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NEED OF THE TIME: STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING

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Abstract:

In student centered learning, the learning is active learning. The importance is given to understanding and not rote learning. The student is responsible and accountable for his/her own learning. At the same time, the learner is getting more autonomy. As it involves group work, there is lots of interdependence of learners among themselves and also between teacher and learner. There is participation of learner in all activities. The teacher is facilitator and monitors development and growth of learner. Teacher is resource person. Here, affective and cognitive domains are developed at the same time. The learning becomes enjoyable experience for learner. In this paper, the author has tried to give clear understanding of concept of Student Centered Learning and has explained some activities for student centered classroom.

KEY WORDS:

Student centered learning, Student centered classroom, Activities for student centered learning .

INTRODUCTION

In teaching learning process the term student centered learning is widely used. There are many different terms which are used for explaining student centered learning. The different terms used are flexible learning, experiential learning, and self directed learning. Therefore, the term student centered learning has different meaning for different people. There are different views about implementation of student centered learning.

Over a period of time, there is shift from teacher centered education to student centered education. The lecture method used by teachers over period of time is under criticism and now the shift is towards student centered learning. This alternative approach is accepted now all over the world. The unfortunate part of student centered learning is that many institutes claim that they follow student centered learning process but actually they do not. The main reason is that the concept of student centered learning is not clear to them. [1]

Student-centered learning starts from the assumption that all young people can master the skills and knowledge. It is actually exciting new territory. Today's student-centered practices provide an essential updating of innovative educational approaches focused on harnessing the individual interests, abilities, and challenges of each student.

DEFINITIONS OF STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING

According to Burnard [2], students might not only choose what to learn but how and why that topic should be learnt. His definition says that the students have choice in their learning.

Harden and Crosby [3] describe that in teacher centered learning, the teacher is transmitting

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knowledge. Whereas in student centered learning, the important thing is the student is doing to learn something rather than what the teacher is doing. His definition puts emphasis on doing of students.

Gibbs [4] believes that in student centered learning, the student is active and not passive. The students' previous experiences outside the school are also very important. The process is more important than the product. The decisions about learning are taken by the learner by negotiating with the teacher. What, How and When to be learnt is all decided by the learner.

To summarize we can say that in student centered learning, the learning is active learning and not passive learning. The importance is given to understanding and not rote learning. The student is responsible and accountable for his/her own learning. At the same time the learner is getting more autonomy. As it involves group work, there is lots of interdependence of learners among themselves and also between teacher and learner. There is participation of learner in all activities. The teacher is facilitator and monitors development and growth of learner. Teacher is resource person. Here, affective and cognitive domain is both developed at the same time. The learning becomes enjoyable experience for learner. Constructivist view of learning relates to student centered learning as it involves activities like discovery, independent learning and activity. Constructivists emphasize on practical work and projects.

STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACHES

The first area considers student-centered approaches [5] in light of recent findings on cognitive processes and in neuroscience and education research. Research has uncovered the plasticity of the brain and how learning experiences continually shape its physical architecture. In other words, students' abilities are always developing and learning environments influence that development.

Teachers can take advantage of this connection by helping students develop positive attitudes toward setting goals, assessing progress, and regulating their emotions, all three of which are considered crucial to achievement. If students believe that they can acquire new skills and improve on existing ones through focus and exertion, their motivation will naturally improve. The more educators give their students choice, control, challenges, and opportunities to collaborate, the more motivation and engagement are likely to rise. Without these elements, students are likely to be disconnected and alienated from learning.

It is necessary to understand how a set of high-performing schools and teachers are applying student-centered approaches to raise achievement levels and close achievement gaps. These schools call upon teachers to play multiple roles, from curriculum planner and classroom facilitator to adviser and community connector. They make sure that students are engaged in learning, and that teachers support students in undertaking complex challenges, becoming more autonomous in addressing those challenges, and expanding their awareness of the connections between their studies and the larger world. The school communities embrace teamwork, risk-taking, reflection, and norms of trust and inclusiveness among teachers, students, administrators, and families.

Assessments are a further challenge to scaling up student-centered approaches. No one assessment process can inform approaches to learning and instruction, as well as decisions at the school, district, and policy levels. In contrast, it appears that student-centered assessment would be part of a balanced system of formative, interim, and summative assessments.

Currently, even higher performing urban district schools do not appear to use such practices across most of their schools. However, implementing student-centered approach presents particular problems when it seeks to change long-standing traditions of teacher practice and classroom culture. It may also clash with policy and administrative requirements and state accountability measures.

Some activities, like discussion, problem solving and role play, are quite clearly suitable as working-together activities. Others, such as writing tasks or multiple-choice and fill-the-blank exercises, may not seem suitable at first glance, but they may be just as effective and enjoyable when done in pairs or groups. Brainstorming and comparing answers can lead to very lively discussions. In this paper some student centered activities are discussed. [6]

DISCUSSION

Discussions are typical of any student-centered classroom. The best discussions involve students talking about personal experiences and giving opinions. Discussions work best in pairs or small groups because then more people can give their views. In larger groups or in a whole class, once one person has given his or her view, everyone else can only agree or disagree. A typical discussion may be a simple exchange of views based on pictures from a textbook unit.

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Problem solving

Puzzles, problems, and brain-teasers can stimulate meaningful communication if students work together to solve them. Some people are less clever at solving problems than others. A student-centered approach has to be a “whole-person” approach; otherwise students will be “just practicing” rather than really communicating. Students try to solve various puzzles and problems together. Although it might be quicker to do this alone, without distractions, students have to do it with a partner and discuss how to solve the problems. Students are focused on solving the problems and coming up with the correct solutions, but the purpose of the activity is to make them communicate and interact with each other.

Role play

Some students feel less inhibited if they have a role to play, and can escape from “being themselves” for a while. Role plays may involve one student playing a tourist/customer/boss, interacting with another student playing a tour guide/sales assistant/post office clerk/employee. Such nonrealistic roles can be problematic for some students, but fun for others. Both partners are themselves, but they imagine themselves in a different place. The questions help students decide what to ask at the same time they do not have to be too creative.

Writing tasks

Longer writing tasks are best done as homework; this saves time in class and allows students to spend as much time as they need. But writing tasks also can be prepared by working together, brainstorming ideas, controlling your thoughts, and making notes. The actual writing will be done as homework. Then, back in class in groups, students read one another's work, react to it, and perhaps suggest small improvements.

CONCLUSION

When in groups or pairs, students can work together without worrying about losing face in front of the whole class when they say something unusual or incorrect. This is the purpose of student centered learning. Students can experiment and take risks and play it safe. Special activities can help them be more creative. Student centered learning does not mean that all the teaching should be done that way. This does not mean that teacher led work should be avoided. As students become more confident, they will do more and more student-centered work. Balance must be maintained between the student centered learning and teacher centered learning. This balance may be different from class to class. Some classes may not respond so well. Student-centered activities are enjoyable and stimulating. Hearing different points of view, sharing experiences, brainstorming ideas, explaining things, reacting to other people, and expressing your feelings can be fun. Here, learning becomes enjoyable.

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