal that one prominent trend is that students generally agree that constructivist learning supports their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For instance, the item "I feel more confident in solving complex problems after engaging in constructivist learning activities" has a mean of 3.49 (SD=.710), indicating a positive response. Students also agreed that constructivist methods help them connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications (M=3.55, SD=.698) and strengthen their analytical thinking skills (M=3.47, SD=.695). These results support the research conducted by Gangwar [15], which found that employing active learning and problem-solving exercises in a constructivist environment can greatly augment the critical thinking skills of students. Additionally, students expressed agreement with statements like "constructivist learning methods encourage me to ask more questions about the material" (M=3.51, SD=.711) and "I am more likely to analyze information critically after engaging in constructivist learning" (M=3.49, SD=.681). These high mean scores suggest that students value the active, inquiry-based nature of constructivism, which encourages them to ask questions and engage in deeper analysis, which is in line with Kwan and Wong [22].

However, there are areas of uncertainty, particularly regarding the impact of group projects and creativity on problem-solving skills. The item "learning through group projects improves my problem-solving skills" (M=2.97, SD=.815) received a lower score, reflecting mixed opinions on the effectiveness of group work for enhancing problem-solving. Similarly, "I am encouraged to think creatively in a constructivist classroom" (M=3.03, SD=.825) shows some uncertainty, suggesting that not all students feel encouraged to be creative in such environments. These results are consistent with the findings of Pritchard and Woollard [3], who reported that although constructivist approaches tend to foster critical thinking, they may not enhance the creativity of all students, at least without further direction. Consequently, the results highlight the significance of creating constructivist learning experiences that facilitate individual and collaborative problem-solving and foster creativity.

Table 1. Student's perspectives towards constructivist learning approach

Constructivist learning approach under student viewpoints	N	Mean	SD	Description
Student engagement and motivation				
I feel more engaged when I am actively involved in the learning process.	384	2.49	.850	Disagreement
Constructivist learning methods make me more interested in the subject.	384	2.48	.620	Disagreement
I enjoy learning through group discussions and collaborative activities.	384	3.53	.750	Agreement
When learning in a constructivist environment, I feel motivated to explore topics on my own.	384	2.95	.841	Uncertainty
Active learning methods help me stay focused during class.	384	3.03	.842	Uncertainty
I prefer to solve problems on my own rather than just being given solutions by the teacher.	384	2.98	.790	Uncertainty
I find learning through hands-on activities more interesting than traditional lectures.	384	3.52	.698	Agreement
I am more likely to participate in class if I am given opportunities to work with my peers.	384	2.96	.807	Uncertainty
Constructivist learning makes me feel more responsible for my learning.	384	2.92	.796	Uncertainty
I feel more excited about learning when I am involved in real-world problem-solving.	384	2.99	.811	Uncertainty
Critical thinking and problem-solving				
Constructivist learning encourages me to think critically about the content.	384	3.28	.688	Uncertainty
I feel more confident in solving complex problems after engaging in constructivist learning activities.	384	3.49	.710	Agreement
Constructivist approaches help me connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications.	384	3.55	.698	Agreement
Learning through group projects improves my problem-solving skills.	384	2.97	.815	Uncertainty
I am encouraged to think creatively in a constructivist classroom.	384	3.03	.825	Uncertainty
I feel that my analytical thinking skills are strengthened by constructivist methods.	384	3.47	.695	Agreement
Constructivist learning methods encourage me to ask more questions about the material.	384	3.51	.711	Agreement
I am more likely to analyze information critically after engaging in constructivist learning.	384	3.49	.681	Agreement
I enjoy applying what I've learned to solve real-life problems in class.	384	3.48	.775	Agreement
I believe constructivist learning methods help me think more independently.	384	2.99	.809	Uncertainty
Learning experience				
Constructivist learning methods make the classroom environment more dynamic.	384	3.52	.830	Agreement
I find constructivist teaching methods more enjoyable than traditional lecture-based methods.	384	4.00	.795	Agreement
I feel that constructivist learning methods provide more opportunities to interact with my peers.	384	3.51	.729	Agreement
The use of case studies and practical scenarios enhances my learning experience.	384	3.00	.838	Uncertainty
I feel more comfortable asking questions in a constructivist learning environment.	384	2.95	.813	Uncertainty
In a constructivist classroom, I have more control over my learning process.	384	2.47	.790	Disagreement
I prefer learning through exploration and discovery rather than receiving direct instruction from the teacher.	384	3.99	.803	Agreement
The opportunity to work on long-term projects in groups is one of the benefits of constructivist learning.	384	2.48	.672	Disagreement
Constructivist learning encourages me to reflect on my own understanding of the content.	384	3.00	.803	Uncertainty
I find collaborative learning more beneficial in helping me understand difficult concepts.	384	2.49	.691	Disagreement
Teacher's role				
My instructors effectively support me in a constructivist learning environment.	384	2.47	.770	Disagreement
The teacher's role in a constructivist classroom is to guide, not to provide all the answers.	384	2.49	.501	Disagreement
I feel that my teacher's feedback in constructivist learning activities is more useful than in traditional settings.	384	3.52	.580	Agreement
Teachers in a constructivist classroom are more likely to facilitate discussions rather than lecture.	384	2.52	.800	Disagreement
I appreciate when teachers encourage me to think and learn independently.	384	2.52	.850	Disagreement
I believe that constructivist methods help my instructor better understand my learning needs.	384	2.93	.826	Uncertainty
In a constructivist classroom, my teacher encourages me to explore different perspectives.	384	2.54	.699	Disagreement
The teacher creates a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for growth.	384	2.50	.701	Disagreement
I feel more supported by teacher when working on group projects in a constructivist classroom.	384	2.91	.804	Uncertainty
Teachers in constructivist classrooms encourage to collaborate and share my ideas with others.	384	2.51	.851	Disagreement
Assessment and evaluation				
I believe that assessment methods in constructivist learning are more aligned with my actual understanding of the subject.	384	2.51	.801	Disagreement
In a constructivist classroom, I feel that I am evaluated based on my learning process rather than just my final exam scores.	384	2.45	.798	Disagreement
Constructivist learning allows me to demonstrate my understanding in ways other than just through exams.	384	2.99	.824	Uncertainty
The focus on project-based assessment in a constructivist classroom helps me develop practical skills.	384	2.48	.725	Disagreement
I feel that my progress in constructivist learning environments is measured in a more holistic way.	384	2.46	.699	Disagreement
Valid N (listwise)	384			

As for the learning experiences, one of the most significant findings, as seen from Table 1, is that students agree that constructivist methods contribute to a dynamic classroom environment (M=3.52, SD=.830), making the learning experience more engaging. This is consistent with the research by Pritchard and Woollard [3], who emphasized that constructivist learning fosters an active classroom atmosphere, promoting student engagement. Additionally, students found constructivist teaching more enjoyable than traditional lecture-based methods (M=4.00, SD=.795), which supports the argument that hands-on, student-centered learning can be more appealing and motivating than conventional methods.

Furthermore, the students perceive that constructivist methods facilitate more peer interaction (M=3.51, SD=.729), reflecting the collaborative nature of constructivist classrooms where learning is often achieved through group discussions and projects. However, uncertainty is observed regarding the use of case studies and practical scenarios, with a mean of 3.00 (SD=.838). This would indicate that, although some students appreciate the link improved between theory and practice, they do not necessarily see it as adding to their learning experience.

On the other hand, there are areas of disagreement in the responses, particularly regarding the level of control over the learning process and the benefits of long-term group projects. The statement "in a constructivist classroom, I have more control over my learning process" received a low mean score of 2.47 (SD=.790), indicating that students may feel a lack of autonomy in such environments, contrary to the principles of constructivism. Similarly, the statement "the opportunity to work on long-term projects in groups is one of the benefits of constructivist learning" (M=2.48, SD=.672) reflects mixed opinions, suggesting that some students may not fully appreciate or find value in long-term collaborative projects. As such, these findings indicate that constructivist methods may need to be carefully structured to ensure that students feel empowered and fully engaged in the learning process.

For the teacher's role in a constructivist learning environment, Table 1 shows disagreement with several statements related to the teacher's role in constructivism. For example, "my instructors effectively support me in a constructivist learning environment" (M=2.47, SD=.770) and "the teacher's role in a constructivist classroom is to guide, not to provide all the answers" (M=2.49, SD=.501) received low mean scores, indicating that students feel their instructors may not be fully adopting the guiding role envisioned in constructivist frameworks. This aligns with findings from Krahenbuhl [36], who observed that teachers often struggle to shift from a traditional, authoritative approach to a more facilitative one in constructivist settings. In contrast, there is agreement with the statement, "I feel that my teacher's feedback in constructivist learning activities is more useful than in traditional settings" (M=3.52, SD=.580), suggesting that students value constructive, feedback-driven learning over traditional approaches. This finding highlights the importance of timely, formative feedback in supporting students' learning in constructivist classrooms, which has been emphasized by Akpan and Beard [8].

However, there is also uncertainty regarding the statement, "I believe that constructivist methods help my instructor better understand my learning needs" (M=2.93, SD=.826). While some students seem to think that constructivist methods help teachers better understand their needs, the mixed responses indicate that this may not be universally felt, possibly due to a lack of personalized attention or effective communication channels in the classroom. Several other items reflect disagreement regarding the teacher's role in promoting independent learning and exploration. For instance, students disagreed with statements like "teachers in a constructivist classroom are more likely to facilitate discussions rather than lecture" (M=2.52, SD=.800) and "I appreciate when teachers encourage me to think and learn independently" (M=2.52, SD=.850). These results suggest that students may not always feel empowered to engage in self-directed learning or collaborative discussions as promoted by constructivist principles. Overall, these findings suggest the importance of providing teachers with additional professional development and support in implementing these constructivist strategies.

Concerning the students' perspectives on assessment and evaluation in constructivist learning environments, Table 1 indicates disagreement with several statements related to assessment practices in constructivist classrooms. For example, statements "I believe that assessment methods in constructivist learning are more aligned with my actual understanding of the subject" (M=2.51, SD=.801) and "in a constructivist classroom, I feel that I am evaluated based on my learning process rather than just my final exam scores" (M=2.45, SD=.798) reflect a tendency among students to feel that assessments in such environments may not effectively measure their understanding or focus on the learning process. These results suggest that despite the emphasis in constructivism on formative assessment and ongoing learning, students may not always perceive assessments in this way. Additionally, the statement "the focus on project-based assessment in a constructivist classroom helps me develop practical skills" (M=2.48, SD=.725) shows disagreement, indicating that students may not find project-based assessments as beneficial for skill development. Furthermore, "I feel that my progress in constructivist learning environments is measured in a more holistic way" (M=2.46, SD=.699) reveals a general lack of confidence in the holistic approach to assessment in constructivist settings. One statement, "constructivist learning allows me to demonstrate my understanding in ways other than just through exams" (M=2.99, SD=.824), shows uncertainty, suggesting that while students acknowledge alternative methods of demonstration, they are unsure of how well these are integrated into the assessment process. These results highlight the need for more effective and transparent assessment practices that align with the principles of constructivism.

Table 2 compares the differences in perspectives between genders on various aspects of constructivist learning, including student engagement and motivation, critical thinking, learning experience, teacher's role, and assessment and evaluation. The results show no significant gender differences in engagement and

motivation, critical thinking, or assessment methods, with t-tests revealing high p-values (Sig.>.05) across these categories. For instance, the mean difference for student engagement and motivation was .02837 (Sig.=.914), and for critical thinking and problem-solving was -.24781 (Sig.=.278), indicating that gender does not influence these aspects of the learning experience. Despite significant variance in the learning experience (F=12.533, Sig.=.000), t-tests still showed no significant difference (Sig.=.671), and similar results were found for the teacher's role, where students of different genders did not perceive a difference in how teachers facilitated learning (t=.156, Sig.=.876). The assessment and evaluation aspect also showed no significant gender-based difference (t=.763, Sig.=.446). These findings suggest that, regardless of gender, students share similar views on the effectiveness and structure of constructivist learning environments. This is consistent with research [8], [10], suggesting that constructivist methods benefit all students similarly, regardless of gender.

Table 3 compares the differences in students' perspectives on various aspects of constructivist learning across academic years. The data presents the results of one-way ANOVAs to examine if there are any significant differences in student engagement and motivation, critical thinking and problem-solving, learning experience, and teacher's role and assessment between different academic years. For student engagement and motivation, the F value is .575 (Sig.=.631), indicating no significant difference across academic years. Similarly, in critical thinking and problem-solving, the F value is 1.142 (Sig.=.332), suggesting that there are no significant differences in how students across different academic years perceive their ability to think critically or solve problems. These findings imply that engagement, motivation, and critical thinking are consistent across academic years.

In terms of learning experience, the F value is .906 (Sig.=.438), which also shows no significant differences. This result aligns with previous studies [7], [15], [21], indicating that students from various academic years may have similar perceptions of the overall learning environment in constructivist classrooms. Similarly, the F value is also .610 (Sig.=.609), showing no significant differences in students' perceptions of the teacher's role and assessment effectiveness between academic years. However, in critical thinking and problem-solving, the F value is 2.112 (Sig.=.098), which is approaching statistical significance but still does not meet the typical threshold of .05. This suggests that while there might be slight differences in how different academic years perceive their problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities, these differences are not statistically significant. These findings indicate that constructivist teaching methods significantly impact different academic years.

Table 2. Comparing the differences between gender and their perspectives

Profile comparison		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference
Student engagement and motivation	Equal variances assumed	.950	.330	.109	382	.914	.02837	.26104
	Equal variances not assumed			.106	171.724	.915	.02837	.26690
Critical thinking and problem-solving	Equal variances assumed	2.886	.090	-1.09	382	.278	-.24781	.22814
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.02	160.825	.308	-.24781	.24234
Learning experience	Equal variances assumed	12.533	.000	.426	382	.671	.11264	.26462
	Equal variances not assumed			.489	241.287	.625	.11264	.23024
Teacher's role	Equal variances assumed	.075	.785	.156	382	.876	.03254	.20805
	Equal variances not assumed			.159	183.965	.874	.03254	.20501
Assessment and evaluation	Equal variances assumed	.600	.439	.763	382	.446	.11535	.15119
	Equal variances not assumed			.774	183.700	.440	.11535	.14909

Table 3. Comparing the differences between academic years and their perspectives

Factor comparison		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Student engagement and motivation	Between groups	8.818	3	2.939	.575	.631
	Within groups	1941.015	380	5.108		
	Total	1949.833	383			
Critical thinking and problem-solving	Between groups	10.615	3	3.538	.906	.438
	Within groups	1483.344	380	3.904		
	Total	1493.958	383			
Learning experience	Between groups	9.607	3	3.202	.610	.609
	Within groups	1995.018	380	5.250		
	Total	2004.625	383			
Teacher's role	Between groups	11.068	3	3.689	1.142	.332
	Within groups	1227.557	380	3.230		
	Total	1238.625	383			
Assessment and evaluation	Between groups	10.740	3	3.580	2.112	.098
	Within groups	644.299	380	1.696		
	Total	655.039	383			

5. CONCLUSION

The study explored university students' perceptions of constructivist learning approaches. The findings showed that students appreciate the benefits of constructivist methods in developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, but there are varying opinions about their efficacy in instilling engagement and motivation. Many students expressed doubt that they felt they could take complete ownership of their learning, indicating a gap in readiness for self-directed learning that is central to constructivist approaches. Nonetheless, students generally appreciated interactive activities such as group discussions and hands-on learning, which are integral to the constructivist model. However, they felt that traditional teaching methods, particularly lectures, often dominate their academic experiences, leaving them less engaged and motivated to participate actively. These findings indicate that while constructivist methods can improve students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, students may need more support and scaffolding to embrace self-directed learning and the autonomy it requires fully.

More specifically, regarding the teacher's role, students felt that the instructors did not fully assume the guiding and facilitating role as described by constructivists. This dissatisfaction probably mirrors the difficulty in moving from a teacher-centered to a student-centered, which requires far more challenging practices. Additionally, the results showed that students struggled to adapt to the fluid and changeable learning space a constructivist approach advocate. Although valued, group projects and collaborative work did not always result in improved problem-solving skills, and some students felt they were not encouraged to be creative in these settings. Moreover, while exploring assessment issues, students questioned assessment methods and exhibited a preference for traditional exams and standardized tests because constructivist assessments were perceived to be inadequate in measuring students' understanding and reflecting on the learning process. These concerns suggest that assessment methods in constructivist classrooms need to be more transparent and aligned with the learning outcomes that constructivism seeks to achieve.

Despite these challenges, the study highlights the potential benefits of constructivist learning in improving students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, all of which are essential for success in today's rapidly changing job market. To effectively implement constructivism in Vietnamese universities, several strategies must be adopted. This involves things like ensuring that instructors get the appropriate training to move away from the traditional lecture-based approach to teaching toward more interactive, student-centered techniques. Additionally, universities should provide more resources and create smaller class sizes to support hands-on and collaborative learning. In addition, assessment practices should also be aligned with the principles of constructivism so that what is measured is a direct reflection of the quantity and quality of student participation and learning as opposed to the outcome of a final, summative exam. Overall, constructivist learning presents a significant opportunity for transforming education in Vietnam, but this method requires a lot of persistence of teachers and students in practice in new learning environments and methods.

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C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
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R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data availability is not applicable to this paper as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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