

Research on Learner-Centered Education Ideology

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Abstract. Traditional teacher-centered educational approaches are found to be ineffective in enhancing learning outcomes and may stifle students' autonomy and spontaneous knowledge acquisition, thus impeding their cognitive development. This study primarily focuses on an in-depth exploration of the learner-centered ideology, accentuating the pivotal role of learners and their unique needs. It explores various educational paradigms and conducts a comparative analysis with other ideologies, such as social efficiency, social reconstruction, and scholar academic. The findings reveal that learner-centered education excels in addressing curriculum content, societal demands, and individual learner needs. Despite criticism, it enhances educational quality by promoting student independence, creativity, and knowledge acquisition.

Keywords: Learner-centered; Educational Philosophy; Curriculum Content; Social Needs; Learner Needs.

1. Introduction

In the field of education, educators have been exploring different forms of education to develop a curriculum that is suitable for learners (Alanazi 2016)[1]. The traditional educational philosophy of teacher-centred education, where educators continually instil book knowledge in learners who passively receive it and repeat the same learning skills in reading and writing, is ineffective in improving learning, and can undermine the initiative and spontaneity of learning, to the detriment of students' active construction of knowledge (O'Sullivan 2004)[6]. As education evolves, there is a notable shift towards learner-centered education, departing from the traditional teacher-centered model (Bremmer et al. 2022, p. 1). The learner-centered philosophy views students as holistic individuals and creative entities (Schiro 2013)[9]. It places a significant focus on human development and factors that contribute to students' growth rather than on theories centered on the process of educating individuals (Schiro 2013)[9].

Central to the learner-centered ideology is the idea that the curriculum should be tailored to meet the interests and needs of each individual learner, granting them autonomy and self-determination (Schiro 2013)[9]. Learners' interests significantly influence curriculum content, and students actively participate in organizing this content, planning their educational journey, and managing their own learning experience (Schiro 2013)[9]. Simultaneously, this approach fosters a community of active communicators, with students engaging in creative activities, exploring and interacting with their world, and satisfying their curiosity about their surroundings. This engagement significantly contributes to motivation and fulfills learners' social needs by promoting interaction with peers and the broader community (Schiro 2013)[9].

To some extent, the learner-centered ideology holds the potential to address three fundamental aspects of education: curriculum content, social needs, and individual learner requirements. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the learner-centered ideology and critically compare it with other educational ideologies such as Social Efficiency, Social Reconstruction, and Scholar Academic ideologies. Through a rigorous comparative analysis, we will determine the suitability of the learner-centered ideology in addressing curriculum content, social imperatives, and the unique needs of individual learners.

2. Learner Centered Ideology

Dupin-Bryant (2004) contends that the Learner-Centered ideology embodies a democratic approach to teaching and learning, cultivating an environment that encourages students to question, fostering their development through collaborative interactions between students and teachers (Dupin-Bryant 2004)[2].

In contrast, conventional educational models emphasize the authority of headmasters and teachers, with students often expected to passively follow instructions from their educators and school administrators without much room for questioning or independent thinking (Schiro 2013)[9]. The Learner-Centered educational paradigm, however, places the interests and needs of students at the forefront, replacing the traditional pedagogical philosophy centered around the roles of teachers and principals. In this framework, teachers first observe students' interests, design activities aligned with these interests, and subsequently integrate these activities into the classroom to facilitate a conducive environment for constructive student growth (Schiro 2013)[9].

Regarding curriculum content, the Learner-Centered approach grants students agency in determining what they want to learn based on their interests, transforming them into eager participants eager to share their valuable insights. Teachers establish a well-equipped environment for observing student performance, fostering interaction with students, assessing their achievements, and optimizing student progress through activities tailored to their interests. This philosophy involves curriculum developers creating lessons that genuinely captivate students' interests and crafting teacher's guide manuals complete with materials that genuinely resonate with students. This student-centered philosophy underscores the collaborative efforts of curriculum developers, teachers, and students alike (Schiro 2013)[9].

The Learner-Centered perspective acknowledges the multifaceted nature of human learning, encompassing emotional, social, and physical dimensions that are inherently intertwined (Noddings 2005)[5]. Consequently, it mandates the integration of knowledge across various disciplines within school curricula, fostering interdisciplinary learning (Rugg & Shumaker 1928)[8]. Furthermore, Learner-Centered educators underscore the significance of students engaging directly in real-world activities, gaining firsthand experiences rather than passively absorbing information from teachers. This approach asserts that students should be actively involved, working with their own senses and abilities (Morrison 1970, cited in Schiro 2013)[9]. This principle asserts that the knowledge students acquire through experiential learning is significantly shaped by their interactions with the real world, transcending the limitations of textbooks (Schiro 2013)[9].

When addressing learners' needs, the Learner-Centered ideology embraces the concept that students are active agents in their own growth and development, fostering spontaneous interactions with the world rather than passively accepting external inputs. Educators subscribing to this ideology firmly believe in children's innate capacity to direct their explorations independently, free from the constraints of adult-imposed learning paradigms, thereby nurturing independent and self-guided learning (Schiro 2013)[9]. This perspective upholds that the acquisition of knowledge naturally unfolds during the learning process, with personal growth being the utmost priority (Schiro 2013)[9].

Given the diversity in students' learning levels and individual differences, teachers are urged to be attentive and responsive to these variations (Mtika & Gates 2010)[4]. This principle aligns with Piaget's (1973)[7] theory of cognitive development, which posits that children progress through different developmental stages. Therefore, teachers and curriculum developers must respect and accommodate these intrinsic differences by designing tailored curricula to cater to students at various developmental stages (Schiro 2013)[9]. The Learner-Centered ideology entrusts students with the autonomy to chart their learning paths, allowing them to select the activities they partake in, when they engage in them, and where and how they undertake these activities (Schiro 2013)[9].

Addressing social needs, Learner-Centered schools are intentionally designed to facilitate interaction and debate between students and adults. These institutions encourage students to explore novel ideas,

engage in collaborative group activities, and actively co-construct new knowledge. These social interactions play a pivotal role in shaping social meaning (Schiro 2013)[9]. These activities are not left to chance; instead, teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of providing opportunities for students to interact, learn effective listening and questioning skills, and collaboratively tackle challenges in group settings. These interactions, in turn, facilitate knowledge construction and the resolution of cognitive conflicts (Schiro 2013)[9].

The Learner-Centered ideology places a premium on children's holistic development, which entails activities that engage their physical, verbal, and emotional dimensions. It is rooted in the belief that children's physical expression should be encouraged, liberating their ability to communicate freely. By fostering freedom of expression, this ideology significantly contributes to individual development in response to students' social needs (Rugg & Shumaker, 1928)[8].

Based on the above, it is clear that Learner Centered ideology can, to some extent, address the three main issues of curriculum content, social needs and learner needs. That Learner Centered ideology will be compared with Social Efficiency ideology, Social Reconstruction ideology and Scholar Academic ideology in the rest of this assignment to highlight that Learner Centered ideology is better suited to addressing the three issues of curriculum content, societal needs and learner needs.

3. A Comparison of Learner Centered Ideology with Three Other Ideologies

From the perspective of the Social Efficiency ideology, educators see themselves as agents of society, and educators aim to perform their tasks efficiently and scientifically (Schiro 2013)[9]. The educator controls the learner and determines the learning content, style and environment (Alanazi 2016)[1]. Social Efficiency educators develop curriculum content that firstly meets the needs of society and secondly teaches students knowledge intending to prepare them to become contributing tools to society (Alanazi 2016)[1]. The knowledge students learn in Social Efficiency empowers them to act, through individual mastery of the skills that society needs, to maintain the best that society currently offers (Schiro 2013)[9]. The idea of Social Efficiency sees children as being groomed toward future adults, who can behave in a socially secure way, and sees children as contributors to the building of society. It is thus clear that the Social Efficiency idea of education focuses not on the learner. However, the development of social skills in order to meet the needs of society, which may leave students' needs unmet or even rebellious, which also neglects students' interests, is not conducive to their individual development and hinders the development of their creativity (Alanazi 2016)[1]. The Learner Centered ideology sees the school curriculum as needed to serve the development of students, based on seeing children as children rather than as potential adults (Schiro 2013)[9].

Learner Centered educators encourage learners to be creative and allow them to determine the direction of their education and growth rather than blindly following the dictates of external factors, facilitating students' adaptation to the existing order of society (Schiro 2013)[9]. Learner Centered thinking assumes that educators respect learners' learning styles and develop curriculum content around learners' interests rather than based on teachers' preferences and teaching intentions (Schiro 2013)[9]. Curriculum developers design content and materials that emphasise student growth in the present rather than what is expected to be achieved in the future. In the curriculum, Learner Centered educators are expected to create meaningful learning units for learners that are based on students' interests and operate actively within the learning environment provided by the teacher. Curriculum developers design the learning activities, teachers provide the learning environment, and students actively shape the content (Schiro 2013)[9], in which students can explore multidimensional areas and choose what they want to learn, which facilitates meeting students' learning and curricular This contributes to meeting students' learning and curricular needs (Kumar Shah 2020)[3].

Starting from the Social Reconstruction ideology, educators attempt to reconstruct cultural identities (Schiro 2013)[9], arguing that students must acquire subject knowledge to understand society better and generate ideas to resist injustice. Likewise, students must learn behaviours in order to be able to fight against injustice in society. The Social Reconstruction believes that the curriculum content must

be aligned with students' values for them to act through the content and, therefore, through observation and imitation to construct new meanings in the social context (Schiro 2013)[9]. Social Reconstruction values the learner's power to act as a driver of social change and a better analysis of future social assumptions to build a society with a better future (Schiro 2013)[9]. However, Learner Centered educators see learners as growing self-promoters and focus on the person themselves rather than their behaviour. According to the Learner Centered perspective, learning should focus on the learner rather than any particular social purpose (Schiro 2013)[9]. Regarding curriculum content, Learner Centered ideology does not develop curriculum content around subject subjects but instead organises learning programmes around students' interests (Rugg & Shumaker, 1928)[8]. Learner Centered educators encourage students to engage in creative activities and to ask questions, which helps to develop their creative thinking and unlock their learning potential, as well as encouraging interactions between students to develop communication skills and realising social needs (Alanazi 2016)[1].

Expanding on the Scholar Academic ideology, proponents of this approach firmly believe that students primarily acquire knowledge through immersion in textbooks. They argue that curriculum content is meticulously derived from universally accepted, objective facts, sanctioned by authoritative subject matter experts. Furthermore, they emphasize that didactic knowledge, conveyed through traditional lecturing and instruction, significantly contributes to students' comprehension (Schiro 2013)[9]. However, an educational approach solely centered on the indoctrination of book knowledge proves insufficient in terms of motivating students and nurturing the growth of critical thinking abilities (Schiro 2013)[9]. To genuinely engage students in meaningful learning, it is imperative that they are provided with the opportunity to have a natural voice and be esteemed as active participants in their educational journeys (Schiro 2013)[9].

The Learner Centered ideology, grounded in constructivism, serves as a stark contrast. According to Piaget (1973)[7], learning occurs as learners actively interact with their surroundings, forging connections between fresh perceptions and their existing cognitive frameworks, thus constructing entirely new understandings and meanings (Schiro 2013)[9]. Learning, in this framework, is a meticulous construct crafted based on students' experiences and interactions, with teachers functioning as a crucial bridge between students and their external environment, facilitating the transfer of experiences into knowledge and understanding (Schiro 2013)[9].

Teachers, in this constructivist framework, are encouraged to extend the boundaries of the classroom, allowing students to immerse themselves in the natural world. This external environment presents abundant opportunities for students to amass experiences that are integral to their self-constructed learning journey, far transcending the confines of mere textbook knowledge (Schiro 2013)[9]. The Learner Centered ideology's fundamental premise underscores its pivotal role in shaping and transforming educational teaching and learning methodologies.

By affording students the chance to explore the world firsthand, beyond the confines of textbooks, they acquire a profound and tangible understanding of their subjects. This tangible understanding becomes deeply rooted in their cognitive structures, fostering a much more profound form of learning that transcends rote memorization. In turn, learners become active participants in their education, constructing knowledge through their real-world interactions and experiences (Schiro 2013)[9]. This approach encourages students to question, experiment, and develop a profound understanding of the subject matter that goes beyond the surface-level knowledge that textbooks can provide.

Furthermore, the Learner Centered ideology prioritizes students' experiences and the role of teachers as facilitators. Teachers are not merely purveyors of information but guides who create opportunities for students to explore, discover, and learn. They facilitate the interaction between students and their environment, helping students make sense of their experiences and connect them with their existing knowledge (Schiro 2013)[9]. In this way, teachers play a vital role in fostering deep, meaningful learning experiences that extend far beyond the pages of textbooks.

Therefore, the Learner Centered ideology, deeply rooted in the principles of constructivism and experiential learning, challenges the Scholar Academic ideology's emphasis on textbook-centered education. By emphasizing real-world experiences and the active role of students in their own learning, it provides a comprehensive and profound approach to education that fosters critical thinking, deep understanding, and meaningful engagement with the subject matter. This constructivist approach recognizes that learning is a dynamic process of meaning-making that occurs through interaction with one's environment, transcending the limitations of traditional textbook-based learning.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparison of various educational ideologies, including Social Efficiency, Social Reconstruction, Scholar Academic, and Learner-Centered ideologies, underscores the distinct strengths of each approach. However, it becomes evident that the Learner-Centered ideology excels in addressing the pivotal concerns related to curriculum content, social needs, and individual learner requirements. Learner-Centered ideology serves as a robust foundation for curriculum development by placing utmost importance on the interests and needs of students (Alanazi 2016). Instead of relying on predetermined content from subject matter experts, this approach allows curriculum content to emerge organically from students' innate curiosity and motivations. Consequently, it leads to more engaging and pertinent learning experiences that cater to the diverse interests of students. Furthermore, it encourages active involvement and ownership of the learning process, thereby promoting the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Mtika & Gates 2010).

Additionally, the Learner-Centered approach fosters a dynamic social environment that facilitates interaction, discussion, and exploration. Students are empowered to voice their opinions, pose questions, and collaborate with their peers. This not only enriches their educational experiences but also contributes significantly to the construction of social meaning. Learner-Centered educational institutions prioritize the holistic growth of students, addressing their physical, verbal, and emotional dimensions. The emphasis on free expression and active communication assists students in meeting their social needs and flourishing in an inclusive and diverse setting.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the Learner-Centered ideology is not without its challenges. Critics contend that an excessive focus on students' needs might potentially undermine the authority of teachers and hinder their professional development (Mtika & Gates 2010). Therefore, it is imperative that future research and practical applications of the Learner-Centered approach address these concerns by emphasizing teacher training and pedagogical skills (Alanazi 2016). By supporting teachers as facilitators of learning and offering continuous professional development, the Learner-Centered approach can further enhance its efficacy in meeting the growth and learning needs of students. In other words, while other educational ideologies possess their own strengths, the Learner-Centered ideology's emphasis on students' interests, active participation, and comprehensive development positions it as an exceedingly effective approach in addressing curriculum content, social needs, and individual learner requirements. Through ongoing evolution and adaptation to the needs of both students and educators, the Learner-Centered ideology is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education, nurturing engaged, critical-thinking, and socially adept individuals.

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