

**STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING AS APPROACH TO ENHANCE BETTER
QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION PROCESS**

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Abstract: Student Centered Learning (SCL) is a modern approach to enhance better quality of the education process, it has diverse connotations but often its philosophy is substituted by more practical issues within the education training. As a teaching approach several observations might be traced. Within broad studies network there had been launched different teaching modules performed by selected visiting lecturers from the partner universities, this approach has potentially good results but sometimes the expected outcomes are not fulfilled. The aim of this presentation is to study best practices but also to resolve the appearing obstacles and setbacks. That is why the original methodology has to be reassessed.

Keywords: proactive learning, education needs, students` involvement

In the beginning SCL concept appears in the 30`s, when American educators have introduced the terms “teacher-centered” and “student-centered”, thus dividing the learning process into two different levels. The first one may be seen as direct instruction, where the lecturer takes full control of the whole education cycle as most active part of learning intercourse – lecturing, demonstrating concepts, moderating discussions, issuing instructions.

Contrastingly, the latter form induces opportunities for learners to be more active, they are invited not only to participate more actively in discussion, but to be more dynamic in undertaking the whole learning process, and generally to contribute the overall design of the course of studies. This method tends to be more productive in the advanced forms of studies and break the standard view of classroom, they are quite efficient in providing internships or apprenticeships, in producing independent research and developing community oriented projects (**Bonwell, C. C., & Eison, J. A. (1991).**).

This approach appeared also in Europe when Scandinavian schooling system was pioneering such patterns and hence forth SCL was appearing in other European countries with main emphasize being put on giving learners initiative for more independent cycle of instruction.

While the needs of inserting individual approaches into the system of education were looking for new patterns, it was a period of finding appropriate definitions. One point of view more conceptually centered on the educational paradigms dividing between so called “Instruction Paradigm”, which simply transferred knowledge from teacher to learner. It was substituted by “Learning Paradigm” in which emphasize was put on the free choice of students through acquisition of knowledge and individual analysis to the creation of learners` own and new expertise (**Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995).**).

Other researchers focus on the learning process underlying the shift from just teaching to a self managed approach of an active student participation during this interaction (**Huba, M.E., Freed, J.E. (2000).**).

However, there are four key elements in this new approach when the teachers place on the students more self-responsibility during the education, namely: knowledge-based, learning-based, assessment-based and community compound based. Each of these elements marks the appearing stages of developing SCL, where each one is a step further of increasing responsibilities the students may build during the teacher-learner interaction. Which means that during the first stage main attention is turned just towards getting independently to new knowledge, during the second we notice already developed abilities of students how to organize themselves the collaborative learning process (**Bruffee, K. A. (1984).**).

The third stage is one of growing debates and concerns as there is already added an element of self evaluation and therefore some elements of peer reviewing might be introduced. The fourth stage is more creative on long run which facilitates building special learning teams, grouped around certain learning task. It is therefore essential that these communities turn to be self-reliable and offering the bases of own democratic regulation in order to give equal opportunities to presentation. This enables that the learners put main attention to the team spirit and collective management when the task solving implementation will be attributed.

Although SCL methods are popular for quite long time, this strategy have been biased by some opponents mainly because it breaks the traditional models of learning process, but also requires from the learner more open attitude, flexibility and capacity to entrust the learners some independent roles. It might also harm the

traditionally established model of dominance of teacher towards the students even if some of them do not recognize this.

There have been going many discussions and SCL is still not fully accepted on every level or type of education, but its proponents focus on following positive effects:

- * teaching process becomes more individualized, taking into account personal features and interests of the students;
- * learners advance faster in their capacities to act autonomously;
- * learners have the advantage to do their assignments more independent and flexibly at anytime and anywhere, by this they are avoiding the traditional model of school room;
- * learners receive more possibilities to use their own preferences and to be subjects of displaying a new role of attributed greater own responsibilities.

Learning results:

- * when we refer of civic education, the students obtain more confidence in their abilities and develop further the idea of responsibility towards the academic assignments and better interaction between the learner and teacher;
- * students are proposed to be more self-reliant and responsible as members of the specially designed community, they follow diligent attitudes of keeping academic values and acquired understanding of research ethics.

There are adjoining problems alongside the SCL strategies and its implementation as this new approach should be balanced and applied in measured manner. It depends much on the nature of syllabus, the timing and duration of classes which define how SCL should be administrated, but these might be topic of another research. Also there should be taken into account that the students might naturally feel objected towards the application of this not typical learning method, but at the same time other students may be more enthusiastic of this form of learning that entrust them more freedom in acquiring knowledge and use of more differentiated ways of presentation in front of public. Some might feel timid with such self-managed learning strategy and in difficulty when presenting the obtained results, but the positive effects of SCL can be traced in the practice of teaching and overall results when going to the examination. Also the students, even those with some objections, finally confess the importance of such approach that makes them more secure when preparing presentation or even later going to a job interviews.

Furthermore, there are different ways of gradually introducing this new learning technology, which take into account the specific features of each learners group and the real circumstances where these teaching is implied.

There are also some helpful advises to develop more efficiently such SCL techniques as following:

So called book reviews reassessment through interactive sessions when students are enabled to write a report or to develop analysis through pair-share presentations. As final result we would have a bookend analysis of learned bibliography through the course.

Students are given possibility to launch an immediate feedback on certain debated matter during the class (**Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K.A. (1991).**)

Students are divided to work in groups on presentations or framework projects, which would require full use of learned course material.

Students may develop a formal cycle of self elaborated research with their own engagement on the front which may include independent exploration of studied topics, producing academic explanations and elaboration of sustained scientific results. This experience may be fulfilled with a self-evaluation.

Student groups may develop team learning through applying peer review techniques with competing presentations of inquiry, of problem solving, or discovery of new expertise.

There may be introduced an approach of case studies and problem-based learning (**Michaelson, L.K., Knight, A.B., Fink, L.D. (2004).**)

The latter model had been widely developed by the author during the specialized master courses on international relations and diplomacy when the students were given special assignments to develop as team presentations on given topic. This required full self management of the groups and stressing on the role acquisition during the presentations instead of mere reading a paper. Following the groups were asked to compete and develop debates. However, the evaluation of such presentations have been subject of further improvement as there is certain difficulty in gradation of the obtained marks of the presenters.

Summarizing, when using SCL and an approach of peer reviewing lecturer might settle the agenda of debates among all learners and enable them to develop independently better understanding of rights and responsibilities of the performers in the education process.

The students will acquire to select best experiences in learning practices and will develop a sense of mutual responsibility. Any possible deficiencies and deviations from the balanced model of responsibility centered teaching pattern might be traced to be used in following discussions.

For the future needs of differentiated approach a short description of various learning models in number of countries could be additionally presented with the aim to see how SCL is applicable within already established teaching traditions with special focus that education is predominantly a conservative model and all reforms or improvements should be undertaken with precaution and fulfillment of the national specifics.

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