

Never Have I Ever... Struggled to Explain Constructionism

(and What to Do About It!)

Giorgia Bissoli^{1,2}, Agnese Del Zozzo¹, Francesca Fiore^{1,3}, Alberto Montresor¹, Giulia Paludo^{1,4}, Marta Valentini¹, and David Zikovitz¹

¹ University of Trento, Italy

² Verona Fablab

³ Glow

⁴ University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia

Abstract

This workshop addresses a recurring challenge in constructionist communities: how to effectively communicate to non-experts, such as school teachers or policymakers what constructionism is. Despite its strong theoretical foundations (Papert, 1980; Harel & Papert, 1991), constructionism often resists simple explanations, especially in non-academic or informal contexts. Our workshop employs a playful and participatory format inspired by the game *Never Have I Ever...* to support educators, researchers, and practitioners in sharing communication challenges and collaboratively building strategies to overcome them. By engaging in structured storytelling, reflective dialogue, and collaborative planning, participants will prototype outreach strategies or conceptual frameworks. The workshop is itself constructionist in design: it invites participants to reflect on their own experiences, construct shared meaning, and build actionable tools through collective engagement. This approach aligns with Papert's vision of learning-by-doing and emphasizes the importance of social negotiation and context in knowledge-building. The outcomes of the workshop will contribute to a broader effort to expand the reach and impact of constructionist ideas in diverse educational settings.

Keywords and Phrases: Constructionism, Science communication, Educators, Reflective practice, Design-based research

Workshop Description: Scope, Motivation, and Background

The scope of this workshop is to improve our collective ability to explain and disseminate constructionism principles to non-specialists, particularly in educational settings. The motivation stems from our repeated experience of communication barriers when trying to “translate” constructionism into everyday pedagogical practice, especially with teachers neglecting its theoretical roots.





Figure 1: Informal but meaningful: “*Never Have I Ever*” moments spark shared reflection.

Despite constructionism’s rich and well-established theoretical foundation (Papert, 1980; Ackermann, 2001; Kafai et al., 2009), its practical dissemination remains uneven. This is particularly evident beyond academic settings, where the use of specialized language or overly theoretical explanations may hinder broader engagement. By creating a space for reflective storytelling and collaborative design, we aim to surface these communication frictions and generate pragmatic, context-aware dissemination strategies.

The format includes four phases:

1. Storytelling through provocations based on *Never Have I Ever...* prompts: some sentences (formulated in terms of “Never have I ever”, e.g. *Never have I ever... tried to explain constructionism to a non-expert;... introduced constructionist ideas in unexpected contexts;... faced resistance when promoting constructionism*) will be distributed to the participants as a stimulus to share their experiences. The result of the first phase will be a list of specific difficulties to be faced.
2. Collective reflection based on the Reflective Team methodology (Andersen, 1991). Participants will articulate possible solutions to the difficulties outlined. The outcome of the second phase will be possible strategies for overcoming the identified obstacles to the spread of constructionism.
3. Prototype development, where participants collaboratively draft an initial dissemination plan, which may take the form of a prototype communication strategy, an actionable outreach idea, or a conceptual model for introducing constructionism in non-expert settings.
4. Revision and finalization of the outcomes, will be completed after the workshop, during which the authors will collect the prototypes, revise them, and distribute them to participants for future experimentation.

This workshop contributes to the community by framing communication itself as a constructionist challenge: it is not just about what we say, but about how we build shared understanding through active participation.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge financial support under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), Mission 4, Component 2, Investment 1.1, Call for tender No. 104 published on 2.2.2022 by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MUR), funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU– Project “Learning Informatics” (CUP E53D23007720006) Grant Assign. Decree No. 959 adopted on 22/04/2022 by the Italian Ministry of University and Research.

References

- Papert, S. (1980). *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas*. Harvester.
- Harel, I., & Papert, S. (Eds.). (1991). *Constructionism*. Ablex Publishing.
- Ackermann, E. (2001). Piaget’s constructivism, Papert’s constructionism: What’s the difference? *Future of learning group publication*, 5(3), 438.
- Kafai, Y. B., Peppler, K., & Chapman, R. (Eds.). (2009). *The Computer Clubhouse: Constructionism and Creativity in Youth Communities*. Teachers College Press.
- Andersen, T. (1991). *The Reflecting Team: Dialogues and Dialogues about the Dialogues*. W W Norton & Co.
- Salanci, L. (2001) *Networking in Logo (style: Normal + Italic)*. In Proceedings of EuroLogo 2001. Edited by G. Futschek. Linz, August. pp. 67 – 74. (style: Normal)