

## “LEARNER – CENTRED APPROACH TO INSTRUCTIONS” A STRATEGY FOR REPOSITIONING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Hannatu Ado Ahmad

Department of curriculum and instructional technology, federal college of education, Kano, Nigeria  
Hannatuado88@gmail.com

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching is as old as humanity, and it is generally accepted that teachers constitute the pivot of any school system. This is because, the successful system of education depend to a large extent on the number of teachers, their quality, their devotion to duty and their effectiveness on the job. It is as a result of this central position of the teacher that it is often said that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. It is ultimately the teacher who decides on what goes on in the classroom and transfers educational theories into practice. It is therefore, proper to begin by trying to identify the teacher. The Longman’s Dictionary of contemporary English defines the teachers as person who teaches, guides, and coordinates class activities especially as a profession.

The current Nigerian national curriculum is activity-based and provides the framework for assessed. what should be taught, how is to be taught, and how learning outcomes should be. This is aimed at helping teachers to move away from the traditional “chalk and talk” and “minds-on” approaches to “hands on and learning by doing approaches”. It has also been acknowledged widely that for pupils to do well and to develop practical skills, they must be actively involved in the learning process. What follows is a catalogue of mainly learner-centred methods that you can use in teaching various aspects of curriculum. We have gone straight to applications in each case.

One of the major weaknesses of the teaching profession in Nigeria is that once teachers complete their initial training, they hardly have the opportunity to continue to grow on the job professionally. But knowledge is dynamic and so also are pedagogical ideas. Only by exposure to interactive conferences and workshops of this type can teachers enjoy professional renewal. TESSA, 2012.

Although, many methods of teaching are at work in our schools, they all emphasized the need to actively involved learners, if they are to construct meanings, and if much learning is to take place. That is, must insist on learner-centeredness. “Learner-Centeredness” is the key word that summarizes all best practices in teaching today. Because we believed the term is often only narrowly understood as the opposite of Teacher-Centeredness, this approach is by no means new and has been adopted in various ways in many parts of the world, including Africa. It is quite possible that teachers are already learner-centred in teaching; perhaps in some ways more than others.

Learner-Centeredness includes more than allowing learner’s opportunities to interact in the classroom. It is more of an attitude, or approach, to the learner, putting them at the heart of the whole school and even the community. A Learner-Centred school plans all the year around for the development of a “whole” learner i.e not just academic attainment but social, cultural, emotional, physical, aesthetic and spiritual growth. It works carefully at topics related to the safety of the learners at school and in their communities, and ensures that parents are fully involved in this thinking and planning.

TESSA stressed that, a Learner-Centred classroom is one that makes the learning space as attractive and clean as possible for the learners. However, small or struggling, the school tries to have posters, learners’ work, reading corners or libraries, playing spaces and quiet spaces where learners can develop together. At this junction, one should be able to assess how far doing the continuum from Teacher-Centred to Learner-Centred you have moved, and why. However, you should feel confident about choosing to be Teacher-Centred when it is needed, and to allow learner’s participation and involvement when it is appropriate.

### Competing teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches to instructions:

Traditionally, **Teacher-Centred methods** emphasizes the importance of transferring knowledge, information and skills from the teacher to the learner. Emphasis is on the mastery of the subjects, and authority. The teacher is positioned in front of the class, using the blackboard, while learners, sit in rows facing the teacher. On the other hand, **Learner-Centred philosophies** are less authoritarian and moved focus on the individual learner’s needs. They place the learner at the center of the educational process. Many educators still pay only lip-service to learner-centred teaching, while they themselves dominate the class talk. The differences between the two approaches are captured.

**General characteristics of learner-centred approaches;**

In general, learner-centred approaches/techniques **appeal to the learner's needs and interest, thereby motivating continuous learning**. They focus on the learner, encouraging participation throughout the lesson period, they are gender sensitive, interactive, collaborative and encourage sharing experiences. They encouraged critical thinking and practice-based activities throughout the lesson. As stressed by N.T.I (2012), not all these conditions always prevail in a learner-centred lessons, but a significant number do.

**Distinction between teacher-centred teaching and learner-centred instructions.**

		<b>Teacher-Centred</b>	<b>Learner-Centred</b>
1.	Classroom Set-up	* Desks in rows	* Desks are in small groups and learner's face each other.
2.	Teaching Style	* Teachers teaches learning as a whole group most of the time. * Teacher uses only one style of teaching.	* Learners learn in pairs or small groups as well as from the teacher. * Teacher adjusts instruction to learners learning style.
3.	Experience & Knowledge	* Learners experience and knowledge are not always fully used.	* Learner's experience and knowledge are regularly used in instruction.
4.	Learners' Creativity	* Learners' creativity rarely encouraged.	* Learner's creativity is encouraged much of the time.
5.	Checking Learner's Work	* Teacher stays in front of class, does not check learner's work.	* Teacher walks around and checks learners work; learners check one another's work.
6.	Teaching Styles	* Teacher uses one kind of instruction	* Teacher adjusts instruction to learner's individual learning styles.
7.	Questioning Techniques	* Closed questions only descriptive and not available questions	* Open ended and higher order (Evaluation reasoning and judgment).
8.	Assessment	* Teacher tests at the end of the term only.	* Learners are continuously assessed and assisted.
9.	Rapport	* Teacher talks to learners in class only; many not use names of pupils outside the class.	* Teacher enquires how learners are doing and used their names.
10.	Knowledge of the whole child	* Teacher does not know learner's profile (strengths, difficulties, health) or backgrounds (family conditions, problems with other pupils, etc).	* Teacher know learner's profile and background.
11.	Responsibility for learning and discipline	* Teacher assumes responsibility for learning and discipline	* Learners assume responsibility for learning and discipline.

TESSA, 2012.

**Skills acquisition in learner-centred approach:**

**a) Learning through play**

From an early childhood perspective, it is considered that all types of play are equally important for optimal child development. Early childhood teachers, plan both the indoor and the outdoor environment to encourage opportunities for a full range of play. They believed that the child's social development occurs through interaction with peers. Children can build their social understandings and bring what they already know about being with others to each new situation. When children engage in rich and meaningful play, they can exercise judgment, get to know and enjoy their power, and experience autonomy, mastery and competence. If they are unable to experience these emotions, their emotional development will be jeopardized Adekola (2006). From a constructivist perspective, cognitive development is also enhanced via play opportunities. Play provides opportunities for symbolic and conceptual manipulation. The cognitive skills which children learn to use as they play are necessary prerequisites for later academic learning.

As children persist in problem solving, they become creative thinkers, problem solvers and risk takers. Constructivists believe that play requiring active use of the body enables children to build their fine and gross motor control, enabling them to gain more and more control over their bodies. Children will practice the motor skills they have mastered and encounter new challenges requiring new skills, which are in turn mastered through further play. Children learn through relating space to their own body and movement, engaging large and fine motor skills as well as cognition.

Other early childhood educators who follow a developmental approach to children's learning believe that play is a developmental activity, where children move through a series of stages and along the way, discover their identity in relation to others. Advocates of this theoretical approach also believe that play has a positive impact on the learning of the young child. Children who are able to play will have more resources to draw on, both in childhood and adult life. Within this framework, dramatic play is seen as an important coping mechanism that allows children to process material that they do not understand and put it in a context that makes sense to them. It can provide a playful space where life can be experimented with and choices explored.

The value of play to the learning process has not been entrenched as widely within the primary school setting as in early childhood contexts, although there are some strong advocates for its inclusion.

If play is defined as intrinsically motivated, children who are directed will find it difficult to incorporate play into their classroom practices where there is an emphasis on procedure, timetabling and order.

### **B)using 'teachable moment' for focused teaching-learning**

**Problems of Emphasis** is laid by UBEC (2004) to teachers to take on the role of facilitators rather than experts with the necessary knowledge to scaffold the children's learning and use 'teachable' moments for focused teaching and learning. Importantly, this principle underpins both the teach me and teach you curriculum approaches where the teacher is empowered to work alongside children in a collaborative manner, thus facilitating the co-construction of knowledge that these approaches strive for.

### **Planning for learner-centred instructions**

In most of the times, teachers give considerable attention to what they intend to do in the classroom, rather than on what is demanded by the pupils. Before the teacher plan for his/her instructions, they must ask themselves 3 basic questions:-

#### **1) Whom am I going to teach?**

This implies that a considerable priority is given to the learner in instructions more than any other thing. It involves knowledge of the learners by capability, sex, age, size of the class, and even by names. This is mandatory for any professional teacher to make sure that he/she is planning to cater for the all round development of the learners, so as to select appropriate content and resources for them.

#### **2) What am I going to teach?**

The second question implies the content of the subject matter under treatment. Providing rightful answer to the first question, will open room for the teacher to pass judgment on the content under planning. For example, as a teacher, the knowledge of the learners will help the teacher in selecting the task that is accomplishable to the learners. It is an expectation on a professional-teacher to start from known to unknown and from easy to more difficult.

#### **3) How am I going to teach?**

First and the second questions will be merged together to produce the strategy to employ in delivering a particular instruction, and to deliver well. Consideration must be given to the approach. In such a case, learner-centred approach is selected as the best approach to instructions.

### **Resources/media in learner-centred instructions**

Resource-based instructions are more colourful, attractive and permanent (Robert et al, 1989). Teachers must learn to improvise instructional resources themselves, without waiting for any other party to provide resources for their instructions. The teacher is collaboration with the learners, improvised resources based on his/her knowledge of the class.

Note that; the instructional resources/media must be:-

- 1) A no-cost resource.
- 2) Available in the local environment
- 3) Attached with safety.
- 4) Bold and colourful.
- 5) Within the limit of age and capability of learners.
- 6) Sex friendly.
- 7) Directly proportionate to the learning atmosphere.

8) Learner friendly

**Problems of education in Nigeria:**

Education in Nigeria is faced with many and diverse problems.

Some of these problems, included:

1. Less provision of infrastructural facilities and learning resources.
2. Establishment and ownership of schools.
3. Teachers' qualifications.
4. Teacher morale.
5. Resistance to new innovations.
6. Low or no motivation to teachers.
7. Less consideration to Professional Development of Teachers ( in-house & outwards).
8. The politics in our educational management.
9. Mismanagement of funds
10. Analogue Teachers.

**Strategies for repositioning education in Nigeria**

The following strategies have been suggested for repositioning educational system in Nigeria.

1. Policies on education and their implementation should be research- based.
2. Monitoring or inspectorate divisions should be resuscitated and equipped with adequate facilities. Education is the "key to the success or failure of the whole society". However, serious attention must be paid to its sustenance.
3. The politicians should not be allowed to toy with this crucial aspect (education). Each state should set up units like the State Education Sector Project Units with professionals in education, and to be dominated by those who have had first-hand experience in educational set-up. Their tenure should be at least 5 years and the performance of the units evaluated yearly.
4. Effective and efficient implementation culture should be adopted with adequate quality assurance measures.
5. Universality implies the inclusion of both school children and out-of-school children. Access and equity demand considerations for all, because none should be denied quality educational opportunity.
6. Pre and post implementational survey on any innovation so as to weigh the effectiveness of the curriculum, and to cater for the societal needs.
7. Digital Teachers
8. There should always be follow-up on any educational delivery.
9. Foreign investors should continue to be intervening in the education sector.

**REFERENCES**

- Adekola, T. (2006); Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Primary Schools, Kaduna: National Teachers' Institute.
- Banjo, A. (2006) Oxford Nigerian Primary Dictionary. Ibadan: Oxford University Press in association with University Press PLC.
- Heinich Robert et al (1989); Instructional Media and the New Technologies of Instructions, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kano State Education Sector Project; Teacher Professional Development Core Module Component 1 (Learner-Centred Approaches) Facilitator Guide/Participants' Handbook, 2008.
- Kano Teachers' Voice, (2012): Vol. II No.6.
- National Teachers' Institute (2012), Basic Classroom Teaching Methods and Techniques, Manual for the Re-Training of Primary School Teachers, (TESSA).
- Okwudibia, N. and Ibrahim, S. (eds.) (2001); Re-assessing the Future of Education in Nigeria.
- Universal Basic Education Commission, (2004). Literary Development Across the Curriculum: Creating an Active Environment in Multicultural Clasrooms Demonstration Lessons. New York: IRA International Development Division.