Section 1: Child Centred Approach of teaching

Keywords

Child centred pedagogy

Problem based learning

Child centred approach (CCA) engages learners in decision making, discussion, critical thinking and working out problems. Learners develop interpersonal and leadership skills through involvement in various group activities. The CCA approaches enable learners to develop skills of writing, listening, speaking, and note taking and reporting. The use of CCA entails the following:

the starting point is the *learners’ existing knowledge,* skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school;

the *natural curiosity*and eagerness of all young people *to learn*to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks;

the *learners’ perspective*needs to be appreciated and considered in the work of the school; learners should be empowered *to think and take responsibility* not only for their own, but for another’s learning and total development;

learners should be involved *as partners*in, rather than receivers of educational growth.

1. **Advantages of child centred approach**

**More personal involvement:** The teacher now has time to develop a more personal interest in each pupil. (S)he can learn strengths and weaknesses, encouraging the first and playing down the second. The teacher can establish a proper relationship with each pupil.

**More and better materials*:*** The teacher will have time to observe how well the materials are working in class – both the formal materials and ones developed by the teacher. Materials for activities can be used again and again, with improvements and changes being made as required.

**Continuous assessment*:*** The teacher can assess each pupil individually, including oral work, written work, activities, reading skills, classroom interaction, and personal development and so on.

The most able and the least able pupils can be given the attention they deserve.

**Compensatory Teaching:** It is not always the least able students who need compensatory teaching in every area ofthe curriculum. A pupil may have been absent, (s)he may lack well-developed psychomotorskills, a topic has not been understood (this can happen to the most brilliantpupil), and so on. The teacher can plan and do compensatory teaching during ordinarylessons.

The learner-centred classroom has the advantages listed above, and it offers teachers an opportunity to develop elements of their pupils other than just those concerned with the acquisition of knowledge. While the work is challenging, many teachers will discover that they can develop their skills far more fully than the traditional classroom. This approach is different, effective and more powerful in promoting learning. Like any method that is new and different, it must be learned, practised and perfected by the teacher. It is not a magic formula; it is an important development in education worldwide.

1. **Principles of child centred approach of teaching**

Child centered pedagogy is where learners are put at the centre of the education process. It places the responsibility of learning upon learners themselves. Child centered teaching represents a paradigm shift from traditional teaching methods by focusing on how students learn instead of how teachers teach. However, challenging us to ask the rarely heard question, “How can I improve my students’ learning?” instead of the often asked “How can I improve my teaching?” **Weimer (2002)** outlines the key principles of learner-centered teaching as follows:

assume that students are capable learners who will blossom as power shifts to a more egalitarian classroom;

use content not as a collection of isolated facts, but as a way for students to critically think about the big questions in the field;

change the role of teacher from sole authoritarian to fellow traveler in search of knowledge;

return the responsibility for learning to the students, so that they can understand their learning strengths and weaknesses and feel self-directed in their knowledge quest;

utilize assessment measures not just to assign grades, but as our most effective tools to promote learning.

The result of this paradigm shift is that teachers become co-learners with students, thus blurring the categorical distinction between these two groups. The broad learner-centered paradigm encapsulates our current understanding of the “best practices” in teaching, including an emphasis on active learning, problem-based learning and, more generally, a thoughtful understanding of what the best teachers actually do in their classrooms.

Active participatory methods are used to achieve the curriculum objectives and learning and teaching are considered to be a two-way process. The teacher and learners are important sources of knowledge. Using leaner-centered teaching method doesn’t mean that students are left to do whatever they feel like or leaving them to make whatever sense they can from any experience. This approach values learners and their ideas and it aims at making students independent learners.

The approach focuses on the development of the ‘whole’ child. It responds to the needs of the learners, their abilities, interest and learning styles. The teacher creates an environment that motivates learners to discover new skills and knowledge using all the senses (sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell and even our sixth sense, which is intuition. Also, the teacher plays the role of helping learners to use all their senses and apply them to acquire knowledge and skills thereby not only meet the curriculum objectives but also prepare them for life.

### Activity 1 🖉

Outline 4 advantages of child centred approach of teaching to a teacher

1. As a classroom teacher, in which areas of your teaching do you think research may be needed?

Feedback

*If you carefully read and understood the above section , you can now do this activity. Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this block.*

Section 2: Making a Lesson Child – Centred

Keywords

Teacher centred classroom

Child centred classroom

Children can grasp the material imparted to them if they become responsible for their own learning. However, this requires the teacher to make a lesson child centred. The following are some of the ways through which a lesson can be made child centred:

***Get learners actively involved:*** This means exactly what is says: get learners to do things in class. Learners who sit passively in front of a teacher who talks at them for the whole lesson are not actively participating in a lesson. Learners do not always have to be conducting experiments, presenting topics, or giving reports. They can also be actively involved by asking questions, having discussions, relating their own experiments and so on to the class. Learner centred education encourages interaction between all the class members, including the teacher. *Encourage trial-and-error learning*: Establish an atmosphere that allows earners to learn by their mistakes. Don't let it worryyou that learners do not get everything right the first time. Encourage them to keeptrying until they find the solution to a problem.

***Give clear guidelines:*** Make sure that the aims and objectives of any learning exercise are clear from thebeginning so that the learners' activities remain focused at all times and frustration isavoided or kept to a minimum.

***Be flexible:*** Teachers need to be flexible and prepared to change according to new requirements andchallenges facing them. Teachers also need to be flexible enough to meet the specialneeds of their learners. Each classroom, learner, teacher and learning situation isdifferent, so often the teacher needs to make special arrangements in order to makehis/her lessons successful. A teacher who is blind to see these differences and whoteacher the same way, every lesson, year in and year out, is not likely to be successful,and learners will probably neither enjoy these lessons nor learn much from them. Onthe other hand, a teacher who varies teaching styles and keeps up to date with newtechniques will probably keep learners interested, have fewer discipline problems andachieve more in the end.

***Emphasize problem solving:*** An essential skill in life is the ability to understand the nature of a problem and thensolve it. However, this skill can only be learned through practice. In the past, teacherswould pose a problem and then solve the problem for the learners. In learner centrededucation the learner is confronted with a particular problem and then required to solveit with the knowledge and skills at her or his disposal. The teacher who solves problemsfor the learners wants to be seen as the "expert". In learner centred education, the roleof the teacher is different. The teacher should guide learners and assist with thedevelopment of skills so that learners are eventually able to solve a particular problemfor themselves. Learner centred education acknowledges that each learner is different,learns at an individual pace, and possesses different skills and capabilities. Anotherimportant point to make here is that there is no single correct way of solving a problem,as problems may have many different solutions. Learners need to be able to select thebest solution to a problem under a given set of circumstances.

***Practice decision making:***Decision-making is a skill that can be acquired through practice. Set up real andimaginary situations so that learners can practice this skill.

***Use continuous assessment:***The success of learning cannot be measured by a single test or final exam. Animportant component of learner centred education is that assessment is conductedcontinuously throughout the learning process.

***Make the learning experience relevant:***Gone are the days when teaching facts and figures for the sake of teaching werecommon. In the modern world it is important that learners understand the relevance ofwhat they are learning and how they can apply it to the real world. It is the goal oflearner centred education to bridge the gap between what is learned in the classroomand the real world.

***Teaching the "whole" child:***The fact that learners are complex individuals, each with his or her own background andpersonality, cannot be ignored in the classroom. Each and every learner has a body,mind and soul and it is important to avoid focusing only on the mental aspects oflearning. Emotional and spiritual development of the child is equally important, so donot overlook them (the holistic approach).

***Start with what learners have and build on it:***Learners have ideas, skills and experience. They have built these up since the day theywere born. Even the youngest learners have experiences that can be useful as startingpoints in class. Using their life experiences makes it easier for learners to relate to thetopic under discussion and they become drawn into the learning process (priorknowledge).

***Teach concepts and not unrelated facts:*** An important part of making sense of the world around us is to know a certain numberof facts about it. These facts, however, serve little purpose if we do not understand theconcepts that underlie them. What is the point of knowing a fact if we have nounderstanding of how it has come to be or the consequences of it being true? A personwho can rattle off a string of facts and figures but who has nor real understanding ofwhat they mean and who cannot apply them in their daily life is not the product of auseful education. A person who knows the scientific name of every tree that grows inher or his area is not necessarily environmentally aware. Teaching concepts, rather thanfacts, enables learners to understand the world about them and how it functions, andenables them to apply their knowledge in a meaningful way. Learning through conceptsalso means learners are in a better position to add to and adapt their knowledge as theirsituation changes throughout their life.

***Allocate time for learning while doing tasks:***When the learning process places emphasis on end products there is often no timeallocated to the essential learning processes that need to take place before a task can becompleted. In learner centred education the teacher must make allowances for timeneeded to do tasks and acquire skills. This often means practising things over and overagain!

***Encourage choice:***Allow learners to actively participate in the learning process. Offer them choices andalternatives so that they can be more in control of what they are learning. Learners whomake choices are accepting responsibility for their own education.

***Allow learners to teach learners:*** Provide opportunities for learners to assist each other. This encourages co-operation,confidence building and interaction skills. Learners often become more motivated,committed and enthusiastic when they have to demonstrate their knowledge andunderstanding of a topic to their peers.

***Be patient:***People learn things at different paces and often in a different order. Do not becomeimpatient with learners who do not follow the pattern of learning that you follow.

Below is a comparison of a traditional classroom setting and that based on a child-centered model (Dooley, 1997):

**Differences between child -centred and teacher centred classrooms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Teacher-centred classroom** | **Child-centred classroom** |
| Student primarily work alone | Students primarily work in groups. |
| Curriculum is presented part to whole, with emphasis on basic skills (bottom - up). | Curriculum is presented whole to part with emphasis on the big concept (top - down). |
| Strict adherence to a fixed curriculum is highly valued. | Pursuit of student questions is highly valued. |
| Curricular activities rely heavily on textbooks of data and manipulative materials. | Curricular activities rely heavily on primary sources |
| Students are viewed as "blank slates" onto which information is etched by the teacher. | Students are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world |
| Teachers generally behave in a didactic manner, disseminating information to students. | Teachers generally behave in an interactive manner mediating the environment for students. |
| Teachers seek the correct answers to validate student lessons | Teachers seek the student's point of view in order to understand student learning for use in subsequent conceptions |
| Assessment of student learning is viewed as separate from teaching and occurs almost entirely through testing. | Assessment of student learning is interwoven with teaching and occurs through teacher observation of students at work and through exhibitions & portfolios  |

### Activity 2 🖉

Give 2 differences between child -centred and teacher centred classrooms

1. As a classroom teacher, in which areas of your teaching do you think research may be needed?

Feedback

*We hope you have had a thorough understanding of child centred approach of teaching. You can now atteempt this acitity. Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this block.*

Section 3: Child -Centred Approaches of Teaching

Keywords

Group work

Inquiry learning

Peer teaching

Role play

The child centred approaches of teaching focus on putting learners’ needs at the centre of what they do in class rather than the teacher being the central figure. They also focus on students’ needs, what and how learning and the conditions that contribute to their learning are. They emphasize what learners are doing which results in building of responsibility in learning. Learners learn from the teacher, from one another and on their own. The following are some of the child centred approaches of teaching.

1. **Group Work**

Here focus on group work and discussions as critical teaching-learning methodologies used in learner-centred classrooms.  Small group discussions are the basic units for participatory learning and are often combined with other methods. For them to be effective they must be well planned and organized. Student's discussions may take the form of unstructured brainstorming, or be guided by prepared questions. Group work requires team work if the desired objectives are to be met. Team work depends on strengths and skills of various team members. Therefore, before carrying out any group work, it is important to consider a number of issues.

**1.1. Advantages of group work**

Advantages include:

increases the opportunities for learner activities in large classes;

encourages interaction and working together;

encourages discussion and communication skills;

facilitates report back sessions;

encourages skills in summarising findings and presenting them clearly and concisely;

provides an opportunity for learners to comment on, criticise and provide each other with feedback with regard to their work;

allows learners with similar abilities and interests to work together;

provides an opportunity for learners to practise acquired knowledge;

increases the opportunities for teacher/learner interaction where the teacher/learner ratio is high;

provides opportunities for the teacher to individualise and to assess continuously;

reinforces new information through different activities to achieve a specific competency.

**1.2. Issues to consider when planning group work**

When planning the group work you may consider the following:

is group work the best way to handle the task at hand?

is the group work equal to the knowledge level of the children?

what are the resources available for reporting back?

has enough time been allocated for the discussions and reporting back?

is there enough space for the group work to take place?

**1.3. Forming group in class**

Groups may be formed in a number of ways such as by:

allowing students to choose who they want in their group;

using pre-existing friendship groups;

building on knowledge of the learners, their special interests, gender, grade level (for situations where students from different grades are learning together), and / or experience;

selecting students randomly or by numbering off especially when factors mentioned in the previous bullet point are not important for the task.

**1.4. Clarifying learner’s tasks**

Though the group tasks may be given orally in the class, it would be better to write the tasks on the chalkboard or flip chart (if in a training course). Children can copy the tasks down if they need to do so. The instructions should include the amount of time available for the group work and the reporting format.

It should also remind the students to select a person to chair the group work, one to take down the action points and issues, and somebody to do the presentation. You, as the teacher may move around the groups to make ensure that the students have understood the task properly.

Students may be involved in making up the “ground” rules such as listening to each other, and allowing everybody equal space to speak and share ideas. One or two members should not be allowed to dominate the discussions. The same people should not be expected to perform the tasks all the time. Tasks such as chairing the sessions; taking the notes; and doing the presentations should be rotated among different group members.

1. **Problem Based Learning (PBL)**

According to Marx and Soloway (1994), PBL is a teaching that uses problems as the focus for developing content, skills, and self direction. Lessons begin with a problem or question, and solving the problem is the focus of the lesson. Students are responsible for investigating the problem, designing strategies, and finding solutions. The teacher guides students' efforts through questioning and other forms of instruction.

**Steps involved in Problem Based Learning (PBL)**

Definition of the problems and identification of which phenomena need explanation;

Analyze the problem (students discuss the problem from their current level of understanding);

Report back, using their new knowledge, and discuss the problem from a basis of better understanding.

1. **Inquiry learning (IL)**

Inquiry is a strategy in which facts and observations are used to answer questions and solve problems. A typical inquiry method uses the same method employed in carrying out research in education and social sciences. The steps include:

identifying a question or problem;

forming a hypothesis;

gathering data to test the hypothesis;

drawing conclusions from the data;

generalising on the basis of the conclusions.

In Inquiry learning*,* students are presented with questions to be answered, problems to be solved, or a set of observations to be explained. If the method is implemented effectively, the students should learn to “formulate good questions, identify and collect appropriate evidence, present results systematically, analyze and interpret results, formulate conclusions, and evaluate the worth and importance of those conclusions.

**3.1. Peer teaching**

Peer teaching is a process which involves students learning from and with each other in ways which are mutually beneficial and involve sharing knowledge, ideas and experience between participants. The emphasis is on the learning process, including emotional support, that learners offer each other, as much as the learning itself.

**3.2. Role Plays, Stories, and Interactive Drama**

Learners especially at primary level love listening to stories, acting and watching plays, doing mimes and playing with puppets. Their interest in these activities may be used to get them to discuss, identify and analyze important issues and themes. To encourage creativity, the teacher can get the children to come up with a role play, or story based on a scenario.

Learners should be given time to prepare the role-play before presentation and discussion in the front of the whole class.

**3.3. Stories**

Stories are very effective in getting students break silence around sensitive issues and getting them to talking about the issues. They allow students to devise and try out possible solutions to identified problems. Stories that deal with situations that are clear, relevant and interesting should be used. These are "entertainment" techniques-that is, they are educational and entertaining. Students may learn new knowledge and facts using stories and plays.

They allow students to present their views on sensitive issues and demonstrating the intensity of the problem, to adults without offending them. They allow students to engage in dialogue and acquire new positive attitudes. They draw on the students' creativity and knowledge of reality.

### Activity 3 🖉

Group work is one of the main child centred approaches of teaching. What issues should a teacher be mindful when planning to use group work method in classroom?

1. As a classroom teacher, in which areas of your teaching do you think research may be needed?

Feedback

*If you carefully read and understood the above section , you can now do this activity.Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this block.*

Block summary

Child centred approach engages learners in decision making, discussion, critical thinking and working out problems. Learners develop interpersonal and leadership skills through involvement in various group activities. The approach enable learners to develop skills of writing, listening, speaking, and note taking and reporting.

Children can grasp the material imparted to them if they become responsible for their own learning. However, this requires the teacher to make a lesson child centred by getting learners actively involved; encouraging trial-and-error learning**;** giving clear guidelines and being flexible and prepared to change according to new requirements andchallenges facing them. Also, the teacher has to encourage peer teaching, use continuous assessment and make the learning experience relevant.

The child centred approaches of teaching basically entail putting learners’ needs at the centre of what they do in class rather than the teacher being the central figure. They also focus on students’ needs, what and how learning and the conditions that contribute to their learning are. They emphasize what learners are doing which results in building of responsibility in learning. Learners learn from the teacher, from one another and on their own.

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**☑**

Answers to activities in this block

Activity 1

The differences between child centred and teacher centred

The teacher is able to establish a proper relationship with each pupil.

The teacher will have time to observe how well the materials are working in class boththe formal materials and ones developed by the teacher.

The teacher can assess each pupil individually, including oral work, written work,activities, reading skills, classroom interaction, and personal development and so on.

The most able and the least able pupilscan be given the attention they deserve.

Activity 2

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Activity 3

Issues to consider when planning group work

 Is group work the best way to handle the task at hand?

Is the group work equal to the knowledge level of the children?

What are the resources available for reporting back?

Has enough time been allocated for the discussions and reporting back?

Is there enough space for the group work to take place?