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Philosophical Foundation of Learner Centred Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Learner-centered teaching has a very long history. Two of the first educators to put emphasis on the learner were Confucius and Socrates (5th to 4th centuries B.C.). Over two millennia passed before seventeenth century Englishman Locke introduced experiential education/the idea that one learns through experience. Another two hundred years passed before European educators Pestalozzi, Hegel, Herbart, and Froebel designed and popularized experience-based, learner-centered curricula. A century later, nineteenth century educator Parker brought this method to America. Twentieth century American philosopher and educator John Dewey shaped the existing learner-centered teaching into a program called constructivism. The major aim this article traces this development and examines the major contributions of each of these educators. For this purpose, IDR or secondary research methods has been utilized.

Context of the Study

Learner-centered teaching (LCT), also referred to as student-centered teaching/approach, typically involves teaching approaches that transfer the emphasis of teaching from the instructor to the student. LCT seeks to establish learner autonomy and independence in original use by placing responsibility for the learning path in the hands of the learner by imparting skills to them, and the basis on how to learn a particular topic and schemes necessary to measure up to the specific performance requirement. Student-centered training focuses on skills and practices that enable problem-solving that is lifelong and autonomous. It can be said that signs of LCT began appearing with the dawning of education, and formal education can be traced back to the Sumerians and the development of written language around 3500 BC (*Brodie, Lelliotta, & Davis, 2002; Entwistle, 2012; Mtika & Gates, 2010; Henson, 2003; Entwistle, 1970; Darling, 1994*). In the West, notions of learner-centred teaching can be seen to reach back as early as Plato's Socratic dialogues (*Entwistle, 1970; 11; Brodie, Lelliott, and Davis, 2002: 542; Darling, 1994; Tabulawa, 2003*). In these dialogues, LCT manifests itself in the strategic questioning through which the teacher draws out the ideas of the student based on his current knowledge and understanding. Socrates, in the form of dialogues, illustrated an early concern with scaffolding, believing that a person's latent knowledge needed the guidance of any other who is more knowledgeable to bring it out. All an instructor can do, therefore, is to assist a learner to become aware of his current experience, his errors, and his limits. And only the student is willing to bring about the enhancement (*Perkinson, 1980*). Within five hundred years, the Chinese had also established formal

schools. Seemingly the earliest individual teachers to have a profound, direct effect on the LCT were the Chinese Philosopher Confucius (551 BC-479 BC), and the Greek philosopher Socrates (460-399 BC). *Henson (2003)* argue that Confucius stressed character and citizenship, while Socrates stressed the individual. They believed that every person must strive for the continual development of self until excellence is achieved (*Ozmon & Craver, 1999:105; Entwistle, 1970; Darling, 1994*).

Similarly, Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding' and 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education' written 1690 and 1693 respectively argued for a liberal education of children (*Doddington and Hilton, 2007: XVI*). His ideas which later were picked up and developed by Bourdieu (especially with regard to the middle classes) explored the notions that the cultural capital of language, ways of thinking, talent and manners were more important than their inheritance of where the children came from. 'This central principle, that the young child learns through the early association of sensation and ideas, and then by reflecting, comparing, uniting and splitting then develops the ability to think in the abstract, still underlies LCT thought' (*Doddington and Hilton, 2007*).

The earliest known formal teaching method was the tutorial method. For five thousand years the tutorial method continued to dominate. Although the English Philosopher Locke (1632-1704) recommended its use, he introduced the concept, tabula rasa or blank slate, meaning that at birth the child is a blank slate, and the only way to fill it is through having experiences, filling these experiences and reflecting on them *Henson (2003)*. This proves that Locke believed that the mind gets its understanding from experience. Locke's experience based educational philosophy gave birth to a concept called experiential education. In answering the question as to where the mind gets its understanding, Locke replied, 'To this, I answer in one word, experience' (*Garforth, 1964*). The tutorial method was the earliest formal teaching method known. The tutorial approach has been influential for five thousand years. While the English philosopher Locke (1632-1704) proposed its use, he introduced the term, tabula rasa or blank slate, which means that the child is a blank slate at birth, and the only way to fill it is by getting experiences, filling these experiences and reflecting on them *Henson (2003)*. This shows that Locke assumed that from experience, the mind gets its understanding. The experience-based theory of education by Locke gave birth to a term called experiential education. Locke answered, 'To this, I answer in one word, experience' (*Garforth, 1964*) in answering the question as to where the mind gets its understanding.

Stimulated by Locke's philosophical assertion philosophers like Rousseau, and other philosophers who were inspired by Rousseau and continued to inspire others explored the breadth and depth of the LCT. Bacon (1561-1626) introduced the scientific method as a way of thinking and learning, which was opposite to the way Aristotle had taught people to think. With the Alistotelian method, which had dominated for almost two centuries, Bacon took exception and remained the common technique of the day. By making assumptions, Aristotle began his thinking, and assumptions introduce errors of thought. Realizing that this convergent method was flawed, Bacon warned that if we begin our thinking with certainties, we end with questions, but if we begin with questions, we end with certainties. He insisted that we rid ourselves of four idols, which cloud our thinking. Bacon said that our thinking is limited by our lack of experience, by what others believe, by unclear language, and the by influence of religion and philosophies. Bacon insisted that we use problem solving to avoid these mistakes, which starts not with uncontested conclusions but with divergent or inductive reasoning, taking into account all possibilities.

In modern times, the concept of LCT in education originates from the notion of child centered education that appears to be closely associated with progressive education (*Pine & Boy, 1977*). This progressive education emerged as a response to the traditional, didactic schooling system. A significant early expression of concern for the child as a learner was found in the work of Rousseau and other nineteenth century educators such as Pestalozzi, Herbart and Froebel (*Pine & Boy, 1977*). However, the

greatest and clearest statement of the concepts of LCT is said to be found in the writings of Dewey who seems to place education in the context of a social philosophy expressly designed for the twentieth century (O'Hear, 1991) and it was claimed that many of the methods of social progress and reform were constructed based on Dewey's ideas. The notions of LCT have their origins in the Western philosophy of child centeredness. LCT has its philosophical roots in progressive theoretical perspectives, constructivism, humanistic psychology and experiential learning, along with learner centered psychological principles. These roots supply the theoretical foundations for LCT practices (APA, 1997). Understanding the foundation of this approach is crucial to developing a deeper understanding of how to put the approach into practice and of understanding what learner LCT actually consists of. The key philosophical perspectives of LCT are based on children's natural development, their interests, their individual differences, the importance of play, as well as a supportive learning environment in learning, and learning by experiencing and discovering. A number of scholars were influential in establishing the philosophical foundation for LCT.

Methods and Materials: In-Depth Desk Research

In the present study, In-depth Desk Review (IDR) methods have been utilized. Desk research is the research technique which is mainly acquired by sitting at a desk. IDR is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources. In some situations, the researcher may not be directly involved in the data gathering process and instead, would rely on already existing data in order to arrive at research outcomes. IDR is another name for secondary research. IDR is not about collecting data. Instead, researcher's role as a user researcher carrying out desk research is to review previous research findings to gain a broad understanding of the field. In this study, library documents, published books, research articles as well as various types of online resources have been taken as a data collection tools. Thus, this study may termed as an IDR.

Contribution of the Philosopher and Educationist to the Development LCT

In this section, I have discussed the various philosopher's ideas, vision, thought, and theories regarding the LCT and their various aspects. It through light on the philosophical dimension of the LCT.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): The Founder of the LCT

While such notions of LC have existed for a long time, until Rousseau's Emile was published in 1762, which became the first systematic presentation of learner-centered concepts, there was little concern about handling children in a particular way (Entwistle, 1970; Darling, 1994, Tabulawa, 2003). The founder of LCT was a Swiss born French theorist Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). He was the first educator to introduce the concept LCT in the field of pedagogy. In his line of thinking, the main idea is that educators should not start an instruction by concentrating on a vast amount of information that they wish students to learn. Rousseau emphasized that by understanding what the learner is willing to learn and what he is interested in learning, teachers should begin an education. One of history's biggest inconsistencies was Rousseau. He gave away every child at the birth of his own children; and, maybe no one else has ever done so much to support children. In his adopted country, France, children were seen as tiny adults, as was perhaps generally true at the time. Even worse, they were treated so. Rousseau understood that such treatment was unnatural and damaging to children. After tutoring a boy named Emile, and Emile's sister (Sophie), Rousseau wrote a book titled Emile. Rousseau's key tenets regarding LCT are naturalism and individualism. The term naturalism refers to the idea that 'the child should be left alone to grow naturally without interference from teachers ... or other authority figures' (Dunn, 2005: 158). In Emile, Rousseau introduced a type of education that was 'natural, child-centred, and experience-based' (Henson, 2003: 7). He emphasised the fact that children have their own ways of 'seeing, thinking, and feeling' (Rousseau, 1762: 54), and that it is essential that children should be permitted to develop naturally. The more opportunities they have to explore,

discover things and find things out, the more children can learn. Rousseau argued that they should not be forced to learn. One important idea in Rousseau's account is that children should make sense of the world in their own way. Therefore, instead of relying on the teacher, they should be encouraged to construct knowledge, and discover and explore things freely (*Dunn, 2005*). This has become one of the fundamental principles of the philosophy of LCT. Rousseau proposed a form of education that was unknown at the time, an education that was normal, child-centered, and experience-based, in his book *Emile*. His aim was to protect the kids from a corrupting environment and encourage them to grow naturally. The freedom to explore and communicate with nature was granted to *Emile*. His punishment was imposed by default, not by his tutor, when *Emile* acted poorly. *Emile* smashed a window pane in his bedroom on one occasion. Rousseau ignored the incident and let him feel the resulting cold wind and rain instead of giving him a beating, which was the popular reaction to misbehavior. The book *Emile* by Rousseau soon became, and has remained ever since, the most widely read educational book of all times.

Rousseau's views stood in contrast to the old puritan assumptions that children were from the moment of birth 'in a state of fallen grace from which they had to be saved' that had influenced the educational philosophy before the Enlightenment (*Doddington and Hilton, 2007: XV*).). Rousseau believed that childhood was a distinct state of life and that children were the result rather than inherent sinfulness of their environment. The book '*Emile*' by Rousseau exemplified his thinking, which was, however, restricted to boys and did not believe in girls' equal treatment. Another key guiding principle in *Emile* which has become a notion of the LCT, is the appreciation of individual differences. In traditional education, it is assumed that there are no differences among children. According to Rousseau, 'every mind has its own form' (*Rousseau, 1762, p.58*). For this reason, there is a need for education to be individualised to take into account children's differences, along with their needs and their levels of development. These ideas lead to a shift of focus from teaching to learning and to a change from viewing students as passive recipients of knowledge to seeing them as active and participatory players. For Rousseau, educating children does not mean teaching them knowledge, but rather, developing children's interests, promoting their natural growth, as well as their desire to learn. He said, 'Don't teach many things to your kids. ...It is madness to try to make your child learn. It is not your business to teach him the various sciences, but to give him a taste for them and methods of learning them' (*Rousseau, 1762, pp.134-135*). His account clearly implies that education is a matter of discovering and experiencing (*Darling, 1994; Davies et al., 2002*). Rousseau's most famous contribution to LCT is the idea of the learner learning, instead of the teacher teaching (*Davies et al., 2002*). *Mark (2005)* quotes Rousseau as saying that, 'the noblest work in education is to make a reasoning man, and we expect to train a young child by making him reason! This begins at the end; this is making an instrument of an outcome. If children understood how to reason they would not need to be taught.' This quotation proves that Rousseau right from the beginning believed that meaningful education should make the learner to reason and to be creative, otherwise if education fails to achieve this it ceases to be relevant to learners.

Rousseau's Philosophy of education is not concerned with particular techniques of imparting information and concepts, but rather with developing the learner's character and moral sense, so that he may learn to practice self-mastery and remain virtuous even in the unnatural and imperfect society in which he will have to live (*Mark, 2005*). Rousseau sees education as a tool that is used to acquire survival skills and competencies through reasoning and creativity. This is seen when, under the guardianship of a tutor who will lead him through different learning activities planned by the tutor, a hypothetical boy *Emile* is to be raised in the country side, which Rousseau claims is a more normal and healthier setting than the city. Via his learning experiences, the teacher would ensure that no damage occurs to *Emile*. Like modern behaviourist Psychologists Rousseau believed that the child learns through consequences rather than through physical punishment. *Lynda (2002)* contends that Rousseau

was one of the first to advocate developmentally appropriate education, and his description of the stages of child development mirrors his conception of the evolution of culture. He divides childhood into stages: first stage age 12, when children are guided by emotions and impulses; second stage 12-16 years, reason starts to develop; third stage 16 years onwards, when the child develops into an adult. Rousseau recommends that the young adult learns a manual skill such as carpentry which requires creativity and thought. His philosophy pays more emphasis on producing a creative learner who is able to reason on his own and solve problems, as opposed to producing a passive learner who is accustomed to a dependence syndrome always.

Similarly, *Vincent (2009)* attests that Rousseau praised a form of education that at the time was unknown, a neutral, child-centered, and experience-based education. His main intent was to protect children from a corrupting society and allow them to develop naturally. This was demonstrated by the fact that Emile was given the freedom to explore and interact with nature. When Emile behaved inappropriately his punishment was administered not by his tutor. On one occasion, Emile broke the window pane in his bedroom. Instead of giving him a whipping, which was the common response to misbehaviour, Rousseau ignored the event and let him experience the resulting cold wind and rain. This is a good philosophy that still applies up to date. Children learn better on their own from consequences that they generate for themselves. This philosophy as well is in line with behaviourism perspective which contends that the behaviour of children is shaped by consequences, because children continue with the behaviour that result in positive consequences, but tend to stop or discontinue the behaviour that result in negative consequences as the case is in Thorndike's cage and Skinner's box. In the same token Natural Science learners need to be actively involved during the lesson in order to enable them to achieve and enjoy the results of their own effort. Once this happens these learners will be motivated and continue working hard on their own and in groups so that they continue reaping positive results of their own hard work and initiative.

Practical Education (1798)

Later, the Birmingham Lunar Circle began to establish LCT as a method. The most outstanding text on LCT was Practical Education, published in 1798 by Edgeworth and his daughter, Maria. In 1798, a guide entitled Practical Education was written by the Edgeworth family, who were members of the circle and had 21 children of their own, based on a system of exploration in education. The principles of this method was making tools and imitation toys available to children and encourage them to undertake experiments as well as being given space to discover themselves. It provided a comprehensive theory of education that combines the ideas of Locke and Rousseau, as well other educational writers. It was the first educational work to place more emphasis on experimental and holistic teaching methods, emphasising the notion that children should be encouraged to discover for themselves and that "children's attention, interest and understanding should be awakened by sympathy" (*Doddington & Hilton, 2007: 7*). However, in contrast to these LCT movements, the industrial revolution was also developing schools catering to children from poor areas and slums. In these schools, children were educated through rote memorisation and a system based on a rewards and punishments. The LCT became the system for the more privileged through charity schools catering to the children of the artisans and shopkeepers (*Lall, 2010*).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827): Learning by Head, Hand and Heart

Rousseau's way of thinking about children was further elaborated by another educator, Pestalozzi. He was a Swiss pedagogue and a reformer of social education who exemplified Romanticism in his approach. He founded a number of educational institutions in both the German and French-speaking regions of Switzerland and wrote a number of books describing his progressive modern concepts of education. His motto 'learning by the head, the hand and the heart' is still a central concept in the effective schools of the 21st century. Pestalozzi argued that children need to be taught

physically, mentally and emotionally, and furthermore, 'children should be nourished as a plant while they learn to do ... teachers must value children' (*Henson, 2003: 8*). He specifically mentioned that the subject matter needs to be matched with children's abilities. This idea was introduced in Scotland's Primary Memorandum and England's Plowden Study in the 1960s and became a milestone in child or LCT development in Britain (*Darling, 1994; Croft, 2002*).

Pestalozzi has developed his own educational approach based on Locke. He believed in the child's inherent intelligence that had to be nurtured, and that children were active learners who needed stimulation. Such ideas have been underscored by romantic poets such as Wordsworth, who believed in childhood innocence. Dickens criticized mindless rote learning for the weak industrialists. Pestalozzi's curriculum and regular schedule for his pupils included time for them to develop their 'own jobs' as well as a focus on manual work, gardening and physical activity, apart from more academic topics, in order to give the children a 'balanced' upbringing. *Silber (1965)* argues that the contribution of Pestalozzi to education illiteracy in the 18th century almost completely conquered Switzerland by 1830. He was known as the father of modern education because of his tremendous contributions to education. The pedagogical doctrines of Pestalozzi are highlighted by *Silber (1965)* as stressing that instruction should switch from familiar to modern, integrate the performance of concrete arts and the experience of real emotional reaction, and be driven by the gradual development of the infant. *Silber (1965)* also maintains that when the French army occupied the town of Stans in 1798, several children were left without a home or a family. The Swiss government founded an orphanage and on 5 December 1798 recruited Pestalozzi to take care of the newly created institution. This, according to *Silber (1965)*, was a dream come true for Pestalozzi, since this appointment presented him with an opportunity to bring about far-reaching changes in the education system of the day by implementing an education system that served the needs of the learners. This form of education, according to *Bruhlmeier (2010)*, was later to be called the LCT.

Bruhlmeier (2010) points out that Pestalozzi's instructional approaches were child-centered and focused on individual differences, awareness of the senses and self-activity of the pupil. *Bruhlmeier (2010)* continues to attest that in 1819 Stephan Ludwig Roth came to study with Pestalozzi, and his modern humanism led to the growth of the language teaching system, including considerations such as the role of the mother tongue in the teaching of ancient languages. Pestalozzi and Niederer had significant impacts on the philosophy of physical education. They developed a regime of physical exercises and outdoor activities linked to general, moral and intellectual education, representing Pestalozzi's ideal of peace and human autonomy. These practices founded by these two thinkers are of critical importance in today's schools, since they include, engage and inspire learners. Learners when carrying out these activities are entertained and educated at the same time, while on the other hand learners are being prepared for autonomy in life. Pestalozzi's principles of education especially the development of the whole person through child centred teaching methods inspired many in education up to date. Philosophers like Froebel and Parker were inspired by Pestalozzi's work *Lilley (1967)*. *Watson (1997)* asserts that most education systems nowadays have either implemented or are in the process of implementing the LCT that would produce a holistic learner who will become a useful member of the society. The principles of the LCT were further promoted and consolidated by Philosophers like Pestalozzi and others.

Pestalozzi's influence over the spirit, the methods and the theory of education has continued into the twentieth and twenty first centuries, and most of his principles have been assimilated into the modern system of education, and are highly relevant to the teaching of Natural Science where learners need to be supported by their parents in as far as scientific equipment and field tours are concerned. In such cases teachers and parents need to work as a team for the good of the child. Important of all is round education and learning which is cross functional, capable of linking Natural Science with Geography, Tourism, Life Orientation and History to mention but just a few. This linkage helps learners

to have a broader picture of education, and to appreciate the fact that all subjects are linked and they are all equally important in their success at school. It also sheds light to them that subjects cannot be learnt in isolation, but they are supposed to be learnt as a total whole in the school curriculum. Pestalozzi opened a school with a student-centered program. Pestalozzi believed that the entire child should be trained (physically, mentally, and emotionally) and that children should be nourished as a plant when learning to do so. Pestalozzi believed that teachers had to honor children and base their instruction on compassion. He said the school should be like a good house, and the teacher should be like a good parent. Pestalozzi's school was educationally successful, but it struggled financially. In Germany, Froebel used child-centered, child-centered, experience-based concepts to create the world's first kindergarten, a school for young children. In the early nineteenth century, Thomas Jefferson expressed concern for both society and individuals:

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. There is no safe deposit for the functions of government but with the people themselves nor can they be safe without information. (Ikenberry, 1974: 114)

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852): Originator of the Terminology LCT

The term LCT was first used by Froebel and, in addition, his elaboration on LCT was influential in shaping education in America, as well as in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. Froebel took the new thinking of education forward. His view of the philosophical foundations of LCT embraced the idea that 'the learner is placed in the centre of all things, and all things are seen only in relation to himself, to his life' (Froebel, 1826: 97). An additional idea that enabled Froebel to advance LCT was that a happy and harmonious environment is of vital importance to the growth of children. Moreover, through play and self-activity, the whole person can be developed. Children learn willingly and better through play (Chung and Walsh, 2000). The role of the teacher is to provide a supportive learning environment for children's growth.

It was however not until the Kindergarten, invented by Froebel, which focused on the instincts and play of the young child, that LCT received an institutional boost across Western Europe. The 'Kindergarten' was built to encourage children to grow up in a garden that had to be guarded and cultivated. Kids, he concluded, instinctively imitate the social world around them. Froebel created a realistic guide and encouraged children to use sticks and wooden blocks and bricks to communicate their ideas. Throughout this period of the development of LCT, the dominant education system designed for the poor remained based on rote learning, regimentation and the increasing control of standards. Setting standards and examinations were chiefly developed to help with classroom control. This developed into a 'mechanical system of pedagogy resting on anonymous relations of disciplinary power through grouping and setting, testing and grading of child pupils.' (Doddington and Hilton: 22). It was only with the Hadow studies in the 1920s and 1930s that primary education was revamped and a more child-centric approach was recommended. However, the secondary system remained wedded to old methods due to the selection at age 11 for distinct forms of secondary education. Watson (1997) asserts that Froebel started his career in the forestry industry where he studied botany and biology, but later ended up teaching in a primary school. It was his study of and love of nature that influenced his views on the importance of nurturing children. He enjoyed working with children so much that he decided to make education his life long career. His programme intended for the child to be free, creative spirit within the classroom where one can grow and express themselves as God intended. He believed that this process should begin at a very young age.

Lilley (1967) describes some components of Froebel's Kindergarten Philosophy. *Firstly*, humans are creative beings. Under this tenet Froebel is of the opinion that what separates humans from other life forms is that they can alter their environment, because human brains allow humans to visualise, and imagine a different future. It is in light of this that Froebel attests that, true education must help children

to understand their true nature as creative beings. In the same token Natural Science education in particular as a Science subject should be delivered in a way that would enable learners to understand their nature and also understand that they are creative beings who can positively transform families and communities through their creativity. *Secondly*, Play is the engine that drives true learning. *Lilley (1967)* highlights Froebel as attesting that, play is not idle behaviour, it is a biological imperative to discover how things work. It is happy work, but definitely purposeful. Natural Science can be more enjoyable if certain educational games are introduced. Children enjoy playing while at the same time learning something. He goes on to assert that the 21st century presents a big opportunity of introducing carefully chosen scientific videos and scientific games that can help learners acquire scientific knowledge and skills better, while at the same time having joy and fun.

Colonel Francis Parker: The Founder of the Normal School

Henson (2003) asserts that American educators became serious about the LCT at the end of the civil war, when a soldier and teacher named Parker returned to his home state of New Hampshire where in 1865 he accepted principal ship in Manchester. Three years later in 1868 unhappy with the rote memorisation that characterised schools at that time, Parker accepted principalship in Dayton, Ohio, where he headed the first normal school, giving demonstration lessons to help teachers learn how to use the LCT child. But Parker found Americans slow to embrace LCT. Finding the climate rigid, he said that the inhabitants of the area were clinging to the old methods like barnacles (*Campbell, 1967*). Parker had heard of several Europeans who had started to introduce the LCT for as long as a century, including Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Hegel (1770-1831), Herbart (1776-1841) and Froebel (1782-1852). In 1872 Parker went to Berlin to obtain an academic degree, but his main aim was to learn directly from the Europeans about their LCT. When he was told that the courses he had selected would not lead to a degree, his answer (*Campbell, 1967: 68*) was, "But they did lead to the children of America."

Henson (2003) attests that on his return to the US in (1875) Parker accepted Superintendence position in Quincy, Massachusetts, where he gave model learner centred lessons in all seven Quincy schools. He also held district wide teachers' meetings where he demonstrated LCT to teachers. By substituting drill for investigation operations, Parker replaced memorization of the evidence with comprehension. The school board was divided on support for the new reform. The New York Tribune sent a reporter who credited the Quincy system as "the starting point in the reorganization of the deplorable American system." But the criticism only improved the prestige of the school. It was estimated that 30,000 people attended Quincy Schools between 1878 and 1880. (*Campbell, 1967: 99*). It has to be said that some parts of American society have opposed Parker's new approach to improving the deplorable American education system. Such criticism, however, instead of having a negative effect, has had a positive impact by making Parker's LCT more common in American schools. In 1880 Parker was convinced by the Boston School Board to introduce his "Quincy Scheme" to Boston Schools. When asked to describe this scheme, the committee said, "In a word it can be said about the entire system, the student is treated less like a machine and more like a person." In 1882, a representative of the Cook County Normal School near Chicago asked Parker to take over the institution to hear about Parker's success with the Boston Schools. He agreed, and by the 1890s he had worked out his theory of education, which he called the Theory of Concentration; the key argument (in this theory) was that all efforts should be focused on the child rather than on the subject.

In 1900, Parker returned to New Hampshire and opened a new school the next year. Two years later, at age 65, Col. Frances Parker died. In the time of his death in 1902 Parker's LCT to education was adopted by many schools, and had a lot of followers in the US. Seemingly this was the beginning of the new revolution in education not only within the boundaries of USA but beyond to other territories of the world, because in the 21st century according to *Henson (2003)* many countries are dropping rote learning and embracing the child LCT. *Sparrow's (2000)* attests that the only concern about the LCT is

whether countries are implementing it correctly, because the correctness of the implementation of the LCT is of great interest to many education systems of the world.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and Other

Montessori) also contributed to LCT by adopting an approach which allowed the children to self-direct their learning. Her work also contributed to transforming the role of the teacher. 'Teachers have to be 'responsive to the different learning styles and 'intelligences' of their learners as well as their learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds' (Falk, 2009: 29). The theory of multiple intelligences developed by Gardner's revolutionised the classroom (King, 2008: 41). The old notion of intelligence did not recognise creativity, civic mindedness or if the person was ethical. Gardner identified eight different forms of intelligences: linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, bodily kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligence (King, 2008: 45). His theory was that if a teacher was aware of the various different forms of intelligence he/ she could use this to help individual students with their own person guided discovery according to their strengths. 'Pretend Play' was also central to his approach as children in the past used to learn by playing in a multi age group in their neighbourhood. Today computers and televisions mean that children are increasingly isolated and therefore schools have to incorporate such play styles into the classroom.

The Reggio Emilia approach (developed after the Second World War in Reggio Emilia, Italy) has been hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education based on creating an environment where children of pre-school age can develop their own powers of thinking. This approach links in with Howard's Gardner's notion of schooling for multiple intelligences and uses art as a tool for cognitive, linguistic and social development. Beyond these approaches detailed above there have been further developments and academics, educationalists and psychologists have moved the theoretical boundaries of LCT further. One recent approach is the theory of the transformatory approach developed by Sue Askew and Eileen Carnell (Askew and Carnell, 1998) that moves beyond both the behaviourist theories (TCA) and the cognitive intelligence theories (Piaget) and focuses on an organismic view of the person 'who is active in a change process' and which 'recognises the complexity of the interrelationship of the emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive dimensions of learning'. (Askew and Carnell, 1998:20).

John Dewey (1859-1952): The Founder of Democracy

Dewey used his very long life to exercise more influence on education and philosophy than any other American before or after that. Dewey was inspired by Locke's tabula rasa, Bacon's scientific method, Kant's pragmatism, and James' (1842-1910) conviction that reality is inseparable from experience, and that life-like experience is a stream of sequential events. Dewey described the LCT as one in which 'the child is the starting point, the middle and the end' (Dewey, 1956: 9). He also contrasted this approach with conventional schooling. In the words of Dewey (1956), traditional education:

The centre of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself ... Now the change which is coming into our education is the shifting of the centre of gravity. It is a change, a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical centre shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the centre about which they are organized. (p. 34).

The above quote suggests that the center of the school should be the child rather than the curriculum. For Dewey, the primary role of education was to take over the interest of the learner, to give him / her direction, and to encourage the growth of the learner (Dewey, 1944; 1956; 1997). As far as the role of the teacher in the LCT is concerned, the teacher is a co-planner who organizes events to promote learning and make learning easier, along with encouragement for the learner.

Dewey developed a progressive theory with democracy as the aim of schooling. The curriculum has to be rooted in the social context and teachers and children decide together which experiences are meaningful. Schools, in his opinion, must act as a democratic society. Dewey's idea of education emphasises the equal importance of physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child and proposed that a teaching-learning process should engage the whole child. Dewey accepted that individuals have important developmental properties but he also stressed the value of experience. To Dewey, education should be a systematic reconstruction of learners' experience (*Dworkin, 1959*), where teachers are required to progressively guide learners in connecting learners' experience with their learning as well as constructing new experiences. These requirements evidently put certain demands on the teachers' roles as synthesised by Dewey below. According to Dewey, teachers' roles in LCT can be categorized into four as listed below: finding ways of enriching, balancing and clarifying the children's experience; refining experience because children need to be guided into reflective channels to seek new meanings; simplifying experience because a child is uniquely different; and finding ways of connecting the child's experience with the diverse ways of life of his culture.

Dewey's (1938: 97) view of LCT embraced the idea that education should be both problem-based and fun, "Unless a given experience leads out into a field of previously unfamiliar no problems arise, while problems are the stimulus to thinking (*p.97*)" On the surface, this comment, taken from his book *Experience and Education*, may appear to suggest that the curriculum should be highly sequential with all the content and experiences mapped out, but this would be a gross misinterpretation because Dewey believed that the experiences of each learner must come from within each individual learner. Dewey was saying that each experience should leave each student motivated and that the solving of each problem must lead to new, related questions about the topic. (*Dewey, 1938: 48*).

Dewey saw life as a process of constant regeneration, a series of on-going experiments. At the University of Chicago, he established the nation's first laboratory school, the curriculum of which was a collection of problem-solving exercises (*Campbell, 1967*). Dewey's laboratory school became so famous that every state eventually had one or more laboratory schools. Unfortunately, in order to minimize costs, most of these highly effective learning societies have been dismantled and most of the approximately one hundred remaining laboratory schools have abolished secondary schooling. For a list of these schools and more information on laboratory schools. Dewey's work has been powerful because he understands that every child has both a psychological and a social component, and to be effective, education must begin with recognizing how the child's talents, desires, and behaviors can be guided to help the child thrive in the community. In comparison to Rousseau, who wanted to shield children from society, *Dewey (1897)* argued that the only way a child could grow to its potential was in a social environment. He believed that the school should be a microcosm of its culture and that education is alive, not just a preparation for life.

Another concept that helped Dewey to advance the theory of LCT was his recognition of what he called collateral learning, an idea that has since been labeled confluent learning. Confluent or collateral learning recognizes that the richest learning includes our feelings, and *Dewey (1938: 48)* found this form of learning to be the richest of all. Collateral learning in the way of knowledge about enduring behaviors, likes and dislikes can and is often more important than spelling lessons or lessons learned in geography or history. These behaviors are basically what matters in the future. The most critical mindset that can be developed is the ability to continue learning.

Occasionally children need to be alone on their own. They learn more by doing things together and in groups, planning their work, helping one another to do it, trying out various ways and means of performing the task involved, discovering what will forward the project, comparing and appraising the results. By doing this learners would best develop their latent powers, their skills, understanding, self-reliance and co-operative habits. Dewey believed that the questions and answers resulting from

such joint projects would broaden the horizons of the child by relating his immediate activities to the wider life of the community. He highlighted that young children aged 6 or 7 who take up weaving, for example, can be stimulated to inquire into the cultivation of cotton, its processes of manufacture, the history of spinning devices. Such lines of inquiry emerging from their own interests would open windows upon the past, introduce them naturally to History, Geography, Science and Technology. This will establish vivid connections between what they are doing at school and the basic activities of human existence. The assertion above is in line with *Sparrow's (2000)* opinion, where he argues that participation in meaningful projects, learning by doing, encouraging problems and solving them, not only facilitates the acquisition and retention of knowledge, but it fosters the right characteristics traits, unselfishness, helpfulness, critical intelligence, as well as individual initiative. He says that this is the case because learning is more than assimilating; it is the development of habits which enables the growing person to deal effectively and most intelligently with his environment, and where that environment is in rapid flux, as in modern society, the elasticity which promotes readjustment to what is new is very essential.

Paulo Freire: The Founder of LCT in the Field of Adult Education

He considered that it was the education system that perpetuated the social injustices, disparities and oppression of the masses in Freire's conception of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy. The concerns raised by Rogers about the essence of learning and teaching above also recall the conventional teaching and learning activities described by *Freire (1972)*. He believed that it was the job of teachers to uphold and perpetuate social inequality by instilling a 'false consciousness' in their students, wittingly or unconsciously, and thereby conditioning and misleading them. Freire referred to conditioning as the educational 'banking' term. In his opinion, schooling was seen as a depository. The teacher deposited information in the depositories of the students' minds.

The 'banking' idea of education treats men as adaptable, manageable units, in Freire's opinion. In their education, students play a passive role, and the harder they work to store the deposited information, the less likely they are to build a critical consciousness. As a consequence, students end up with a fragmented view of the world they are expected to adjust to. He suggested an alternative solution focused on these issues, which he called a 'problem-posing' education system. He envisaged that this technique would promote the growth of the critical consciousness of the student through a dialectical dialogue with the teacher. The end of the conventional top-down relationship between learners and teachers, and the emergence of a more horizontal relationship in which the dichotomy between teacher and student ceases to exist, will mean such a relationship. The relationship between teacher and student is thus transformed into, '... teacher-student with teachers-students. The teacher is no longer just one who teaches, but who teaches himself in conversation with the students, who also teach in their turn while being taught.' Freire claims that this is a mechanism by which men grow their capacity to objectively interpret and focus on their social reality and act upon it. The educational information content is not regulated by either party, but is produced in collaboration by both parties. For both parties, who, as a result, will become genuine and completely humanized, the information produced will be meaningful and important. There is support from a variety of educators for Freire's idea of dialogue between students and teachers as a way of transforming the educational process (*Happs, 1991; Mazhindu, 1990; Burnard, 1987*).

Malcolm Knowles: From Pedagogy to Andragogy

In 'The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy (1970), Knowles was most concerned with the fact that teachers of adults did not have, and have not had, a coherent theory of adult learning or teaching to justify their practices. Moreover, he suggested that there seemed to be no clear differentiation between how adult educators taught adults and how teachers of compulsory education taught children. *Knowles (1970)* views self-directedness as the main characteristic of

adulthood, and it is the achievement of self-directedness that is at the centre of andragogy (*Brookfield, 1986*). Knowles suggests that knowledge gained by an individual at age 21 is largely out of date by the time that he is 40. On this latter point, Knowles suggests that it is necessary to redefine education from the transmitting of what is known, and view it as a lifelong process of discovering what is not known. Fundamental to Knowles' assumptions is the notion of difference. Knowles argues that the way children learn (pedagogy) is fundamentally different to the way in which adults learn. Therefore, there is a need to review and identify different educational theories, philosophies and teaching approaches that reflect those differences. *Milligan (1995)* citing work of several authors, identifies the key elements of the andragogical approach: '...facilitation of adult learning that can best be achieved through a LCT that, in a developmental manner, enhances the student's self-concept, promotes autonomy, self-direction and critical thinking, reflects on experience and involves the learner in the diagnosis, planning, enaction and evaluation of their own learning needs' (p. 22). The relationship between the concepts of LCT, self-directed learning and andragogy is seen by some to be synonymous, and continues to emphasise the inherent dichotomy between andragogy and pedagogy (*Jinks, 1999*). According to *Sweeney (1986)*, Knowles' theory of andragogy is the uniting force between the two concepts:

....'self-directed learning', reflects the move towards increasing personal responsibility for autonomy in determining what should be learned and how, according to individual needs...'student-centred learning', reflects the humanistic influence on education which stresses the importance of holistic learning, the democratisation of the teacher-learner relationship and the notion of personal growth for both through an interactive learning process...'andragogy' the philosophy of adult learning, unites these two concepts in a manner which emphasises the fundamental differences in approach between adult learning and pedagogical instruction. (p. 257)

The humanistic perspective emphasises process in education, and a change in the relationship between the teacher and the student, to achieve the desired, but negotiated, outcomes. The United Kingdom Central Council is more concerned with pre-determined outcomes of education and not with the educational process itself. The situation is complicated further by the addition of another interpretation of the links between pedagogy and andragogy. *Milligan (1995)*, arguing against the unhelpful andragogy-pedagogy dichotomy, asserts that andragogy should be conceptualised as a discrete theory of adult education that is consistent with the romantic curriculum. Moreover, he asserts that andragogy should be conceptualised as a, 'field within the broad concept of pedagogy.' Pedagogy, according to *Milligan (1995)*, should be viewed as the all-encompassing concept that subsumes andragogy and Freire's pedagogy. The relationships between andragogy and pedagogy, and between the concepts of student-centred, self-directed and problem-posing education are becoming increasingly blurred and unclear.

As mentioned in the section above, there have always been strong voices speaking out against LCT as a better or more evolved teaching and learning approach. Whilst at first the opposition to LCT was one linked to educating the masses in industrialising urban slums where the lack of teachers and large classes made such an approach impractical, the later opposition to LCT was one based on wanting a system where performance could be measured. The understanding about learning by those propagating the teacher centred teaching (TCT) is that the learner is an empty vessel which needs to be filled up. Behavioural theories also believed in the transmission of facts and skills and that learning is best controlled through sanctions and rewards. (*Falk, 2009: 26-27*) In these processes the mind is passive and the teacher is a conduit for the 'stuff' being delivered-the internal process of the student or learner is not recognised. There are however some real drawbacks of LCT that have emerged after its use in schools across the UK, the US and Canada which go beyond the philosophical debates described above. Since children are expected to learn at their own pace, some fall behind the rest of the class and never catch up. Some parents feel that their children are not learning basic skills. The fact that children's needs

are supposed to lead the curriculum also throws up the difficulty of knowing what a child's educational needs are, how these change over time and how the curriculum is to be structured around it. There are likely to be disagreements with regard to culture and contexts and a 'needs based curriculum' offers no basis for 'judging one kind of curriculum to be preferable to another' (*Darling, 1994: 71*). Generally critics of the LCT process state that it is too individualistic and too vague (*Darling, 1994: 76*). Other critiques focus more on the role of the teacher and how in LCT the teacher's role is 'reduced' to one of a facilitator and therefore unnecessarily limits the relationship between teachers and their students. This has more recently been critiqued from a critical feminist, postmodern and post structural approach (*Langford, p.113*). The fact that LCT have not taken part in many evaluations, make it difficult to acclaim how successful the approach actually is in practice.

Carl Rogers: From Client Centeredness to Learner Centeredness

Many of the underlying assumptions in relation to student centeredness have been informed by the work and writings of Rogers, and were based upon his notion of client centeredness from his work as a non-directive counsellor. *Rogers' (1983)* LCT is based on his notion that teaching was an overrated function and that the aim of education should be the facilitation of learning. The mainstay of his assertions on LCT was that, 'Learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the student as having relevance for his own purpose' (*p.158*). *Rogers (1983)* believed that it was the education system's responsibility to nurture children and young people to aid their personal and social development, and also to ensure that what was being learnt was meaningful and relevant to each individual concerned. Static knowledge was unimportant and students need to be able to learn how to find out the information that they needed to address their issues and concerns. Although he has stated on many occasions that teaching was an overrated function, the key players in this process of change and learning are teachers, but these teachers don't teach, they facilitate learning. Good teaching, or facilitation, particularly related to classroom instruction, seems to equate, for example, to: the creative provision of learning experiences, by the teacher, from which students can select; learning experiences that can stimulate excitement in the process of learning; the creation of learning experiences that foster independence and self-direction in learning; and learning experiences which aid the students' development of problem-solving skills.

The good teacher/facilitator is someone who: is able to create a learning climate or atmosphere that fosters meaningful and relevant learning that is related to 'live issues'; is able to create a learning climate in which mutual learning takes place (teacher and learner learning from each other); values and seeks to enhance the personal relationship between the teacher and the student and who is 'human' in the classroom; supports and accepts the expression of feelings and attitudes from students. In relation to the personal relationship that Rogers sees as being necessary for effective teaching/facilitation and for significant learning to occur, he talks about a 'person-centred way of being in an educational situation' (*Rogers, 1983: 95*). For a facilitator to be a good facilitator, he/she has to possess three essential attitudes or qualities: genuineness; non-judgmental caring and acceptance, and empathic understanding. Rogers contends that traditional ways of teaching, and the lecture in particular, are outdated and stifle creativity and narrow the range of cognitive and affective development and the skills that students will need to develop in order to be able to learn how to learn. The differences between traditional and student-centred learning that are conceptualised by Rogers, would appear to be so different that they are presented as being incompatible and mutually exclusive, with teacher-centred methods, beliefs and values at one extreme, and student-centred methods, beliefs and values at the other extreme.

From the foregoing it can be seen that, although learning and teaching methods are important and necessary, they are not, in Rogers' view sufficient in and of themselves for effective learning to take place. It is not only what the teacher/facilitator is doing to promote self-direction, excitement in

learning and the methods of instruction or learning experiences and so on that is of importance. For significant and meaningful learning to take place for the student it is how the teacher/facilitator is with the student that takes precedence. It is the qualities and attributes of the teacher/facilitator that are seen as being fundamental to support the process of learning how to learn. These qualities and attributes are thought by Rogers to be essential pre-requisites for effective teaching or facilitation. From a nurse education perspective, Rogers' theory of learning requires the nurse teacher to become another learning resource, rather than the conveyor of information.

Conclusion

A thorough review of the literature shows that LCT has been developing for over five thousand years, and it continues to take on different shapes. Yet, many of the dispositions that are embedded in this education model tend to endure. The nature of all theory is to guide thinking; therefore, LCT should guide teachers' thoughts, which will inevitably shape their behavior. Because the nature of all knowledge is fluid and temporary, responsible use of this model requires educators to commit to a life-long pursuit of improving their understanding of learner-centered education and of the broader processes called teaching and learning. LCT is a much more progressive way of teaching than the variations of the alternative TCA methods. The advantages of LCT are that the students will genuinely build an understanding of the subjects they are being taught and they will learn in the process essential skills such as pair and group work. Whilst it is harder to measure understanding and learning as opposed to memorisation, it is a more inclusive methodology, helping those who do not thrive in an environment driven by high levels of memorisation. LCT is about awaking the interest of the child and creating a learning culture which goes beyond school and beyond childhood. The move away from LCT in the west is not driven by the discovery of a better teaching and learning method-it is driven by government measurement policies. Often wealthier families will opt to have their children educated in primary schools using a form of LCT such as the Montessori or the Pestalozzi method i. e. different philosophical approaches. Overall children being taught LCT will learn how to understand and those being taught by rote will learn how to memorise. It is essential to break away from the rote learning strategy in order to raise understanding, learning levels and achievement across the whole country.

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