



Understanding Learner-Centered Approach

As educators we prepare and work towards building an engaging environment for our students. Yet it is observed that students are often bored or easily distracted in classrooms leading to disengagement. With emphasis still lying on teacher centered approach this gap could persist. The reason being, in our traditional lecture method, we as educators enter the space as knowledge holders who impart this knowledge to our students. This equation places our students as mere participants who receive information that may or may not be relevant to them.

According to research, young people are often bored in schools because we do not offer them meaningful challenges. We do not engage their thinking through reflection and exploration of possibilities. Instead of feeding them with information it is more important to place the learner at the centre of their own learning, engaging them actively in the process.

So, what is Learner-Centered Approach?

Learner-Centered Approach views learners as active agents by placing their needs at the centre of their learning or placing them at the heart of educators' discipline. This approach allows learners to bring in their daily life experiences, ideas, and knowledge to enable further learning.

For instance,

1. Before beginning with a new chapter (e.g., citizenship in social science) having a conversation with students, asking them for their personal opinions on the topic (citizenship).
2. Create different opportunities for students to exhibit their understanding of the topic through the provision of differentiated assignments. (e.g., giving different assignments on the topic of citizenship to students based on their experience and knowledge.)

This Learner-Centered Approach can be facilitated across age groups and studies have shown various benefits when learners engage in this from an early age.

With this brief introduction to Learner-Centered Approach we would like to encourage you to answer the following reflection questions to explore your own practice –

Reflection

1. As a learner (think back to a time when you have learned something new) at what point were you most engaged. At what point were you least engaged?
2. While you are teaching, observe at what points are your students most engaged. At what points are they least engaged?
3. Make a note of what you were doing as a teacher that caused your students to be engaged.
4. Make a note of what you were doing as a teacher that caused your students to be least engaged.