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KNOWLEDGE, CURRICULUM AND UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINES

Learner Centered Curriculum Approach for Curriculum Development

Meaning of learner centered approach for curriculum development

In learner centered curriculum approach the center of interest is the learner. The students are given more importance in this type of curriculum design. Most of the education experts and educational psychologists are in favor of this learner centered curriculum.

First of all Rousseau emphasized that education should be according to the interests of the child. He should be provided a free and democratic environment. The interest of the child should be a base for the curriculum design. Learner centered design emphasizes individual development and their approach to organizing the curriculum merges from the needs, interests and purposes of students.

Dewey's contribution in this respect is an important one. He organized so many child centered activity programmes. These programmes were based on the scientific study of child's mental, physical, social and spiritual characteristics and needs.

It is a method of teaching that shifts the focus of instruction from teacher to the student. Here the aim is to develop the independence of the learner by making learner active in his learning path. It focuses on skills that enable lifelong learning and independent problem-solving.

This learner-centered approach is based on constructivist learning theory that put emphasis on learner's role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experiences.

In Learner-centered curriculum approach, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn and how they will assess their own learning. Here students take a more active role.

So, student-centered learning requires the student to be active, responsible participants in their own learning and with their own pace of learning.

Here the teacher acts as a facilitator of learning for individuals rather than for the class as a whole.

Characteristics of Learner Centered Curriculum

- This type of curriculum gives importance to learner and considers child as the centre of interest which is the most natural approach.
- The interest of the child is the most important factor in the process of teaching and learning. This factor is highly emphasized in this type of curriculum.
- In this curriculum the teacher's role is not that of a task-master but that of a guide. In this curriculum, the child is treated as, plant, the teacher as gardener and the school as a garden. Thus, and child grows and develops in a natural atmosphere.
- Students centered curriculum gives several options (special activities, exploratory courses and other experiences) to the students. The options are based on knowledge of learner characteristics.
- Students are actively involved in planning and evaluation of the options in general and for themselves in particular.
- Learner centered curriculum points out that "the more experience in life a child has the more eager he will to learn."

Advantages of learner centered approach

- This approach to curriculum gives power to learners.
- The curriculum provides a lot of help and assistance to the learners.
- Students see their needs clearly reflected in the classroom, which is very motivating.
- It creates a direct link between class work and the learner's needs.
- Learners can easily transfer new skills in day to day activities.
- It encourages learner's persistence.
- The curriculum gives students a written detail about the types of learning experiences they need to acquire for completing the expected learning objectives.
- The curriculum makes them familiar with the learning objectives. This way it makes the tasks of learning purposeful and goal oriented. This purposefulness makes them motivated towards learning as they are aware of the types of behavioral changes expected as learning outcome from the study of a particular subject or doing a certain activity to complement learning.

- A properly developed curriculum is accompanied by the resource materials needed to supplement it. These resources include suggested experiments, learning activities, projects, assignments, references etc. These materials are equally important for both teachers and learners.
- A curriculum is a properly developed framework of the teaching-learning process. It includes learning objectives that should be known to the learners. When learners are aware of the learning objectives they can plan, execute and evaluate them for the realization of the learning outcome of the course being studied.
- Hence a properly developed curriculum can help the learner in their learning process from beginning to end for the realization of the set learning objectives. Realization of these learning objectives results in overall growth and development in all the aspects and dimensions of their personality.

Disadvantages of learner centered approach

- It often relies on the teacher's ability to create materials appropriate to learner's expressed needs.
- It requires more skill on the part of the teacher as well as their time and resources.
- It is often difficult for teachers to make an acceptable balance among competing needs and interests of students.
- In terms of man, material and resources this approach could be a luxury that learners often cannot afford.