

LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING: THE STUDENTS' LEVEL OF LEARNING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Students are challenged to develop their own learning skills and strategies for life-long learning. With this, the study investigated and analyzed the level of learning skills and strategies of the students in relation to the extent of implementation of learner-centered teaching in the classroom. This study conducted a survey in a high school institution where 900 students from first year to fourth year levels were considered as respondents. A survey tool was used to evaluate the students' level on their learning skills, collaborative learning, and study skills through learner-centered teaching. It was found out that students rated themselves as Good in their learning skills and strategies. This leads to enriching more the learning skills and strategies of the students and providing them more opportunities to be engaged in meaningful activities from which they develop their own knowledge and skills applicable in their day-to-day lives.

KEYWORDS

Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning Skills and Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

It is part of the vision-mission of the school to form students to become competent individuals moved by the pursuit of seeking the “magis” or doing more and excellence. To become competent, students should be equipped with the appropriate skills to deal with the different challenges that they may encounter in and outside the classroom. These skills can also help them in dealing with their future endeavors in life. Thus, it is the role of the school to prepare these students to face these challenges. With the learner-centered approach espoused by the school, it allows the students to become responsible of their own learning by giving them the chance to explore and be engaged in their own learning process. Providing them with the opportunities to become responsible learners will equip them for college work, in their future careers and undertakings in life. Thus, an environment conducive for learning is just apt for students to become active learners.

It is also emphasized that in the learner-centered classroom the content is also used as a tool to develop learning skills. The function of content then takes on a dual purpose: to acquire knowledge and to develop learning skills. It is the means as well as the end purpose of instruction. It enables learners to become aware of themselves as learners, recognize and understand their strengths and weaknesses, acquire strategies to build on their strengths and compensate for their

weaknesses, become confident in their learning skills, and become self-directed learners, which leads to life-long learning [6].

Moreover, it is also mentioned that schools nowadays are under accountability pressure today. This leads into the desire to increase student retention rates and levels of student success. Thus, shifting the paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered approach is necessary to form students equipped with learning skills and strategies to become successful in high school as well as in their college life. This is also very much aligned to the outcomes-based education (OBE) system where teaching and learning put emphasis on what the student becomes or learning outcomes like acquiring the right skills and strategies in their daily tasks [1].

It is in this light that the objective of this study is to determine the level of learning skills and strategies of the students in the first year to fourth year levels in relation to the extent of implementation of learner-centered teaching in the classroom. The results of this study may lead to enriching the students' learning skills and strategies as well as providing avenues for them to become more engaged in their own learning process.

2. THE STUDENTS' LEARNING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

The students' learning skills and strategies are essential because educators need to know the students' level of self-management on learning in order to become successful students. On the other hand, the students need also to enhance their learning skills and strategies in order to cope with their school work. These will also prepare them to become equipped in their chosen fields. With this, the following significant points and process were considered in this study.

2.1. Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on the constructivism and experiential learning theories. Constructivism learning theory states that human beings produce or construct meaning, understanding and knowledge of the world from their own experiences. The benefits of this approach make learning more engaging rather than merely transferring of information. In teaching it is important for educators to facilitate the process of learning by using existing knowledge and experiences of the students. With this, constructivism promotes learner-centered rather than teacher-centered [5].

In like manner, Kolb's experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, and knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" [5]. Looking back, Kolb's experiential learning theory was derived from the experiential learning theories of Rogers, Jung and Piaget. It presents a cyclical model of learning consisting of four stages. In facilitating the class, the teacher may begin at any stage: concrete experience ("do"), reflective observation ("observe"), abstract conceptualization ("think") and active experimentation ("plan"). Kolb's cycle of learning paves the way for learner-centered teaching by allowing students' experiences to be involved in the learning process. These stimulate the imagination, keepings participants hooked on the experience [5].

With these theories, achieving learner-centered approach can be done through learner-centered teaching. It is also emphasized that learner-centered teaching focuses attention on what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, and whether the student is retaining and applying the learning. Through these, the learning in the classroom is not just confined within the four walls of the classroom. They can apply what they have learned in dealing with different challenges that they will face [3].

In connection to learner-centered teaching, it is also important on how much learning skills and strategies are learned by the students. This helps them to become more aware of how they manage their own learning. It also serves as indicators if students are able to develop appropriate skills

they need in the process of learning. One also added that one of the basic facts that all teachers know about the learning process is that the one who does the work does the learning. This includes developing the communication skills needed to collaborate with others, taking more control of their own learning, and developing life-long learning skills [2].

Thus, the focus of learner-centered learning environment is that teachers serve as facilitators of learning. The teaching-learning process use a variety of instructional materials and technology and a variety of strategies to make the teaching-learning effective. With this, students gain knowledge and skills which they can apply in varied contexts and situations. Eventually, students can become more responsible for their learning.

2.2. Methodology

The descriptive method of research was used in this study. It considered one high school institution with a population of 1,887 students for the academic year 2011-2012. In this paper, 900 students from first year to fourth year classes or 47.70 percent were considered as the respondents.

A manual also served as a guide to construct the researcher-made questionnaire on learning skills and strategies [4]. This instrument was used to evaluate the students' level on their learning skills, collaborative learning, and study skills through learner-centered teaching. In addition, pilot testing was also done to test its validity and reliability. In the first attempt, there were 20 questions that were given to a class not included in this study. Looking at the results, it was recommended to interview students to verify if they fully understood the questions. From 20 questions, it narrowed down to 15. Students rated each statement whether very much practiced, often practiced, somewhat practiced and not practiced. The following scale was used:

Responses	Rating	Interval Scale	Description
Very Much Practiced	4	3.70 – 4.00	Very Good
Often Practiced	3	2.80 – 3.69	Good
Somewhat Practiced	2	1.90 – 2.79	Fair
Not Practiced	1	1.00 – 1.89	Poor

This survey was conducted to help validate if a learner-centered teaching could aid students to develop the learning skills and strategies that would lead them to become responsible and independent learners. These skills are needed to prepare them in college and in their future careers in life. In addition, an in-depth interview with the students was conducted to substantiate some significant points found out in the study. With this, the following results were obtained.

2.3. The Learning Skills and Strategies of the Students

Table 1 presents the results of the overall learning skills and strategies of the students from first year to fourth year levels. This is composed of 15 learning skills and strategies with three main components, namely: intrinsic goal orientation, cognitive and metacognitive and resource management skills and strategies. Under each main component are specific indicators. Students

evaluated themselves using the Likert scale. The overall result was 2.86 that equated to Good level. The results were shown to the teachers as a confidential document. They confirmed that the results were true based on their own observations of their students.

Based on the results, it revealed that the students obtained a Good level of their learning skills and strategies on intrinsic goal orientation. Intrinsic goal orientation means one's own enthusiasm to work on a particular task. Students made use of the resources such as books, Encarta, Internet and the like. They also exert much effort to learn the lesson if the topic is difficult. This implies that students make use of the resources in in order to enrich their learning. Even if the topic is difficult, they try their best to learn the subject. This is a good indicator that students have developed the skill of making use of books, electronic media and the like. It also displays a good attitude of not easily giving up even if there were challenges met in the course.

Table 1. Level of Students' Learning Skills and Strategies

INDICATORS	Mean	SD	Desc
Intrinsic Goal Orientation			
Makes use of the resources such as Encarta, Internet, ...	3.09	0.83	Good
Exerts much effort to learn the lesson if the topic is difficult	3.17	0.76	Good
Cognitive and Metacognitive Skills and Strategies			
Rehearsal			
Memorizes key words to remind of important concepts in class	3.18	0.80	Good
Elaboration			
Relates the lesson to what is already know or experience	2.97	0.85	Good
Connects ideas from one topic to another to understand better	2.80	0.86	Good
	2.39	0.99	Fair
Organization			
Makes simple charts, outlines, diagrams or tables to help organize one's thoughts	2.62	0.82	Fair
Critical Thinking			
Creates own ideas and examples to be prepared for class	2.89	0.76	Good
Effort and Self-Regulation			
Sets goals in order to direct the activities	2.47	0.86	Fair
Goes through with the readings			

Resource Management Skills and Strategies:			
Time and Study Environment			
Balances academics and involvement even with clubs	2.88	0.82	Good
	2.86	0.89	Good
Finds time to study even for a short period of time	2.59	0.95	Fair
Studies at least an hour a day	3.29	0.86	Good
Finds a place to concentrate on homework, projects and test	2.91	0.88	Good
Peer Learning			
Works with other students to assist in the assignments	2.73	0.87	Fair
Help Seeking			
Asks the teacher when seeking for help			
OVERALL	2.86	0.37	Good

Legend: Desc = Description

For the cognitive and metacognitive skills and strategies or the ability of the students to process information, they rated themselves at Good level in most of the indicators. However, students rated themselves Fair in making simple charts, outlines, diagrams or tables to help them organize their thoughts, creating their own ideas and examples to be prepared for class and going through with the readings without waiting for the teacher to discuss. Even if some teachers displayed sample charts, diagrams and outlines in their delivery of instruction, students did not fully utilize these skills. This implies that teacher can teach more the students on how to make use of these so that they can do it on their own. This would also lead them in creating their own ideas and examples once these skills and strategies are taught. Moreover, some students just wait for the teacher to discuss and not going through the readings anymore ahead of time. This challenges teachers to give guided homework or outputs to encourage students to read for them to enrich their learning.

With regard to creating their own ideas and examples to be prepared for class and going through with the readings without waiting for the teacher to discuss, it is important that students are able to apply the knowledge imparted to them to develop their critical thinking skills. One also explains that in order to be learner-centered, instructional practice needs to change [6]. This is also in relation to constructivism where each learner must construct meaning for himself or herself based on what they have read. Then the learning that is taking place is the connection to one's own pre-knowledge of the subject and linking it to the new lesson.

With resource management skills and strategies or the ability of the students to be resourceful and manage their time, they rated themselves as Good in most of the indicators. In this case, students find time to be involved in different clubs of the school and able to balance their academics and club involvement. This is a good learning skill and strategy because learning is not just confined within the four walls of the classroom. Eventually, this is important not only in school but also in their future endeavors because they know how to look for their place and pace in making a task.

On the other hand, students rated themselves as Fair in studying at least an hour a day and asking the teacher for help. Although it was evident that students find time to study even in a short period, this implies that students study but fairly reach to an hour. This also suggests that students

find difficulty to study even for an hour. As a consequence, students do not exert much more effort to become excellent students.

Moreover, students seldom approach the teacher when seeking help. On the contrary, it was observed that teachers accommodated students' questions and clarifications. Nonetheless, students still have inhibitions to approach teachers when seeking for some help. This is relevant to the results of the previous discussions where students rarely explain their questions and justify their responses. There is still an element of shame or being afraid of getting bullied by their classmates if they get the wrong questions or answers in the class discussion as mentioned in one of the interviews from the students.

2.4. The Learning Skills and Strategies of the Students per Year Level

Table 2 shows the learning skills and strategies of each year level. This presents the level of learning skills and strategies developed among students through the learner-centered teaching. Overall, all year levels rated themselves as Good except the fourth year which was only Fair.

For the intrinsic goal orientation category, the students rated themselves as Good in making use of resources like books, Internet, et cetera and exerting much effort to learn the lesson if the topic is difficult. This indicates the students' practice of maximizing the use of resource materials to help them learn the subject matter. With this, they exert much effort to learn by extending some of their time looking for resources.

Table 4.1.1 Level of Students' Learning Skills and Strategies Per Year Level

Indicators	FIRST YEAR			SECOND YEAR			THIRD YEAR			FOURTH YEAR		
	Mean	SD	Desc	Mean	SD	Desc	Mean	SD	Desc	Mean	SD	Desc
Intrinsic Goal Orientation												
1. Makes use of the resources such as Encarta, internet, ...	3.13	0.84	Good	3.02	0.85	Good	3.04	0.85	Good	3.16	0.77	Good
2. Exerts much effort to learn the lesson if the topic is difficult	3.19	0.73	Good	3.15	0.83	Good	3.24	0.76	Good	3.03	0.70	Good
Cognitive and Metacognitive Skills and Strategies												
Rehearsal												
3. Memorizes key words to remind of important concepts in class	3.19	0.76	Good	3.26	0.78	Good	3.28	0.77	Good	2.91	0.87	Good
Elaboration												
4. Relates the lesson to what is already know or experience	3.03	0.81	Good	2.86	0.88	Good	3.08	0.88	Good	2.85	0.82	Good
5. Connects ideas from one topic to another to understand better	2.82	0.86	Good	2.93	0.85	Good	2.76	0.89	Fair	2.69	0.81	Fair
Organization												
6. Makes simple charts, outlines, diagrams or tables to help organize one's thoughts	2.40	1.04	Good	2.31	0.99	Good	2.50	1.00	Fair	2.32	0.92	Fair
Critical Thinking	2.64		Fair	2.66		Fair	2.59		Fair	2.59		Fair
	2.84		Fair	2.91		Fair	2.96		Fair	2.86		Fair

7. Creates own ideas and examples to be prepared for class	2.60	0.80	Good	2.46	0.87	Good	2.41	0.80	Good	2.38	0.84	Good
Effort and Self-Regulation												
8. Sets goals in order to direct the activities		0.72	Fair		0.83	Fair		0.78	Fair		0.69	Fair
9. Goes through with the readings		0.84			0.90			0.86			0.81	
Resource Management Skills and Strategies:												
Time and Study Environment												
10. Balances academics and involvement even with clubs	2.82	0.79	Good	2.88	0.80	Good	2.99	0.85	Good	2.83	0.82	Good
	2.82			2.86			3.00			2.74		
11. Finds time to study even for a short period of time	2.79	0.90	Good	2.53	0.95	Good	2.59	0.85	Good	2.33	0.85	Fair
12. Studies at least an hour a day	3.28			3.18			3.36			3.32		Fair
13. Finds a place to concentrate on homework, projects and test		0.99	Fair		0.95	Fair		0.91	Fair		0.88	Good
		0.87	Good		0.95	Good		0.79	Good		0.87	Good
	2.70			2.89			3.12			2.94		
Peer Learning												
14. Works with other students to assist in the assignments	2.73		Fair	2.72		Good	2.76		Good	2.67		Good
		0.89			0.90			0.87			0.80	
Help Seeking			Fair			Fair			Fair			Fair
15. Asks the teacher when seeking for help		0.85			0.89			0.88			0.85	
OVERALL	2.87	0.36	Good	2.84	0.37	Good	2.91	0.40	Good	2.77	0.33	Fair

Legend: Desc = Description

The cognitive and metacognitive skills and strategies, it is divided into sub-indicators, namely: rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking and effort and self-regulation. The rehearsal serves as the preparation stage of learning; elaboration is recognizing connection of topics; organization is using charts, diagrams and the like to organize one's thoughts; critical thinking is promoting students to become independent learners; and effort and self-regulation is showing efforts of learning exemplified by the students. In general, the first year to fourth year levels mostly observed the same pattern or level of learning skills and strategies. On the other hand, the third year and fourth year levels rated themselves as Fair in connecting ideas from one topic to another. Based on the results, giving of the objectives and asking the students to summarize what has been taken up were less evident. This contributed to the student learning outcomes of the students wherein they could not thoroughly connect the ideas from one topic to another.

In addition, from first year to fourth year levels, they were Fair in making simple charts, outlines, diagrams or tables to organize their thoughts, going through the readings without waiting for the teacher to discuss and creating their own ideas and examples to be prepared for class. Since students lack the skill to think critically as shown in the previous discussions, they were dependent on what teachers would present to them. They were not able to do it independently like using diagrams to organize their notes, going through the readings and making their own examples. These skills can be taught to the students so that they may use these in their own learning process. It is also important that the students be encouraged on going through the readings without waiting for the teachers to discuss by giving them guide questions.

The resource management skills and strategies have specific indicators that talk about time and study environment, peer learning and help seeking. In general, students rated themselves as Good, but it varied from first year to fourth year level. Nonetheless, the first year students rated themselves as Fair in working with other students to assist them in their assignments. This means that students may be given the opportunity to work with their peers to share insights. On the other hand, as their first year in high school, they are still on the process of developing this skill on working with others.

Moreover, the fourth year students need to enrich their learning skills and strategies in finding time to study even for a short period of time. Students could have been bombarded with a lot of projects in different subject areas. This also came out in the interview with the students. They have little time of studying because of some demanding projects that they need to work individually or as a group. For instance, in the third quarter, it is a practice that fourth year students make a research paper. At the same time, their Science subject required them for a group project on a three-dimensional (3-D) amusement park applying the laws of Physics they have discussed in class. As the shortest quarter, they really had a difficult time balancing on these projects, making their homework and answering their quizzes and long tests.

Furthermore, first year to fourth year students rated themselves as Fair in studying at least an hour a day and asking the teachers when seeking help. With regard to study time, students should be guided more on their study habits by giving them points on what to study. Like in reading, students will be given guide questions on what to get in the readings. Moreover, seeking help from classmates and teachers are significant survival skills in learning. As social beings, people work with others to help each other. Hence, students should be taught on interpersonal skills by being confident to seek help from other people. On the other hand, it is also understandable that first year students are still on the process of testing the waters on how to deal with their peers and teachers. Eventually, in time they will develop the skill of seeking help with other people.

3. CONCLUSIONS

It has been revealed that majority of the students rated themselves as Good in most of their learning skills and strategies. In some areas, they rated themselves as Fair. Based on the results, no indicator has reached the Very Good level. Consequently, there is a challenge of mastering the learning skills and strategies of the students. It is very important that students are engaged and involved in their own leaning process so that they can adapt more learning skills and strategies for them to become active learners. These learning skills and strategies aid the students to become responsible learners as well. Furthermore, these also help them in making learning more authentic and applicable in their daily undertakings in life.

On the other hand, the learner-centered approach has to be evaluated in order to enhance and strengthen the delivery of curriculum and instruction. Moreover, there is also a need to assess the transformation of learning developed among the students. When teachers use more of learner-centered teaching in class, the learning skills and strategies of students develop or increase because teachers can provide more opportunities for the enhancement of the learning skills and strategies of students.

Among teachers, they are highly encouraged to integrate in their teaching how these learning skills and strategies can be done by the students. For instance, allowing students to make use of graphic organizers such as the Venn diagram in order to see the similarities and differences. In this manner, students are able to make use of these graphic organizers in order to see relationships. In addition, one of the learning skills and strategies considered in this study is dealing with one's peers in doing school work. This is one way of teaching them in dealing with different personalities in their future jobs and careers. Collaborative work can be done in the

classroom that will transcend even after college. Hence, the learning skills and strategies of the students are life-long learning skills that they can use not only for higher learning but in their future endeavors in life.

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