

Chapter 10

Learner Centred Approach for Global Leadership in Management Education

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ABSTRACT

Management education institutions world over are adopting learner centred approaches with a hope to enhance the effectiveness of teaching learning process and also ensure management education fulfils its role of creating leaders who are global players on a sustainable basis. However, the evidence supporting these is tangential. Even the proof illustrating improvement in student learning through use of these approaches is still questioned. Through exhaustive literature review and grounded theory approach this chapter investigates the learner centred approach - teaching nexus and reflects on the use of them to enhance student learning in this globalized knowledge society. The critical review of the learner centred approaches for better understanding to adopt appropriate strategies by management educators is also delved. This is hoped to enhance the value of management education which is vital in this turbulent world and pressures from knowledge driven economies.

INTRODUCTION

The use of learner centre approach also referred to as student centred approach in management education is emphasized time and again. This approach for learning and teaching brings optimism and opportunity for both learners and educators in education. It liberates both the teacher and the student in the scholarly enterprise by removing traditional boundaries and restrictions to knowledge. However, it also challenges us to consider the best possible approach and the adoption of it so that our students and, more fundamentally, our actions as educators in the process of exploiting these approaches for pedagogical advantage. The term 'learner centred approach' is used extensively throughout the educational world; it is the latest in an assortment of terms that have been used to describe the how management education can be made more effective, sustainable and facilitate in creating future leaders. Malcolm Knowles (1980) popular-

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ized the concept of *andragogy* (“the art and science of helping adults learn”). Andragogy is not without criticism. Brookfield (2003) called the theory “culture blind,” stating that the concept of self-directed learning and the concept of the student are establishing a non-threatening relationship with the teacher as facilitator of learning may neglect races and cultures that value the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and direction. This self-directed learning a process in which individuals takes the initiative, without the help of others in planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences (Knowles, 1975), is the basis of learner centred approach.

BACKGROUND

The use of learner centre approach also referred to as student centred approach in management education is emphasized time and again. This approach for learning and teaching brings optimism and opportunity for both learners and educators in education. It liberates both the teacher and the student in the scholarly enterprise by removing traditional boundaries and restrictions to knowledge. However, it also challenges us to consider the best possible approach and the adoption of it so that our students and, more fundamentally, our actions as educators in the process of exploiting these approaches for pedagogical advantage. The term ‘learner centred approach’ is used extensively throughout the educational world; it is the latest in an assortment of terms that have been used to describe the how management education can be made more effective, sustainable and facilitate in creating future leaders. Perhaps by defining - albeit very rapidly - a number of concepts we will be able to outline our position as regards certain recent debates within the field of learning theories. In fact, the very notion of “student/learner-centred learning”, which has enjoyed so much success and which has been seen as one of the central tenets in educational reforms (American Psychological Association, 1997), remains a complex construct and the outcome of various compromises and were we to take all fourteen of the guiding principles of this approach together it would be virtually impossible to be faithful to them all. Rather than highlight, therefore, a homogenous perspective, as that described by Bonk & Cunningham (1998) within a socio-cultural or constructivist-social vision, we would prefer to focus on a commitment to the very conception of education: not so much for its novelty, which when all is said and done is perhaps not so innovative, but rather for its efforts to make a break with educational practices based solely on the perspective of the teacher. Indeed, “centring” the approach on the person that has to learn is what education should have always sought to achieve.

The organization of teaching and learning activities that is described here draws on various and complementary, approaches. One of these is what we might, in general terms, call “learning through experience” and which has its roots in the work of Dewey and the North American pragmatists (as Valsiner & van der Veer (2000) remind us, pragmatism, and in particular that propounded by Dewey, underlies the origins of the social conception of the mind), but also in Piagetian constructivism, and more recently in the works of authors such as Kolb & Schank who stress the idea of learning by doing. This long tradition - albeit one that is not always entirely coherent among the work of the authors cited above - gives pride of place to the idea that we learn thanks to a practical process, of physical but also cognitive manipulation, in which we are constantly comparing and contrasting what we do and say with the results that we expect to obtain and, thus, we proceed adjusting our behaviour and adapting our mental schemata. It is a relatively simple idea, and depending on how it is formulated almost ingenuous, but

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