



## **ADDRESSING APPROACHES IN STUDENT CENTRIC LEARNING**

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of student centred learning is to make students active, creative and bring in keenness. We often do the job of lecturing for the sake of it without worrying much of what the students are really getting and the students on their part may not be involved in listening, but just gazing at their teacher. Many of them don't understand much of what you say, but they never ask questions and clear their doubts. In a bid to avoid this embarrassment and to bring more out of a student we need to adopt intelligent techniques to keep the students on their toes. Student centred environments emphasize mutually complementing relationship between teachers and students which go a long way in establishing a win-win situation in that there would be a collaborating , challenging, student directed and real life conditions. In this regard, this paper discusses some innovative solutions to satisfy the same.*

**Index Terms:** Centred learning, Techniques, Innovative, Approaches, Challenges & Relationship

### **1. Introduction:**

In this technology centric era, the prime focus is on nurturing talent and on top-notch quality. To get the best out of education the teaching faculty have to be innovative to keep the student interested at all times. Johnston stated "Learning is not about passively and order, it is about the messy process of discovery and construction of knowledge". To facilitate learning and to allow the students garner more information, Student Centred Learning methods have been in the fore and implemented worldwide with mixed results. It is the duty of psychologists and teachers alike to discover novel methods to improvise on these suggestions to further the cause. In the western societies teachers and students have been exposed to both the teacher/expert and student centred approaches from public debates and also real life experiences in class rooms. A variety of different approaches have been developed under the umbrella of the student centred approach which include cooperative learning, student centred instruction and hands on learning. In the context of education, ideas and concepts of constructivism led to the development of a student centred approach to learning. Learning is considered to be a complex process that is not possible to deconstruct into logical parts. The learner is not a passive receiver of knowledge but rather, an active participant. According to researchers in the field of education, there is evidence to support the view that a student centred approach has positive consequences in learning; especially the child centred pedagogy supports class participation.

This new approach allows students to become more open and efficient at making decisions on their own. In a student centred approach teachers need to change their roles as professionals, develop competence programs, to adapt their lectures to include interactions with the class to consider students' prior knowledge and background, as well as orient and guide students in their learning process. In this kind of approach both teachers and students need to change their attitudes and behaviours to education. In the quest for knowledge different schools of thought have put forth ideas in the form of the following approaches[16]: Active learning, Problem based learning , collaborative learning , in-time learning etc. [15]Active learning anything course related that all students in a class session are called upon to do other than simply watching, listening,

taking notes. Active learning literature offer approaches think-pair-share, concept tests and thinking aloud pair problem solving. Collaborative learning capitalizes on one another's resources and skills. According to Gokhale (1995), individuals are able to accomplish advanced level of learning and retain more information when they work in a group. In problem based learning, students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation. The role of instructor is to facilitate learning by supporting, guiding, and monitoring the learning process. Furthermore, in Project-based learning, students learn about a subject by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to intricate questions, challenges or problems. The aims of all these approaches is to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students and puts students' interest first, recognizing student voice as central to the learning experience. Among the above discussed approaches I shall now brief on addressing challenges in "Active Learning", "Collaborative Learning", and "Problem-Based Learning" that pose difficulty in implementation.

Extensive researches have been done in the past few decades on students' learning abilities and the approaches aiding these. Few reviews [11] will be discussed here. In the 1970s Marton and Säljö did research to reveal the differences between students in how they approached a specific task and found out that some students made use of deep learning processes with an intension to understand, where as others used surface learning processes in order to reproduce the learning materials.

In a recent version of the ASI (Approach to Studying Inventory) (Entwistle, McCune, & Hounsell, 2002), the strategic approach is discussed by means of two dimensions namely Organized learning and effort management. In the present review, we mainly focus on Studying Inventory (ASI) (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983) and the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) (Biggs, 1987) approaches to study in higher education (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Leung, Ginns, & Kember, 2008; Richardson, 2004) In the past decade, newer teaching methods were implemented that defined learning as an active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organized knowledge in constructive learning (Mayer, 2004, p. 14). The above method encouraged the development of student centered approaches (Hannafin, Hill, & Land, 1997) which describe as "ways of thinking about teaching and learning emphasis, student responsibility and activity in learning rather than content or what the teachers are doing. Accordingly several teaching methods came into vogue: Ex: Student Activity teaching methods Struyven et al., 2006)

Problem based learning (Dochy, Segers, Van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003), Powerful Learning Environments (DeCorte, 2000), Minimal Guidance approach (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006), Open Ended Learning Environment (Hannafin et al., 1997), Collaborative/Cooperative Learning (Slavin, 1995), Project/Problem based Learning techniques (Dekeyser & Baert, 1999) and Case Based Learning (Ellis, Marcus, & Taylor, 2005). These teaching methods are frequently highlighted as contrary to the traditional methods. The sole purpose of all the above approaches is to encourage deep learning and understanding (Hannafin et al., 1997; Lea et al., 2003; Mayer, 2004) rather than memorizing and scoring. It looks at a student's personality development in terms of his handling real life situations than to just find a job and earn a living.

## **2. Methodology:**

The challenges that pose while implementing these systems need to be addressed for betterment of student understanding in order that it could be widely

implemented and accepted. This paper is about addressing those issues by careful thought and insight based on experience and common sense.

### **Challenges in Active Learning Approach: [2-5]**

**Willingness:** When you bring up the discussion of active learning, with colleagues they might immediately tell you that it is a bad idea saying and a waste of class time which is an educational fact. Hence the issue of willingness has to be addressed by making it mandatory for the entire faculty to follow this policy.

Workshops and seminars could be organized where resource persons who are experts in pedagogic techniques could be invited to deliver their thoughts and to train the faculty. These kinds of teacher training programmes may have to be organized repeatedly. In doing so, the issue of time constraints wouldn't matter as the teacher could be well acquainted in their techniques on repeated training.

**Time constraints:** Workshops and seminars could be organized so that teachers could be well acquainted in their techniques after repeated trainings.

**Types of task to be assigned:** A complex task is divided amongst students and the method is explained. Find answer to a question; explain a complex concept. Sketch a flow chart or diagram or plot or time line or concept map; solve a short problem, Next step of a case study analysis. Formulate a questionnaire about the material you just lectured

**Assessments:** Alter the testing procedures to reflect what was done in the active learning format. **Deep understanding of the content:** Have a deep understanding of the content and how a student might go about learning it.

Active learning technique would allow completion of material to be covered in quicker time than the opposite. Acceptance of anything new is not that easy. Change is essence of evolution be it education or anything else.

### **Challenges in Collaborative Learning: [6] & [14]**

"Collaborative Learning is self-explanatory. It means collaboration, a marriage, understanding, in which there is give and take". The issue of understanding one another between individuals in "collaboration" is bound to happen. This issue can be addressed only by developing good chemistry and relationship amongst the students. The students and teachers may be instructed to organize meeting amongst them to discuss viability of this concept for the implementation of the same and hence could be easily accepted. Coordination between pupils is just a matter of knowing each other in and out which shouldn't be difficult.

Time constraint is also one of the foremost issues in this regard. The students' peers (mentors) should know their responsibility of completion of a given task. One has to systematically coordinate and monitor group activities for completion of a task in given time.

Systematic preparation is an obvious necessity especially for the teacher. Periodic self assessment by group members and by the teacher of the student will ensure perfectness. Extensive revision of syllabus will account for increase in group work. This has to be done from time to time; it may be difficult initially, over a period things can fall in place by co-operation and co-ordination between students, staff and the institutions.

The challenge of revision time allocation for assignments can be addressed by revising the syllabus as mentioned above. Reduction in the number of assignments allows more time for each assignment thereby improving standard and quality. Teacher could adapt to this new role by accepting it as a challenge and by leading by example to

this already time tested approach. The key factor here is simply the mindset which needs to change

Adjustment to group work format is a challenge which can be addressed by encouraging activities which can bring harmony amongst them, which is very essential for a successful partnership in the long run. The group activities may range from fun games, puzzles, case studies and quiz.

Increased responsibility for own learning: To address this issue the teacher could adopt a one-to-one assessment criterion, wherein individuals or groups are encouraged into competitiveness by performing exams/assessments amongst themselves in the presence of the mentor.

Collaborative learning could revolutionize the modern day teaching and could go a long way in establishing a strong educational base. It could also improve students' standards and help them in exhibiting confidence and excellence in the real world.

### **Challenges in Problem Based Learning:**

Problem based learning is an interesting approach even though student centred method poses huge challenges for the students-teachers-institutions. PBL is quite demanding on the students in all ways. To address this issue, brain-storming sessions involving real life situations may have to be conducted periodically. [7]

As it is a demanding task for the mentor, it also requires extensive tutor training programs.[8] To understand the affectivity of this approach periodic assessment of student calibre is necessary which adds up to the already hectic, time consuming exercise. This can be addressed only by doing the same, perhaps with the aid of short essays and MCQs. This could also be done by outsourcing (technology based).

As already discussed PBL is also time consuming and demands enormous effort on the part of everyone involved. The solution perhaps is to develop a well planned curriculum which is longer than the usual semester based system (perhaps even eating into the vacation) [9]

Information overload is another issue that has to be encountered. This kind of study is self directed in which a student may be ensured of how much self directed study to do and what information is relevant and necessary. This issue can be addressed by having well trained instructors. [10]

Traditional assumption of the student is another matter of concern. Most students might spend their previous years of education assuming their teacher as the main disseminator of knowledge. Because of this understanding towards the subject matter students may lack ability to ponder about something in the beginning years in this line of learning. [11]

Planning, Organizing and Managing: Nominating group leaders, briefing by the tutor and expert advisory committee formation [12]

Monitoring: Encouraging feedback from students and teaching staff [13]

### **3. Conclusion:**

Student Centered Learning techniques though have limitations in implementing does carry effective ways of delivering education. It has several advantages over traditional methods. The student seems to have better knowledge retention and it provides interesting and challenging educational atmosphere to students. There has to be consensus among the different schools of thought, implementation on pilot basis, government level support and acceptability by the general public. These provocative steps will go a long way in worldwide implementation thereby benefitting the students' community of the present and future world.

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