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## Learner-Centered Teaching practices and Learners' Participation in the Teaching-Learning Process at Santiago South Central School

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### Abstract

*This study examined learner-centered teaching practices and learners' participation in the teaching-learning process at Santiago South Central School. The study aimed to explore how instructional strategies that place learners at the center of classroom instruction influence their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed to capture authentic classroom experiences and perspectives. The participants included selected elementary school teachers and learners who were purposively chosen based on their direct involvement in classroom instruction. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and focus group discussions with learners to ensure data triangulation. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed four major themes: learner-centered teaching practices as drivers of active participation, positive teacher-learner interactions fostering emotional engagement, contextualized instruction enhancing meaningful participation, and variations in learners' participation due to individual differences. Findings showed that interactive strategies such as group work, guided questioning, and activity-based learning increased learners' attentiveness and willingness to participate. Supportive and encouraging teacher-learner relationships created a safe learning environment that boosted learners' confidence. Contextualized lessons helped learners connect new concepts to real-life experiences, resulting in better understanding and sustained interest. However, variations in participation were observed, as some learners remained passive due to shyness or low confidence, highlighting the need for differentiated and inclusive instructional practices. The study concludes that learner-centered teaching practices significantly enhance learners' participation in the teaching-learning process. The findings underscore the importance of interactive, supportive, and contextualized instruction in promoting active and meaningful learning in elementary education.*

**Keywords:** learner-centered teaching, learners' participation, teaching-learning process, elementary education, qualitative study

## Introduction

Learner-centered teaching has gained increasing attention in contemporary education as an approach that actively involves learners in the teaching–learning process. This pedagogical orientation emphasizes learners’ needs, interests, experiences, and active participation, positioning them as partners in knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of instruction. Research suggests that when teaching practices are learner-centered, learners are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of participation, motivation, and responsibility for their own learning. As such, learner-centered teaching is considered essential in fostering meaningful and engaging classroom experiences, particularly in basic education.

At Santiago South Central School, teachers employ various instructional strategies to encourage learner participation in classroom activities. However, there is a need to examine how these learner-centered teaching practices are implemented and how they influence learners’ participation during instruction. Understanding the relationship between learner-centered practices and learners’ behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement can provide valuable insights into improving classroom instruction. This study was conducted to explore learner-centered teaching practices and learners’ participation in the teaching–learning process within the context of an elementary school setting.

## Background of the Study

Learner-centered teaching practices focus on creating interactive, inclusive, and supportive learning environments where learners are encouraged to actively participate in lessons. These practices include collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, contextualized activities, and the use of varied instructional materials. Learners’ participation, on the other hand, refers to their active involvement in classroom activities, expressed through attentiveness, interaction, enthusiasm, and cognitive engagement in learning tasks. Studies have shown that active participation enhances understanding, retention, and the development of higher-order thinking skills.

In elementary education, promoting learner participation is particularly important as early learning experiences shape learners’ academic attitudes and social skills. Despite policy directions encouraging learner-centered instruction, classroom practices often remain teacher-directed, limiting opportunities for meaningful learner involvement. This situation highlights the importance of examining actual classroom practices to determine how learner-centered teaching is enacted and how it affects learners’ participation at the school level, particularly at Santiago South Central School.

Existing studies affirm the positive impact of learner-centered teaching on learners’ participation and engagement. According to Weimer (2013), learner-centered teaching empowers learners by giving them greater responsibility and voice in the learning process, resulting in increased participation and motivation. Similarly, Prince (2004) found that active learning strategies significantly improve learners’ involvement and understanding compared to traditional lecture-based instruction.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conceptualized learner participation as a multidimensional construct involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components, all of which are influenced by instructional practices. In addition, Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) emphasized that supportive teacher–learner interactions enhance learners’ emotional engagement and willingness to participate. In the Philippine context, Dela Cruz and Lapinid (2014) reported that contextualized and participatory teaching strategies positively affect learner involvement and classroom interaction in basic education settings.

While numerous studies have established the effectiveness of learner-centered teaching in promoting learner participation, limited research has been conducted at the elementary school level within specific local contexts. In particular, there is a lack of school-based studies that examine how learner-centered teaching practices are implemented in everyday classroom settings and how these practices directly influence learners’ participation in public elementary schools. Moreover, few studies have focused on learners’ perspectives alongside teachers’ practices to provide a holistic view of participation in the teaching–learning process. Addressing this gap, the present study investigated learner-centered teaching practices and learners’ participation at Santiago South Central School to generate context-specific evidence that may inform instructional improvement and learner-centered pedagogy in basic education.

## Research Objectives

This study aimed to examine learner-centered teaching practices and their influence on learners’ participation in the teaching–learning process at Santiago South Central School. Specifically, it sought to identify and describe the learner-centered instructional strategies employed by teachers during classroom instruction. It also aimed to explore the nature and level of learners’ participation in terms of their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive

involvement in learning activities. Furthermore, the study intended to examine how learners respond to learner-centered teaching practices as reflected in their engagement, motivation, and classroom interaction. Lastly, the study aimed to determine the perceived relationship between learner-centered teaching practices and learners' participation in the teaching-learning process, with the end view of providing insights that may support the enhancement of learner-centered and inclusive instructional practices in the school.

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine learner-centered teaching practices and learners' participation in the teaching-learning process at Santiago South Central School. The qualitative approach was appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of classroom practices and learners' participation as they naturally occurred, without manipulating variables. The design focused on understanding teachers' instructional practices and learners' experiences within real classroom contexts.

The participants of the study included selected elementary school teachers and learners from Santiago South Central School. Teachers were purposively selected based on their active involvement in classroom instruction and implementation of learner-centered strategies. Learners were also purposively chosen to represent varying levels of classroom participation. Ethical considerations were observed through the securing of permission from school administrators, informed consent from teachers, and parental consent and learner assent for pupil participants.

Data collection utilized multiple qualitative techniques to ensure triangulation. Classroom observations were conducted to document learner-centered teaching practices and learners' participation during instructional activities. Semi-structured interviews with teachers were used to gather insights on instructional strategies, challenges, and perceptions of learner participation. Focus group discussions with learners were conducted to capture their experiences, preferences, and responses to learner-centered teaching practices.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach. All observation notes, interview transcripts, and focus group discussion data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring patterns and themes related to learner-centered teaching practices and learners' participation. Themes were analyzed in relation to behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of participation. Trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The results were intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of learner-centered teaching and learner participation that may guide instructional improvement in elementary education.

## Results/Findings

### Theme 1: Learner-Centered Teaching Practices Promote Active Classroom Participation

The findings revealed that learner-centered teaching practices significantly enhanced learners' active participation in the teaching-learning process. Teachers commonly employed strategies such as group work, guided questioning, collaborative activities, and hands-on tasks, which encouraged learners to take part in discussions and learning activities. Classroom observations showed that learners were more attentive and responsive when they were given opportunities to express ideas, work with peers, and engage in meaningful tasks rather than listening passively. These practices fostered a classroom environment where learners felt valued as contributors to the learning process, resulting in increased behavioral and cognitive participation.

*"When I let them work in groups, they become more active and confident,"* shared one teacher. A learner stated, *"I like the lesson when we are asked to share our ideas."* Another learner noted, *"It is easier to learn when we do activities together."*

These responses indicate that learner-centered teaching practices effectively promote active participation by allowing learners to engage collaboratively and think critically. The findings suggest that participation increases when learners are provided with opportunities to interact, explore, and take ownership of their learning.

### Theme 2: Positive Teacher-Learner Interaction Encourages Emotional Engagement

The study found that positive teacher-learner interactions played a crucial role in encouraging learners' emotional engagement. Teachers who demonstrated patience, encouragement, and approachability created a supportive classroom atmosphere where learners felt safe to participate. Observations revealed that learners were more willing to answer questions and engage in activities when teachers acknowledged their efforts and provided constructive feedback. Such interactions strengthened learners' confidence and reduced fear of making mistakes.

One teacher expressed, *"I always encourage them even if their answers are not correct."* A learner shared, *"I am not afraid to answer because my teacher is kind."* Another learner said, *"When my teacher listens to me, I feel confident."*

## Interpretation:

These findings suggest that emotional engagement is closely linked to the quality of teacher–learner relationships. Supportive interactions motivate learners to participate and sustain interest in learning activities, highlighting the importance of positive classroom climate.

### **Theme 3: Contextualized Instruction Enhances Meaningful Participation**

Contextualized instruction emerged as a key factor in sustaining learner participation. Teachers often related lessons to learners' daily experiences, family life, and community situations. This approach helped learners understand concepts more easily and increased their interest in the lesson. Observations showed that learners were more engaged and responsive when examples and activities reflected familiar contexts, making learning more relevant and meaningful.

A teacher stated, *"When the lesson is connected to their daily life, they listen more."* One learner commented, *"I understand the lesson better when it is about things we know."* Another learner said, *"The examples are easy because we see them every day."*

These responses indicate that contextualized teaching enhances cognitive engagement by helping learners connect new knowledge with prior experiences. Meaningful participation increases when lessons are relevant and relatable.

### **Theme 4: Variations in Learners' Participation Due to Individual Differences**

Despite the use of learner-centered practices, variations in learners' participation were evident. Some learners consistently participated actively, while others remained passive due to shyness, lack of confidence, or difficulty understanding the lesson. Teacher-centered activities tended to limit participation among less confident learners, while differentiated tasks helped increase involvement. This variation highlighted the diverse learning needs present in the classroom.

A teacher observed, *"Some learners are active, but others need more encouragement."* A learner shared, *"Sometimes I am shy to answer in front of the class."* Another learner said, *"I want to participate, but I am not sure of my answer."*

### **Interpretation:**

The findings suggest that learner participation is influenced by individual learner characteristics and instructional approaches. While learner-centered strategies promote engagement, differentiated and inclusive practices are necessary to ensure equitable participation.

### **Discussions**

The results of the study demonstrate that learner-centered teaching practices positively influence learners' participation in the teaching–learning process at Santiago South Central School. Interactive strategies such as collaborative learning and guided questioning promoted active behavioral and cognitive engagement, consistent with studies emphasizing the effectiveness of learner-centered instruction. The findings further showed that positive teacher–learner interactions foster emotional engagement by creating a safe and supportive classroom environment where learners feel confident to participate.

The use of contextualized instruction strengthened learners' understanding and sustained interest, supporting literature that highlights the importance of relevance in learning. However, the presence of varying levels of participation underscores the need for differentiated instruction to address individual learner differences. Overall, the findings affirm that while learner-centered practices are effective, their impact is maximized when combined with inclusive and adaptive teaching strategies.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that learner-centered teaching practices play a vital role in enhancing learners' participation in the teaching–learning process at Santiago South Central School. Interactive instructional strategies, positive teacher–learner relationships, and contextualized learning experiences contribute to increased behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement among learners. However, variations in participation indicate the need for differentiated and inclusive instructional approaches to ensure that all learners are meaningfully engaged. The study highlights the importance of sustained learner-centered pedagogy in promoting active participation and meaningful learning in elementary education.

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