

# The Learner Centered Method and Their Needs in Teaching

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**Abstract - The paper examine the learner centered methods and their needs in teaching, it discusses the concept of learner centered methods, the various types of learner centered method, the differences between teacher centered methods and the learner centered methods. It also addresses characteristics of learner centered method, the benefits (needs) of learner centered methods to students and the teacher and the barriers militating against the implementation of the learner centered method in our schools.**

**The paper concludes that the learner centered method should be embraced as it is the ideal method for teaching soft skills needed to navigate the environment, work well with others, perform well and achieve goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper suggests that the nature of curriculum need to move from traditional to progressive to allow full implementation of the learner centered methods and teachers should be exposed to modern trends in the teaching profession.**

**Keywords: Learner centered, Students, Teaching Methods, and Teacher.**

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional teaching method, which is distinguished by its expository form and narrative character, has been the most pervasive pedagogical model around the world. Traditional methods of teaching has been criticized by many scholars and international organizations involved in education (UNESCO and UNICEF) for relegating education

to an act of depositing whereby teachers make deposits and students receive, memorize and repeat to the best of their effort and capacities.

The world of 21<sup>st</sup> century is rapidly changing which is reflected in the transformation of global environment to which education system need to adapt, not just through one off reform, but continuously.

The constant advancement of technology and innovation is changing the ways we communicate, work and live together and education systems which reflect this dynamic will be most capable of responding effectively to the current and changing needs of young people, society and indeed the labour market. The traditional method of education delivery had not been able to respond to the various emerging trends as it only provides foundational skills such as numeracy and literacy although students' need this foundation for all future learning. The soft skills like creativity, problem solving, critical thinking needed to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world are develop through learner centered method as it encourages the learner to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it.

The learner centered method encompasses methods of teaching that shift focus of instruction from the teacher to the students. It puts students' interests first, acknowledging student voice as central to the learning experience.

The paper addresses learner centered method and what it brings to knowledge transmission; it is also

to understand the various types of learner centered methods of teaching and its importance to teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## II. CONCEPT OF LEARNER CENTERED METHODS.

According to Meyers (2017), early educational movements that led the way to learner- centered education include Dewey's progressive (Dewey, 1938), Montessori education (Montessori, 1917). Learners centered approaches include but are not limited to problem- based learning, project based learning and inquiry- based learning. Therefore, learner centered instruction can take many different forms. As McCombs (2012) noted, learner- centered practices do not look the same from school to school, classroom to classroom or day to day.

A learner centered method of teaching views the learner as active agents. The students exhibit their own knowledge, past experiences, education and ideas and this impacts how they take on board new information and learn.

It differs significantly from a traditional method of instruction as it presents the students as "blank slates" and teachers as experts who must impart all relevant information whereas the learner centered method creates a dynamic classroom where students participate actively where while the teacher take a more passive role. It boils down to group work, one- on-one tutoring between student and teacher and students presentations (Caroline, 2019). It was further reiterated that for students to learn a skill, students must be directly involved and that teachers cannot just say a thing in the classroom and expect students to leave the classroom able to do it.

## III. TYPES OF LEARNER CENTERED METHODS OF TEACHING

In the traditional method of teaching, most class time is spent with the instructor teaching and the

students watching and listening. Learner- centered teaching methods shifts the focus of activity from the teacher to the learner. The following according to (Bas and Beyhan, 2019) are learner centered methods of teaching:

- A. Cooperative learning:** in the cooperative learning students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assures both positive interdependence and individual accountability. The teacher here serves as a facilitator to guide and give feedback on the outcome of projects and tasks.
- B. Inductive learning:** students are first presented with challenges. Inductive methods include inquiry based learning, case based learning, problem based learning, project based learning and discovery learning
- C. Gamify learning:** games are a great way to add an element of fun to the learning environment. Gamification has been a huge trend in teaching and learning in recent times. The use of mathematical games like ludomatic, chess etc. helps to improve critical thinking.
- D. Expeditionary learning:** this learning is based on the idea that there is considerable educational value in getting students out of the classroom and into the real world. Examples include trips to areas the students are not familiar like a short trip to the house of assembly, museum etc. the primary focus of this type of learning is getting students in the community for real world learning experiences.
- E. Active learning:** this method of teaching allows students to solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate or brainstorm during classes.
- F. Flipped classroom:** this is a method in which instruction is given to group of students which transcend to individual students and the result group is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the teacher guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

All these and more of learner centered methods are designed to groom students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and entrepreneurs as it gives learners first-hand experiences and exposure.

**IV. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEACHER CENTERED METHODS AND LEARNER CENTERED METHODS.**

In recent times there has being a foundational shift from traditional classroom, a learner centered approach does not eliminate the teacher. A learner centered environment creates a more collaborative way to learn (Katie, 2014).

(Rogers & Frieberg 1994) distinctively revealed the difference between teacher centered methods and learner centered methods. This shows how friendly and effective the learner centered is to students that are committed to the teaching and learning process.

<b>Teacher centered methods</b>	<b>Learner centered methods</b>
Focus is on instructor	Focus is both on the learner and instructor
Instructor talks and students listen	Instructor models; students interact with instructor and one another.
Students work alone	Students work in pairs, in groups or alone depending on the purpose of the activity
Instructor answers students' questions.	Students' answers each other's questions, using instructor as an information resources.
Instructors evaluates students learning	Students evaluate their own learning; instructor also evaluates.
Classroom is quiet	Classroom is noisy and busy.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEARNER CENTERED METHODS OF TEACHING**

Student centered methods have repeatedly been shown to be superior to the traditional teacher centered methods of instruction as it is revealed by (Blumberg, 2012) in the features below:

- A. Engage students in the learning process. On traditional teaching in most classes teachers are working much harder than students. Students don't develop sophisticated learning skills without the chance to practice and in most classroom the teacher gets far more practice than the students. With **learner centered teaching** students have the opportunity to implement a real task and acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and key competences through the process.
- B. Learner centered teaching includes explicit skill instruction, students learn how to think, solve problems, decision making, team work, evaluate evidence, analyze argument, generate hypotheses all those learning skills essential to mastering material in the discipline.
- C. Learner centered teaching encourages students reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it.
- D. Learner- centered teaching motivates students by giving them some control over learning process.
- E. It encourages collaboration among students; students learn from each other which results to shared commitment in the teaching and learning process.

**VI. BENEFITS OF THE LEARNER CENTERED METHODS TO STUDENTS**

The evidence that the learners centered method out ways the teacher centered methods must be reflected in the production (output) of real- world results. The National conference of state legislature

and Nellie Mea Education Foundation (2020) reported that learner centered methods does indeed produce measurable benefits which include the following:

- A. The learner centered method allows fitting education content to student interest.
- B. Allowing students to gain competency and mastery at their own pace before moving to other topics.
- C. Teaches students how to devise their strategies for learning.
- D. Teaching students how to monitor their progress as they learn new material.
- E. Improves students' communication and collaboration skills.
- F. Stronger relationships between students and teachers through shared experiences.

This method of teaching is changing the role the teachers as teachers serve as facilitators, coach, conductor etc. and for students, teachers and schools to reap the benefits teachers must understand their new roles. Johnson (2013), agreed with this point as he stated that the new roles may be **beneficial** to the teachers:

**Firstly**, the method presents the teachers as facilitators and places the teachers in positions where they can academically challenge the students in order to enhance their learning. The teachers work is reduced as what he needs to do is to guide students thought.

**Secondly**, it creates continuous self-improvement amongst teachers as teachers review and develops their area of specialization and methods of delivery. The confidence gained from implementing the learner centered method is also measurable in that teachers obtain relevant and constructive feedback from more highly engaged students.

**Thirdly**, learner centered methods allows for professional development for academia with regards to the development of knowledge, skills and competencies relevant both for personal development and career advancement. It also enhances teachers' flexibility in designing new ways of teaching their subjects.

## VII. BARRIERS TO LEARNER CENTERED METHODS

As beneficial as these students' friendly methods are they are not free from factors preventing the smooth implementation in our classroom and our schools. Yilmaz (2018) conducted a study to examine the reasons behind the largely unsuccessful implementation of learner centered method. The result revealed that most of the challenges were related to the organizational structure of their classroom and schools for example:

- A. **Large class size:** Class size refers to the number of students in a classroom. Studies have shown that class size and staff – to- student ratios are widely used as indicators of quality at schools. Studies on the effect of class size have examined a wide range of outcomes, including achievement, student engagement, attitude and student evaluations of teaching. While some studies suggest that large class size has negative effect on direct measure of student learning. The learner centered method is effectively delivered in a class well managed and in decreased class size as materials will always be needed for delivery. In public schools where the average of each class is 80-120 it is a lot difficult to engage all students at the same time especially when involves group work as group may become larger and make some students passive in a group (Miller and Metz, 2014).
- B. **Lack of Resources:** the inadequate human, material and financial resources stand as a barrier to the implementation of learner centered method. The

teachers are not enough; the funds are inadequate to purchase relevant students friendly instructional materials to carry out instructions.

- C. **Time constraints:** the 35-40 minutes allocated for in the teacher centered methods may not be enough for the learner centered method as students are exposed to hands on activities that may take longer time; students are given topics to work on which may take longer time. The learner centered method requires more time as students are given the freedom to learn without haste while in the teacher centered method students are regimented for a particular period of time so as write examination.
- D. **Assessment:** standardized test like NECO and WAEC are still traditional in nature. It is one reason the teaching method can't change. It is usually taken with paper and pen that are usually true or false, matching, or multiple choices (summative). These assessments are easy to grade but only test isolated application, facts or memorized data. This approach do not allow authentic assessment as the learners centered method use more complex, higher order thinking skills. They must reason, solve problem or collaborate with others to produce individual responses.
- E. **Inadequate training for teachers:** most teachers are too comfortable with the traditional centered method thereby locking their minds to upgrade, training and exposure. The fear of change from norm is a major problem. The learner centered method comes along with new trends like being a facilitator, manipulation of digital tools, games and machines and the teacher who is so used to being an actor in class to passive students finds it difficult to change.
- F. **Nature of Curriculum:** a traditional curriculum will not allow for a progressive kind of education. The traditional curriculum presents the teacher as the active agent and students as passive agent. For learner centered methods to be functional in schools

curriculum must be progressive as it presents students as the focal points in the class and encourages interaction and project based education. The learner centered methods is ideal for developing the relevant soft skills needed to run the highly technological world as the traditional method can no longer respond to 21st century needs. Learner centered methods concerned itself with how best students learn and not how the teacher teaches (Derebssa, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the learner centered method is the prevailing method of teaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century students as students want to be part of the teaching process. The method has proven to be the answer to current trends and shift from pure physical classroom learning to a more blended kind of learning.

It is of great importance to embrace the students' friendly learner centered methods as it is the ideal method of teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the emergence of technology in all part of our life the issue of just being mastery of core subjects is becoming obsolete. The world needs individuals that are critical thinkers, problem solvers, decision makers, creative and digitally literate (soft skills) and all these skills are properly groomed in schools with the learner centered methods as students are exposed to individual practical learning. These are skills that cannot be replaced by automation and for this reason should be effectively transmitted to our students.

The learner centered methods also gives the teacher a new role in the classroom. The teacher becomes a "facilitator" here the duty of the teacher is to provide guidance, correct wrong information and supervise projects.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Curriculum experts should develop curriculum that is progressive that will accommodate the learner centered methods.
2. Teachers should be trained on modern teaching trends
3. Government or school owners should provide materials needed for students' engagement.
4. Class size should be of manageable size to allow effective teaching and learning
5. Fund should be made available to purchase instructional materials for practical lessons

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