

# Child -Centered Teaching: Facilitators’ Perceptions and Practices in Nepalese Early Childhood Development (ECD) Center

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**Abstract** It is a blunder if students are regarded as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. But we find most of the schools in Nepal; the classes are generally conducted in very primitive and traditional manner in the name of maintaining discipline (Gharti, 2006). The present study sheds some spotlight on the facilitators’ perceptions and practices of child- centered teaching in the context of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers in Nepal. The study was based on qualitative approach and used the case study method. The result showed that the majority of facilitators have positive perception towards teaching profession and used child- centered teaching methods. Most of them reported the unavailability of teaching materials and low monthly pay.

**Keywords:** Child- centered method, perception and practices, early childhood development and facilitators

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a highly noble profession and teachers are always a boon to the society (Chamundeswari, 2013). The ultimate process of education could be simplified as a meaningful interaction between the teacher and the pupils. The teacher thus plays a direct and crucial role in moulding a pupil’s mind.

Child-centered teaching assumes that the teacher plays the role of a catalyst to facilitate the task of the pupils and prioritizes teaching activities. It places greater value on the interaction among the pupils, in place of traditional method which places the teacher at the center of the teaching learning activities.

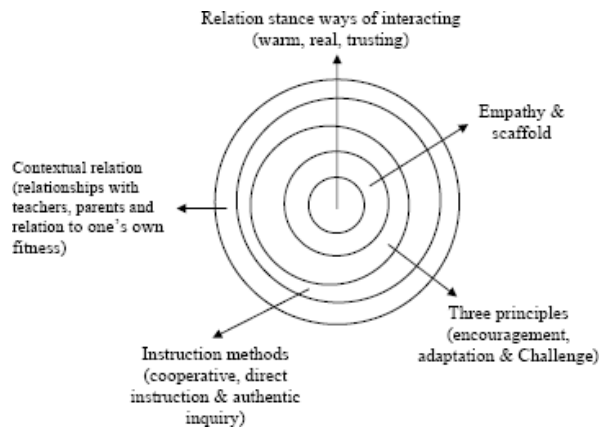
The following figure shows the model for student- centered instruction that aims for comprehensive student success (Cornelius-White and Arbaugh, 2010).

The term ‘learner-centered’, or ‘student-centered’, is most commonly used to modern approaches to education compared to traditional ones. Schooley (2012) listed student-centered terms that differentiate student- centered methods from more traditional teaching methods as shown in table 1.

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**Figure 1:** Model of Student -Centered Instruction

**Table 1:** Child-Centered Approaches and Traditional Approaches

Child-Centered Approaches	Traditional Approaches
Learners centered	Curriculum centered
Self directed	Teacher directed
Process (how)	Content (what)
Constructing understanding	Covering subject matter
Thinking	Memorizing
Experiential method	Lecture
Active	Passive
Showing	Telling
Cooperation	Competition

### Study Area, Methods and Techniques of Data Collection

My research area was Kathmandu and Surkhet districts of Nepal. A sample may be defined as a group or set of representative individual taken from larger groups. Samples in qualitative research tend to be small (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). In purposive sampling, a researcher picks the case to be included in the sample on the basis of judgment.

Due to the nature of my study, I used purposive sampling procedure to select the sample. For this, I selected 10 facilitators from the study area. The objective of my study was to find out the facilitators' perceptions and practices of child- centered methods. I applied subjective approach under qualitative research design and used the case study method. Questionnaire interview and observation were used as techniques of data collection.

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## Findings of the Study

The present study was qualitative research approach so that participant's statements have been mentioned directly. In this situation, the real names of participants were kept confidential due to the ethical consideration. Here, I have tried to summarize the facilitators' perceptions and practices of child centered teaching.

Gita is ECD facilitator of the Surkhet district. She wanted to have experience of teaching ECD classes in the beginning but later it became her real profession. She likes this profession because she produces good people by sowing seeds of knowledge of various aspects in the minds of her pupils. The ultimate thing, she says, is satisfaction which she derives from this profession. She likes proper interacting with students and tries to use the play materials. However, she is discontent with the unavailability of play materials and small size classroom and low monthly payment.

Sarjana facilitator of Surkhet, reported that she is not happy with this profession due to low payment. She also expressed the negative perception towards profession and also blames the District Education Office (DEO) for mismanagement of early childhood development center.

Gina, another ECD facilitator from Surkhet, has a positive perception towards her profession. She shares her experience in the following words:

I love teaching profession. I derive a lot of pleasure from it. There were other opportunities as well but I chose only teaching as my profession. The reason why I chose it that, I have nothing else worth owing. Besides, I have been enjoyed in it for a long time. If I happen to get to the ECD center late, I find my students worrying at my arrival. The ECD assistant finds it difficult to handle them in my absence. When I reached ECD center, then I keep students in a circle and initiate talks about various objectives. They participate in talking and other play activities. There is Tiffin break from 12:00 to through 12:30. Then I get them to stand in a straight line with clean hands. In the course of observation, I found that child-centered method has been applied properly. She is thus happy t with her profession.

Another facilitator Sarita of ECD center from Kathmandu has expressed her view toward teaching in the following way:

I prefer teaching profession very much. I have been teaching here for five years. I'm engaged in this profession as there are no other options. In fact, I don't like to stay at home idly. At times, I get disappointed at the teaching profession because of lack of proper and required facilities despite its many positive aspects. Currently I'm paid Rs. 2500 per month. We protested against the Department of Education (DOE) with the agenda of increment in salary and consequently, we signed the negotiation letter with the new salary figure

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Rs. 6,000. However, the agreement has not turned into reality yet. We are also called facilitators. In fact, we have been employed under the Regulation Act of Ministry of Education. Ergo, we should be provided with the facilities in accordance with the provision of facilities in due proportion to the primary school level teacher.

Shristi, another ECD facilitator of the Kathmandu district has used the child-centered methods of teaching. For this, she uses play cards of pictures of different animals and things. Such materials in teaching learning can enhance the pupils' recognition of animals and numbers. The facilitator uses the pictures of dog, horse, fish, watermelon, orange, and pomegranate. A raisin has been used to teach the alphabets viz. ABC.

Another facilitator Bhabana of the Kathmandu ECD has been teaching her pupils through song as below:

The facilitator makes them to sing the song "Yeti- yeti- Pani" and one of the participants points the level of water from bottom to up. Firstly near by the knees, then chest and neck respectively, while one says "Yeti- yeti- pani", the other participants respond with *Ganga- rani*. When she points the level of water near forehead, the participants respond let it drown.

Different play items, songs, games and story-telling methods of teaching create positive emotional situation in children. In this context, when I reached the *Seto Gurans* ECD center Kathmandu, I found them teaching through songs as below:

*Two fingers from spectacles, three from beard, four fingers from pigeon,  
and a butterfly is formed using five fingers.*

The facilitator in this center is very much enthusiastic and devoted to her duty. She says she always used child-centered method. But she also reported to low level of her pay. Play and story-telling methods let the pupils interact with each other. I found that most of facilitators have positive perception toward and child-centered teaching. But almost all facilitators reported low monthly salary. Satisfaction is an essential factor in life and in teaching (Velayudhan and Gaffor, 2010). Low wages (salary) tend to result in a high turnover of staff which is harmful to the development of children.

From the above statements, salary and allowance of facilitators is major aspect because all programmes of ECD centers are handled by single facilitator. It was found that District Education Office (DEO) has provided the facilitators each with Rs 2500 per month. A month and some money were added by the centers. In some of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers, the facilitators have not been provided with extra pay. With one accord, virtually all of the facilitators frown upon low pay. They have more responsibility but

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are paid low. The pay that they get, then hardly can afford tea and bread. They demand it be raised to Rs 6000 a month at least. In addition, lack of incentives has badly affected child-centered teaching methods.

Seema other facilitator of Kathmandu expresses her experiences as such:

I have been working at this center for 12 years. I always come early and go late. I've been teaching the pupils with low pay. I get Rs 2500 and Rs 700 from District Education office (DEO) and ECD center respectively. I get a pay every four months. My family forces me to leave this profession. There is no way out though. I love teaching profession and kids.

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### **Educational Implications**

Student centered instruction is a humanistic and constructivist approach to teaching. This approach depends on democratic goals, instructional flexibility, trust, and the importance of creating a safe learning environment for all students. Cooperative learning environments and positive teacher-student relationships help create a positive classroom environment and thus classroom conducive to student-centered learning. Properly implemented child centered methods can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught.

### **CONCLUSION**

Student-centered instructional approaches influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the student in the center of the learning process. Trusting relationships foster the formation, process, and completion of self-actualizing and democratic goals, pedagogical flexibility. The value of helping students discover how to learn more effectively so that learning becomes life.

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