

**SCOPE FOR STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING IN GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS IN EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT, ANDHRA
PRADESH,INDIA; A STUDY ON THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE**

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"I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." -- Albert Einstein.

Abstract

Education since ages has been sage-centered or teacher-centered be it in Europe, or in Asia. However, with changing times education included rational thinking which paved ways to scientific thinking. This thinking has opened new ways of learning. Currently, SCL or Student centered learning takes the centre stage .

This article is an attempt to find out the effectiveness of Student-Centered Learning, in which a questionnaire was employed to 40-50 teachers of English in Government schools of East Godavari District. The questions were meant to elicit 1). The understanding of the teachers on the abilities of their students, 2.) Teachers' perception on the effectiveness of the text books, 3). The students' perception of the text 4). The training needs of the teachers.

In the teacher-centered classes the teachers go to the class and teach the scheduled lesson/topic irrespective of the assimilation by the students. Teachers focus more on completing the syllabus instead of whether it is learned by the taught. Teaching methodologies also got woven around this. However, things have changed for good and many thinkers and their 'isms' like the Naturalism, Pragmatism, Progressivism, Realism, Existentialism etc, paved way to Student Centered Learning (SCL).

The article is about the teachers' perception about students and their language skills as they foray into SCL which is the crux of CCE Model (Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation), the text book and it's suitability for SCL and a general self-perception regarding their own skills (teachers') and abilities in the SCL context.

Methodology: A Questionnaire has been designed to elicit the basic understanding of the teachers about the present situation in schools and the relevance of the textbook to the CCE Method which calls for SCL.

Context:The ambitious English language curriculum --recommended for schools in the CCE Model-- is in a transition. It is being observed that the students, mostly from government schools in the rural areas, have difficulties regarding their foundation. The opportunity and challenges

before them in this model to **deal with** the learning demands is intriguing. In this context a questionnaire was developed and employed to the teachers teaching respective classes, and a sample ranging from 40 to 50 has been collected to primarily understand the experience of the teachers and their perception during this transition to the student-centeredness in the curriculum. The findings reveal shocking realities. There seems to be on an average a 25% of students who are being promoted from lower classes who can't recognize the English alphabet in an order. However, on an average almost 25% of students are found to comprehend on their own and do the exercises given at the end of the lessons.

Teachers opine that the text-book is upto the level of the students with an exception to the 25% of students who can't recognize the English alphabet in an order. It is widely understood that textbook is the most important tool in the learning process; particularly, in the student-centered learning. It has the blueprint of a strategy to impart the required skills keeping in view the expected outcomes. Even the teaching-learning design is incorporated in it.

A text book is an effective tool for SCL. Neuro-linguistic programming identifies two essential types of learning; 1) learning through pain, and 2) learning through pleasure. Hence, a textbook must have prose and poetry which **appeal** to their aesthetic sense and gives pleasure. It must carry exercises that are guiding, motivating, persuading learning, and giving the student a sense of achievement.

The state council of education and research has developed the state curriculum framework-2011 and Position Papers in tune with the National Curriculum Framework-2005 and the Right to Education Act-2009. A new set of text books were designed and developed to be introduced in a phased manner starting from classes I to VII in 2012 -'13 and from IV to IX in the year 2013 to '14. A common English text book has been introduced for both Non-English medium and English medium schools from classes I to X following the states like Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Kerala.

The Objective

The objective is to find out the scope for effectiveness of student-centered learning in government schools in East Godavari district.

The Present Scenario: Most of the government schools have infrastructure which is an excuse for infrastructure. The class-rooms are crowded, ill-lit, (if not little) under-ventilated, dilapidated buildings, broken floors, no benches and desks, no good infra-structure. Teachers' competence and orientation lacks updation due to the demands to finish the syllabus—the demand to perform within the characteristic constraints of a government school; though there is a demand for SCL, the examination system and the demand for marks and ranks in competition with the corporate schools has shadowed it. There is still a hurry to finish the syllabus and prove the performance which once again puts the system back into teacher-centered learning.

The CCE method comes as a silver lining ; it calls for SCL and that is a rainbow. Nevertheless, there are issues like exercises... like chart-work, bit books, sketches, etc that are expensive, and not affordable by the children as most of them are from economically challenged backgrounds. Some children, being (SC/ST/BC) hostelites, have their own constraints. Yet, SCL gives lot of scope for innovation in delivery and usage of available resources creatively amidst the constraints.

The Hypothesis: The aim of the study is to prove that SCL is the best alternative for TCL (Teacher-Centered Learning). It is purposeful and helps the students imbibe knowledge, think critically, participate creatively, and apply it right from their day to day transaction from qualitative, first-hand learning experience.

Methodology: This paper is an attempt to bring out the analysis of the findings using a proper questionnaire as a tool. The geographic area - East Godavari district - has been chosen as the researcher is working in a government high school, Korukonda, in East Godavari district, besides the proximity of schools, and the familiarity with teachers and headmasters in the particular geographic area. In addition, the economic, social, and cultural conditions are almost the same in the district. The questionnaires were designed to elicit responses from the teachers, students, and Headmasters of government high schools in rural areas of East Godavari District. Four different kinds of questionnaires were used to capture the responses as given below:

1. **Class-Specific Questionnaire to Teachers:** The questions were framed to find out whether the text book is up to the level of the students of that class, whether there is enough time to complete the syllabus, ability of the students to read and comprehend words and sentences, ability of the students to follow the instructions and complete the exercises, ability of the students to do project work, and a general opinion on the components like vocabulary, grammar, listening, study skills, oral activity etc.
2. **General Questionnaire to Teachers:** It focuses on the need for training, whether the syllabus gives a sense of achievement (the most important motivator) to the students, whether they need a guide to understand and deliver the contents of the text book, whether the time to deliver is sufficient, and is the curriculum student-centered.
3. **Questionnaire to the Headmaster/Headmistress:** It focuses on curriculum and instruction in CCE method and the teachers' ability to deliver. The issues and challenges identified, the students' response to this CCE, the pass percentage, Training needs of teachers to adapt to CCE method, whether it gives scope for innovation, feelings of self-achievement in students, whether the syllabus is apt for

Let us look at the responses captured from teachers teaching from class 6th to 10th. It is interesting to know that a thread of similarity passes through all the classes and this shows that there is adequate room for student-centered learning and is effective even when the foundation of the students is not good. Significant observation is: 25% of students are unable to identify the alphabet in an order.

Responses Captured from the Teachers Teaching 7th Class

A similarity seems to exist in the competency levels of students. The teachers feel that the text book is appropriately at the level of the students. Time suggested for the reading and writing exercises is enough. 25-50% students are able to follow the lessons. 50-75% students are able to complete the exercises at the end of the lessons. Students are able to do exercises on Study Skills, Project Work, Reading comprehension, and to some extent writing. However, it is observed that the students ability is limited when it comes to exercises on vocabulary and grammar. English medium students are found to be successful in conversion of drama into story. 25-50% students read the lessons on their own. They are able to comprehend the text to some extent. 10-25% are able to complete the conversations. 75% can identify the alphabet. 50-75% can read words and sentences. 75% can do project work on their own. In teachers' opinion, the

text book is appropriately at the level of the student. However, the teachers agree that the students who have weak learning background have limitations in doing the exercises and therefore the suitability of the textbook for them is a concern. It is found that the students' rate of ability to learn the skills given in the text book on a scale of 0 to 5 is:-3.

Responses Captured from the Teachers Teaching 8th class

Perhaps the promotion to next class due to the non-detention policy seems to have carried forward the observations to the next class also. Teachers feel that the text book is appropriately at the level of the students. Time suggested for the reading exercises is enough. 50-75% can identify alphabet in an order. 20-50% can read words and sentences. 25-50% are able to follow the lessons. 10-25% are able to complete the exercises. 25-50% can read the lessons on their own. 10-25% are able to complete the conversations. 25-50% can do project work on their own. In teachers' opinion the text book is appropriately at the level of the student. The students' rate of ability to learn the skill given in the text book on a scale of 0 to 5 is only 2. 10-25% can convert a play into a story. 10-25% can complete vocabulary exercises. 10-25% can complete new report.

Responses captured from the teachers teaching 9th class

The teachers feel that the prescribed text book is beyond the students' level because it asks for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (which is perceived as such because the comprehension in English is a concern), Time suggested is not enough for reading exercises. While 50-75% can identify the alphabet 25-50% can read words and sentences. 25-50% of the students are able to follow the lessons. 25-50% can complete the exercises. 25-50% of them are able to read the lessons. 25-50% of the students are able to complete the conversations. Only 25-50% can do project work on their own. In teachers' opinion the text book is beyond the level of the students. The students' rate of ability to learn the skill given in the text book on a scale of 0 to 5 is between 2 and 3.

Responses captured from the teachers teaching 10th class

Interestingly while a majority of teachers feel that the 10th class text book is appropriately at the level of the students some teachers disagree with it. In general, time suggested for reading is found to be not enough. While 75% of the students can identify the alphabet, 50-75% of them can read words and sentences. 50-75% of the students are able to follow lessons. 50-75% of them are able to complete the exercises at the end of the lessons. 75% can read the lessons on their own. 10-25% can complete the conversations. 25-50% can do project work.

The students' rate of ability to learn the skill given in the text book on a scale of 0 to 5 is 3.

Teachers in general feel that the lessons prescribed are very interesting, thought provoking, and informative. They have observed that the students can read on their own and derive pleasure through collaborative learning. The teachers' disagree that the text book exercises are related to examination pattern. The teachers' agree that the lessons are text-independent and they can implement their textual knowledge in the examination.

Vocabulary used in the lessons is related to their day to day life, and they can easily understand. They can enjoy project work and study skills. For each unit they are spending approximately 21 periods, and writing answers through textual questions, but in exams in one hour they should write answers to unseen passages; teachers agree that they can write. Teachers' agree that they

can easily understand the lessons and exercises and convey the main ideas to the students. However, the focus is on the exercise they should focus on from the examination point of view. Poems with pathos and social issues which neither gives the learner any pleasure and nor appeal to their aesthetic sense (Eg; Poems like; Another Woman, Abandoned, Or Will the Dreamer Wake, Once upon a Time, and Prose includes: Social Issues, Human Rights, and Human Relations), need a re-thinking on alternatives. .

As per the data, it is inferred that students are enjoying doing project works. It is observed that students enjoy doing exercises on Study skills, and writing exercises to some extent. This supports the hypothesis that SCL is the appropriate approach to learning.

The inability of 25% of students to identify the alphabet in an order is an issue here. In the experience of the author, this lot of students is an appendage carried forwarded due to faulty evaluation system. However, given the scope for participative learning in SCL; pair-work and working in groups is building up teams of learning and inculcating interest in them, which once again supports SCL.

Responses captured from the Questionnaire specific to the teachers

There has been unanimity among the teachers about the need for training. They feel that vigorous continuous training is needed to handle the classes. 50-75% of the teachers agreed that this curriculum gives a sense of achievement to the students. Teachers however felt that the text book instructions are sufficient and that they need no guide to help them. They disagreed on the point that the time schedule for the completion of curriculum is sufficient. This proves the point that time to deliver is not sufficient unlike the teacher-centered learning. Textbook instructions are never enough for a teacher always updating his/her learning. To be specific, it is understood that the teachers need training on:

1. How to manage a crowded classroom in SCL.
2. As SCL promotes freedom of thought the teacher needs extra-knowledge to answer the queries of students.
3. The teacher needs training for being: open to new or out-of-the-box thinking, extra patient and appreciative of the mistakes of the students.
4. Time management and resource management is a must.
5. How to reach out.to and manage the backward students

Most Significant Observations: The common thread of observation which is most significant is, about the ability of the students to identify the alphabet, in an order. It is observed that only 50-75% of students are only able to identify the alphabet in an order.

It could be inferred that the remaining 25% of students who are not able to identify the alphabet in an order are promoted to higher classes without: 1) Identification 2) Correction.

This is a serious issue to be addressed. It shows not the lopsidities in language learning but serious errors in the evaluation and promotion system. Another issue is the weak learning in the primary classes.

SCL is surely a solution to it as the learning is craved for by the student; and the teacher just offers/serves. At any point of learning, nothing is left unfamiliar to the student, so continuation of learning is assured and gaps in the learning are avoided.

SCL Curriculum Vs Time:

Unlike in the Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL), and Creativity being the fulcrum of the Student-Centered Learning (SCL), sufficient time and resources are to be provided to the teachers to plan for the classes. The teachers agreed that they need more time or classes to impart this curriculum. They strongly agree that the curriculum is student-centered. To be open, it is observed that the teachers or students are ready to take up SCL curriculum provided they are not pressurized for perfection. The success of the curriculum depends on the sense of achievement to both the student and the teacher alike as it is the prime motivator. However, a culture of ‘catching them doing right’ must replace the culture of ‘catching them doing wrong’. Performance must be appreciated at every step. Effective Implementation can be ensured only if errors are insured and tolerated.

The change in the curriculum needs a change in the syllabus which in turn will give more time to run it effectively. Unfortunately that has been overlooked. Hence, the teachers observe that time is not sufficient to impart the curriculum. If the syllabus is cut-short, the time would be sufficient to effectively facilitate the learning and thereby the goal of student-centered learning would be possible and effective. Spending quality time on quality curriculum is important as the focus must be only on learning and not teaching when it comes to SCL. Quantity of syllabus is neither a stimulant nor a yardstick for quality of learning. Even Educationists like Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Carl Rogers, advocated SCL. Theodore Sizer’s 1987 book, ‘Horace’s Compromise’, called for collaborative learning.

Recommendations:

1. Transform Teachers into Facilitators And Coaches: Unfortunately, namesake Teacher Training (TTS) for the in-service teachers is being held as of now. Motivation is less and operational value is lesser. That which cannot be measured cannot be managed, hence, the objectives of TTS must be specifically laid out, and metrics for the learning outcomes must be developed. Sharing of innovative and collaborative teaching methodology must be presented by teachers. Classroom management for student-centered learning must be discussed thoroughly. Autonomy in thought must be encouraged among the teachers. Teachers must be given space to share their success stories regarding SCL besides discussing the challenges involved in it.
2. Remedial/bridge courses at the threshold of every class to be made compulsory for the students with learning-gaps. However, the Unit test-I should be based on bridge course only and not on the first three units.
3. Make Assessment More Assignment-Based and Less Examination-Based.
4. Nurture the Teachers and Encourage them to research
5. Evolve an Effective Feedback Process
6. Re-Define the Metrics of Success (Stress is more on LRW; focus must be on S, because S has more operational value.
7. Localize the Approach to the Most Appropriate Content
8. Textbook must comprise of stories/poems which have aesthetic value. Language through literature is the best way to learn a language (because of the aesthetic value) for indept understanding and expression. Hence, literary master pieces must be included rather than including those that are didactic in natures which are meant to motivate and transform but

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have no aesthetic value; they fail to appeal to the senses. Students do project work well; that is because, it has immediate operational value which they enjoy doing.

Conclusion:

The results discussed above suggest that teachers of English in the government schools of East Godavari District express that SCL is more effective than the TCL, however, constraints like time, resources are to be planned effectively.

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