

# Challenge In Implementing Student Centered Strategies When Teaching Primary School Social Studies: Teachers Perspective

**Joaquina Belo Freitas**

B.EB., M.Ed., Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (Baucau)

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to examine the implementation of learner-centered strategies in social science lessons. Teachers face challenges in implementing learner-centered strategies in the learning process. Teachers lack knowledge, understanding, and experience about learner-centered strategies and teacher' teaching strategies continue to use traditional teaching methods dominated by teachers centred on the learning process. The research results showed that it is necessary to promote integral and professional training for teachers on student-centered strategies to changes to the modern learning process, offering maximum learning opportunities for students to actively participate in learning activities in social science lessons. The effectiveness of implementing learner-centred strategy as a learning paradigm that promotes learning effectiveness to be creative, active, attractive and innovative to develop students' critical and creative knowledge and understanding of learning in social science lessons. The implementation of the student-centred strategy provides good quality learning for students and also offers a favourable democratic and independent learning atmosphere.

**Keywords:** learning, learner-centred learning strategies, social science.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The National Curriculum of Timor-Leste emphasizes student-centered learning when teaching the curriculum that requires students to actively participate in developing knowledge and skills through self-observation, self-experimentation, self-investigation, and self-solving both in group and individual settings (República Democrática Timor-Leste, 2014). In the lesson plans prepared in the National Curriculum, activities for individuals and groups help to make investigation and find solutions to assist in the learning from the lessons.

The reality of learning in Timor-Leste and its needs

Related to reality, teachers' pedagogical competence in using student-centered teaching strategies will be a cultural difficulty, because many teachers will use a strategy called "talk and chalk" (Quinn, 2002 p. 240) that teachers write only in notebooks and notebooks only talk and passive learner and not involved in activities. Because many teachers believe that traditional teaching strategies in learning can develop students' attitudes and capacities. However, according to Quinn (2002) account argues that teaching strategies are difficult for students to learn well and correctly. This problem on the other hand also gives the reason that teachers lack pedagogical competence and ability to develop learning strategies by facilitating students in learning (World Bank, 2011-2033).

The Ministry of Education of Timor-Leste through the municipal education in 2015 has presented training on student-centered learning for one week. This training helps teachers to implement in the learning process to help students learn well, but generally identifies that teachers implement is not effective in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The Ministry of Education implements this program to develop teachers' capacity and teaching skills to help students' learning process effectively.

The objective of this research is to find the main solution to the problem of social science teaching strategies that are not good for students. Therefore, it is necessary to change the teaching strategy from classical to modern where learning strategies focus on students by developing variety strategies to stimulate students to explore their own knowledge, attitudes and social capacity as a science that is internalized in everyday life through cooperative learning strategies, open learning strategies and contextual learning strategies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner-centered strategy is a learning strategy that gives more importance to students' active participation in the learning process. This gives a sense of how to learn to work together and alone to discover the meaning of science that they learn based on contact with the reality of life through their attendance to explore the knowledge and skills of science itself to observe themselves, experiment themselves, investigate themselves, solve themselves either in groups or individuals (Muij & Reynolds, 2008). learner centered strategy gives importance to visual materials in the learning process to facilitate students' learning to be more effective (Johnson, 2002).

learner-centered learning strategies according to KNEB (2014) are as follows: (1) create an environment that motivates students to develop new skills and knowledge and apply them in a variety of ways, (2) Work in groups when possible, so that students share ideas to build knowledge, (3) Use practical activities and experiments so that students actively participate in the learning process, (4) Promote skills such as prediction, estimation and hypothesis so that learners engage in knowledge construction rather than simply receiving and repeating ideas (RDTL, 2014).

Three fundamental strategies of teaching social science to centered learners to the social science learning. The sense of cooperation in the context of learning means that students work together in groups to share experiences that are different from each other, thereby developing their knowledge together. Here, the learning strategy is based on a constructivist approach, where learners construct their knowledge through social interaction with others. Students build their knowledge through their peers' experiences, thus developing their own (Muij & Reynolds, 2008). Other ideas from Daniels (2005) present Vygotsky's idea that the learner constructs his knowledge by working together with his peers. That is, the student learns experiences to build and help him to develop himself. Contextual learning strategy is a learning concept that assists students in making connections between the subject matter being studied and the real-world situations they experience. The contextual learning strategy can help students apply their knowledge to the actual realities they face in their families and in society (Johnson, 2002). Inquiry learning strategy. This learning strategy is based on the theory of constructivism. This theory suggests that the learning process must involve reflection about students' experiences. In this process, students seek to discover within themselves and the world around them an understanding of themselves and the science they are learning. Each student's findings result in their own "regulation" and "mental model" to use in developing their experiences and acquiring knowledge because learning is a social interaction process (Yamin & Martin, 2005).

## METHODOLOGY

This study examines academic research from the teacher's perspective of implementing learner-centred strategies in social science lessons. This article describes sources that offer databases from TAF, TMSF and STDF. The systematic review methodology included data collection procedures from the perspective of educational staff, students and leaders. The author used thematic analysis to design the main methodology to recognize recurring themes, organize and interpret patterns in the data study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This review various elements including perspectives on the benefits of implementing learner-centred strategies. The obstacles regarding the implementation of the learner-centred strategy were also reviewed. This obstacle occurs because of a lack of training on learning-centred strategies.

The literature review exposed the fundamentals of implementing learner-centered strategies by designating process challenges that affect implementation. Therefore, leaders involve teachers in professional training to support the implementation of learner-centered strategies in learning. This will achieve the effectiveness of implementing learner-centered strategies in the future. This research gathers evidence from academic research on the challenges of implementing learner-centered strategies in learning social science lessons. This detailed study reviews academic researchers to understand the implementation of learner-centered strategies in learning.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Benefits and relevance

Timor-Leste began to adopt a learner-centred learning system to help students' learning process become active and effective to achieve learning goals (RDTL, 2014). Student-centred learning is an educational concept and teaching method, the core of which lies in placing students at the centre of the learning process, emphasizing students' dominant position, encouraging students to actively participate in learning activities, and actively construct knowledge through independent exploration, cooperative communication and other means, instead of passively receiving information imparted by teachers (Hu, Liu & Fu, 2025).

The learning approach still reflects the traditional learning strategy where the student remains passive and uncreative in activities. the implementation of student-centered learning develops students' creativity and adaptability to explore experiences, knowledge in learning groups (Muij & Reynolds, 2008). The advantage of learner-centered strategies is that it facilitates students' critical and creative teaching skills for learning in social science lessons (Yamin, 2005). The implementation of the centered strategy for social science learning in Timor-Leste has shown difficulties and ineffectiveness in the learning process. As Quinn 2002 presents that teachers in Timor-Leste use the strategy "talk & chalk" that teachers talk a lot and write on the board after students copy.

### SCL implementation and challenges in the learning process

The challenge of implementing learner-centered strategies is that teachers have limited knowledge of learner-centered strategies, so the learning process does not help students, students are passive, not creative and do not learn social science lessons well.

### Effectiveness of using teaching materials

Didactic material is an instrument that facilitates to concretize the content of the lesson to students by demonstrating to each student to understand the lesson. The research results showed that teachers do not use materials in learning social science lessons. The teacher explains writing on the board and the student copies. The learning strategy is not engaging and inactive and does not facilitate learners' learning. The teacher continues to reflect on the traditional learning strategy of talk & chalk (Quinn, 2002).

### **The variety of techniques poses questions**

Using a variety of questions in the learning process creates interactive interaction between teachers and students to explore ideas for learning. Foster and attract learners' active participation and develop learners' critical thinking for learning (Muij & Reynold 2008). This research study showed that teachers do not use a variety of questions to stimulate students to express ideas and experiences about learning, teachers do not encourage students to express questions and teachers use closed questions. Teachers' creativity and ability to create questions and ask questions is ineffective and ineffective in facilitating students' learning.

### **Learning group effectiveness**

Group learning is learning that offers opportunities for students to learn together in groups and pairs to get ideas and experiences from one student to another (Daniels, 2005). Academic research studies have shown that teachers do not give students the opportunity to do learning activities together both in large groups, small groups and pairs. Each student does the activity alone, facilitated by the teacher but not effective, very passive learning. the teacher continues to talk a lot during the lesson. The teacher's learning strategy is very monotonous because the learning process is teacher-centered and there is no variation in strategy.

### **Effectiveness Contextual learning**

Contextual learning is a learning strategy that helps students make relationships between the science of learning and the reality of real-world situations that students experience (Johnson, 2002). Academic research studies have shown that this learning is not implemented by teachers, teachers focus on explanation of the concept presented in the board, do not link content with reality, do not use examples that reflect real situations in everyday life. Teachers are less creative in applying this contextual strategy in the learning process in social science lessons.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to the results based on research conducted in two schools, it is found that teachers use minimal student-centered teaching and learning strategies. Concerning this result, it is noted that teachers do not give much importance to maximum preparation to create connections so that students can connect their learning to their real-world experiences (Patrick, 2011).

Developing student-centered strategies requires teachers' ability to manage large classes, their subject matter, and the active participation of students through making connections. Because students' active involvement depends on teachers' creativity in learning activities (Marques, 1999). Therefore, it is still unclear whether student-centered strategies are effectively implemented in the teaching and learning process for social studies in grade 2 in the two chosen schools.

This difficulty arises because teachers have not adequately prepared learning resources, such as referring to reference books to support teaching, nor used student-centered learning strategies, and have not mastered the new lesson plans distributed by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, they do not understand how the learning process works, which could connect students to their learning and make them happier with the subject from the teachers' skills.

Specific problems in making connections are the lack of opportunities for students in the learning process to ask questions, have less presentation, and share ideas with their colleagues. Also, some teachers do not use effective techniques to attract students to learn lesson content and engage them in the learning process. If teachers increase opportunities for student engagement, this will help everyone to achieve the course's learning objectives more successfully (Guedes, 2015).

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The final point of this research analysis is the implementation of learner-centered teaching strategies in social science lessons. Various challenges that teachers face because of lack of training on learner-centered strategies, lack of creativity to use a variety of strategies in teaching social science lessons.

The implication of this research study is that teachers need to make efforts to learn and strategize variety of teaching, creative use of didactic materials in teaching, creating attractive learning conditions in learning. On the other hand, school leaders need to plan for continuing education related to student-centered learning strategies. This can strengthen and raise the quality of learning in Timor-Leste.

Student-centered learning strategies are those that focus on the process of learning centered on students, where they themselves explore, express ideas, ask questions, participate actively in various activities, and develop their capacities both individually and in groups during the learning process, thereby demonstrating significant progress in their learning. In the social science learning process, it becomes interactive and active, where each student contributes various experiences to learning in order to develop knowledge and skills (Baharuddin & Nur Wahyuni, 2007).

Based on the research results, it shows that it is necessary for teachers to adopt a more creative approach to utilize student-centered strategies in the social science learning process to develop students' knowledge, skills, and experiences. Furthermore, it is important for each student to master learning effectively so they can explore learning that is meaningful and useful for their daily lives. Additionally, another effective approach involves encouraging each student to actively participate in various learning activities, while each student must make a concerted effort to collaborate and engage actively in the learning process (Davion, 2017).

Student-centered strategies are more important than ever in basic education schools to help students develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards science. This strategy aids students in 'learning by doing together,' meaning learning activities presented in social science lessons enable students to learn by themselves and work together. As a result, each student can gain self-confidence to develop their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills.

1. Teachers in Timor-Leste, especially basic education teachers, need to pay maximum attention to students who need science through our good teaching skills and quality. Examples are teachers' skills in teaching strategies that can develop children's knowledge, attitudes and science capacity. Teachers should not wait for experiences, but try to seek experience learning variety strategies in teaching, so as to increase teaching skills to implement in the learning process. Use ways that can actively involve students in all activities so that children experience for themselves and can understand to apply in their lives.
2. Teachers in Timor-Leste need to consult and learn more about the content of the national curriculum which is an important source for teachers' teaching where the curriculum gives importance to EASK in the learning process.
3. Teachers use creativity to prepare teaching materials that are relevant to the content of the lesson in the national curriculum lesson plan so as to help students to concretize the lesson easily and access correctly.
4. The Ministry of Education through regional education creates opportunities for teachers to better develop teaching professionalism, thus helping students' learning become effective and achieve learning objectives. On the other hand, it helps teachers to train teachers' knowledge about media use, effective use of time for students' learning process.

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