

# TOWARDS A STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION AND PROGRESSIVE PEDAGOGY

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## ***Abstract***

*Perhaps the most critical shift in education in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been a move away from a conception of “learner as sponge” toward an image of “learner as active constructor of meaning.” This perception and perspective have given rise to the term student-centered learning; that favours a wide variety of educational programs, [learning experiences](#), instructional approaches, and [academic-support strategies](#) that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students. Subsequently, the learner-centred pedagogy has been adjudged to be the most suitable to the development of individuals. Thus, this paper focuses on how drama-in-education and progressive pedagogy as teaching approaches could foster student-centred learning if properly utilized in Nigeria education system.*

## **Introduction**

Curriculum reforms in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century has largely based on the constructivist approach of teaching and in many ways represented progressive philosophy. Although Plato and Socrates, even Dewey reminded us long ago that learners were not empty

vessels, blank slates, or passive observers, thus, much of Europe and America schooling today has been based on this premise: however the reverse is the case in Nigeria Education system. Teachers have talked; students have been directed to listen is the basic philosophy of Nigeria education. The assumption has been that if teachers speak clearly and students are motivated, learning will occur. If students do not learn, the logic goes, it is because they are not paying attention or they do not care.

Fundamentally, educators have used the terms “teacher-centered” and “student-centered” to describe two distinct approaches to instruction” (James 31). Teacher-centered also known as the traditional education model typically refers to learning situations in which the teacher asserts control over the material that students study and the ways in which the student study it: i.e., when, where, how, and at what pace they learn it. In teacher-centered classes, the teacher tends to be the most active person in the room and do most of the talking; by lecturing, demonstrating concepts, reading aloud, or issuing instructions. While students spend most of their time sitting in desks, listening, taking notes, giving brief answers to questions that the teacher asks, or completing assignments and tests. These modes of learning present the students as passive learners; mere receptors of knowledge.

These ideas were grounded in a theory of learning that focused on behavior. One behavior leads to another, behavioral-learning theorists argued, and so if teachers act in a certain way, students will likewise act in that way. Central to behaviorism was the idea of conditioning; that is, training the individual to respond to stimuli. The mind is a “black box” of little concern. But behavioral theorists had to make way for the “cognitive revolution” in psychology, which involved putting the mind back

into the learning equation. As Lesh and Lamon put it, “Behavioral psychology (based on factual and procedural rules) has given way to cognitive psychology (based on models for making sense of real life experiences)” (18) In this shift, several fields of learning theory emerged. Neuroscientists, for example, argue that “the brain actively seeks new stimuli in the environment from which to learn and that the mind changes through use; that is, learning changes the structure of the brain” (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 20). Although, it is still too early to claim that neuroscience can definitely explain how people learn.

However, there are new perceptions of how individual learn, in the wake of late nineteen and twenty century. The work of other cognitive theorists helps here. For example, research suggests that learners, from a very young age make sense of the world, actively creating meaning while reading texts, interacting with the environment, or talking with others. Even if students are quietly watching a teacher speak, they can be actively engaged in a process of comprehension, or “minds on” work, as many teachers describe it. As Bransford, Brown, and Cocking wrote, “It is now known that very young children are competent, active agents of their own conceptual development; in short, the mind of the young child has come to life” (79–80). This cognitive turn in psychology is often referred to as a *constructivist* approach to learning.

Understanding that students construct meaning has led to increased attention to students’ interpretations of what they witness in class. Recall the game of “telephone”: A phrase, whispered from person to person, is followed by hilarity when the last person announces something quite different from what the first said. This game exemplifies the role of interpretation in any human endeavor. At the basest level, what we “hear” is filtered through our assumptions and values, attention, and knowledge. Some students

interpret a phenomenon differently from the way others do. Some students may interpret a given film differently from the way their friends do. All of us, in school and out, shape and sculpt the information we encounter, “constructing” our understanding. Although two students might encounter exactly the same information, as active participants in their own knowledge building, students develop understandings that can be qualitatively different.

Especially important, has been the growing revelation of “the powerful role of prior knowledge and experience in learning new information” (Cobb 11). Students enter school with ideas, and those ideas are a significant force to be reckoned with. Researchers have shown that “students’ beliefs that the earth is flat, last well after teachers and others have told them otherwise” (Cobb 11). Elementary- age children have been found to “hold naive theories of prejudice and discrimination that resonate with the theories of social scientists that have grappled with similar questions about why people dislike or discriminate against those who are different” (Rose 22). Similarly, Byrnes and Torney-Purta found that “adolescents use naive social, economic, and political theories in identifying causes of social issues” (267).

“Many young children cannot understand why  $1/4$  is larger than  $1/8$  because 8 is bigger than 4” (Byrnes and Torney-Purta 268). Researchers are continuing to uncover how students’ preconceptions, nonscientific beliefs, conceptual misunderstandings, vernacular misunderstandings, and factual misconceptions act as powerful filters in what and how they learn. When we acknowledge that students interpret—and do not automatically absorb—the information and ideas they encounter in the world through the experiences and theories they bring to school, the links between learning and teaching become more

complicated. Rather than appearing as a natural result of teaching, learning is seen as inherently “problematic.” Teachers might create opportunities for students to learn, but teachers cannot control students’ interpretations. Teachers become responsible for diagnosing students’ interpretations and helping them alter, edit, and enrich them. Each of the shifts in learning theories that are discussed above undoubtedly has implications for teachers’ roles and responsibilities.

It is against this background that this paper attempts an analysis of drama-in-education and progressive pedagogy as two major learning approaches, that provides students with myriad learning opportunities (learner-centred) and learning strategies that aimed at holistic development of the individual learners irrespective of their learning deficiencies.

### **Conceptualizing Student-Centred Pedagogy**

Student-Centered typically refers to forms of instruction that, for example, give students opportunities to lead learning activities, participate more actively in discussions, design their own learning projects, explore topics that interest them, and generally contribute to the design of their own course of study. Additionally, student-centered instruction is often associated with classrooms that feature desks arranged in circles or small groups (rather than rows of desks that face the teacher), with “self-guided” or “self-paced” learning, or with learning experiences that occur outside of traditional classroom settings or school buildings, such as creative dramatics class, interactive method of teaching, independent research projects, travel experiences, community-service projects.

The term student-centered learning most likely arose in response to educational decisions that did not fully consider what students needed to know or what methods would be most effective in facilitating learning for individual students or groups of students. Thus advocates of student-centered learning challenge or overturn many common organizational or instructional tendencies in schools by making student learning the primary objective; i.e., all considerations that do not in some way improve or facilitate student learning would become secondary (or lower) in importance. The basic rationale is that schools should be designed to enhance student learning, not improve organizational efficiency.

While student-centered learning has sometimes been criticized as a fuzzy concept that refers to a vague assortment of teaching strategies, or that means different things to different educators, in recent years some education reformers and researchers have sought to define the term with greater precision. While the definition of the term is still evolving, advocates of student-centered learning tend to emphasize a few fundamental characteristics:

1. Teaching and learning is “[personalized](#),” meaning that it addresses the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.
2. Students advance in their education when they demonstrate they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn, often refers to as [proficiency-based learning](#).
3. Students have the flexibility to learn “anytime and anywhere,” meaning that student learning can take place outside of traditional classroom and school-based settings, such as through work-study programs, or during nontraditional times, such as on nights and weekends.

4. Students are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning and contribute to the design of learning experiences. (Abbot 15).

### **Progressive Education; Origin, Theory and practices**

Many discussions on education literature in recent decades suggested that progressive pedagogies are preferable as it regards learner as active player in the learning process. Traditional education modeled an elitist curriculum through centuries was criticized as it aimed to classify learners. Teaching as one of the important activities in education is debatable to whether it serves self-development or only to train out people with the qualities that the society expected to be right. At the turn of the Late Nineteenth Century, a pedagogical movement called progressive education began to make great impact over the world.

Progressive education movement is often seen as beginning with the 1870s child-centered school reform of Francis Parker and reflected in the educational philosophy of John Dewey, both in the US. “Parker was a progressive educationalist earlier than Dewey; he led reform in US in Quincy and Chicago’s Cook Country Normal School by applying child-centred theories of Rousseau, Froebel, and Pestalozzi” (Cavanaugh 14). He advocated learning in context and he promoted field trips across the local countryside for geography classes rather than coercing them to recite the geographical jargons. He had his students created their own stories for ““reading leaflets”, which replaced both the primers in grammar schools and the rote learning that went with them” (Windschitl 138). However, as an approach to pedagogy, progressive education is in no way limited to the US or the early

20th century. The ideas grew out of work in other countries, and can be traced back to the earliest theories of teaching and learning.

Progressive educators promote the idea that humans are social animals who learn best in real-life activities with others; “learning should be organized around the learners with consideration of abilities, interests in a democratic education system (Dewey 31). The progressive pedagogies are characterized by “learning by doing” (Dewey 29) a slogan which underscores real life experience as essential in learning. Progressive education also advocates much the same instructional approach as constructive learning approach does, which encourages investigation, discovery and problem solving. “Learning never meant memorization and learning does not happen by externally imposed content. Rather, memorization and other cognitive skills are the aids to learn in the process, and the starting point of all learning is the child’s common experience” (Dewey 32). Thus, Dewey, the father of progressive education, considers education as a tool that can help learners gain knowledge from experience effectively (12); therefore, education should not be a matter of telling and receiving, but an active and constructive process for learners.

Project learning was another recommended progressive pedagogy which was recommended during Dewey’s time, Dewey mentioned that “reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (28). In project learning, learners in group are expected to perform an in-depth study of a particular topic and to produce the correspondence findings by integrating different skills and disciplines. Throughout such learning process, young people are “learning how to learn” (Motschnig-Pitrik and Holzinger, 170).

Dewey believed that “a theory apart from an experience, even it is memorized, doesn’t learn, it tended to become a mere verbal formula, a set of catchwords used to hinder thinking, or genuine theorizing, unnecessary and impossible” (34). For example if students learn cooking a pancake, they should learn it through the cooking processes by a recipe. Memorizing the recipe of pancake doesn’t mean one can cook a pancake. Progressive educationalists reject content-based learning as learning should be regarded as a matter of constructing ideas; Pring’s illustrated the same point with a famous slogan known as “an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory” (37).

Within a large pool of literature on progressive education developed for over two centuries, Kohn summarize the following as pedagogical guides on progressive teaching methods:

- Emphasis on hands-on project and experiential learning experiences
- Thematic teaching and integrated curriculum are recommended
- Integration of community service and service learning projects into the daily curriculum
- Emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and problem solving skills
- Understanding through activity is promoted as opposed to rote knowledge
- Social learning, group work, and social skills are encouraged
- Project learning is recognized as an important means
- Learning contents should be useful to the future needs of the society

- Wide range of learning resources are used
- Emphasis on life-long learning
- Processes of learning is integral in learning
- Assessment is a part of learning that includes learner feedback
- Assessment is production, projects, and case studies but not paper-pencil test (6)

### **Drama-in-Education in Theory**

There is substantial literature on the use of drama as a learning medium. “Central beliefs of the international drama-in-education community are that drama is a vitally important art that can be used to teach virtually anything and teach across curricula” (Neelands 15). The following question and answer would definitely give us insight into the theory and practices of drama in education. “What is Drama? Drama is above all doing” (Wessels 7). We know it very well from our everyday life. For instance when we spill coffee on our boss’s papers and pretend like nothing happened or when we are late for work and invent some elaborate excuse. Briefly speaking, drama is something very natural to us that “we all engage in daily when faced with difficult situations” (Wessels 7).

“Drama in education uses the same tools employed by actors in the theatre. But while in the theatre everything is contrived for the benefit of the audience, in classroom drama everything is contrived for the benefit of the learners” (Wessels 8). Drama in education has a clear pedagogical aim concentrating on the personal and social development of its participants. It should encourage learners to imagine, act and thus reflect on human

experience and the process of this social learning is highlighted above the final product.

The term drama-in-education or educational drama is often regarded as being synonymous with creative drama at other clime. Meanwhile creative drama has been defined as (a) “the play that is developed by a group, as opposed to the one that abides by a written script” (McCaslin 8), and (b) “an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centred form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experiences” (Davis & Behm 10). According to British drama authority Dorothy Heathcote, educational drama is: “anything which involves persons in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters, are the chief concerns” (43).

Thus, Drama-in-education (D.I.E) is the use of drama as a means of teaching across the curriculum. It is used to expand learners’ awareness, to enable them to look at reality through fantasy and to look below the surface of actions for meanings. According to McCaslin “the objective is understanding rather than playmaking, although a play may be made in the process; attitudes rather than characters are the chief concern as the focus is on process rather than product” (10).

Since drama becomes a natural means of learning in the developmental history of human beings, it is evident that this technique could be used effectively in teaching and learning; irrespective of the learners’ age range. According to Landy, its elements; “imitation, imagination, role-playing and interpretation account for much of a child’s learning of language, movement and social behaviour (5). By acting out the roles of the father/mother the child learns what a parent is and what is expected of him/her in his relationship with the parent.

### **Rationale for Drama-in-Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Curriculum**

The field of educational drama is eclectic in that it has a number of theoretical underpinnings from the field of education, “including constructivism (Bruner, 1966), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), humanism (Rogers, 1983), social learning (Cornford, 1999; Saunders, 1999), and experiential learning (Dewey, 1963; Kolb, 1984; Boud, 1996)” cited in (Needland 11). Regarding constructivism, educational drama conventions seek the encouragement of meaningful learning and construction of knowledge. Discovery approaches to learning through methods such as drama, as opposed to “reception learning” (Ausubel, 1978) through exposition, are advocated so that students discover what they need to know (Bruner, 1966, 1972)” cited in (Needland 15).

Such discovery by students themselves reinforces the meaning and relevance of ideas that are identified as fundamental for their learning experience. Transformative learning, “which involves individuals shifting from their existing frames of reference, developing more autonomy and engaging in critical reflection, promotes discovery learning through methods such as group projects, learning contracts, role plays, cases studies and simulations” (Mezirow 15).

Compared to other more conventional educational approaches, experience-based learning, such as educational drama, is characterized by (a) involvement of the whole person - feelings, senses and the intellect, (b) recognition and use of a learner’s life experiences in order to create personal meaning and relevance of new learning, and (c) continued reflection on prior experiences so as to build and transform deeper understanding (McCaslin 18).

### **Progressive Education versus Nigeria Traditional Curriculum Schools**

The curriculum documents of Nigeria; *The National Policy for Education* recommended activity- and project-based teaching approach as a mean to enhance students' learning, suggesting that "a variety of learning activities in the form of science competitions, experimental projects, independent study projects and issue-based learning projects are essential to develop students' capabilities in science" (11-12). Thus, the education reform in Nigeria presented the picture of pleasurable learning, naming the task of "enabling our students to enjoy learning" (*The National Policy for Education* 11) as a priority in the reform.

However, while textual reform documents specify change in education, whether the intended change can be implemented is always questioned. When progressivism applied in the 1950s in US, it created great demands and tensions in schools, the comment noted by Windschitl can be of the same relevance in the current 21st century reform, which suggested teacher's competence as a crucial problem:

"Familiarity with a fantastic range of knowledge and teaching materials, while the commitment to build upon students' needs and interests demanded extraordinary feats of pedagogical ingenuity. In the hands of first-rate instructors, the innovations worked wonders; in the hands of too many average teachers, they led to chaos" (348).

In Nigeria for instance the cultural environment has shaped a set of values for teachers which make education reforms difficult. While much virtue has been found in the Nigeria culture as ideal and acceptable, severe criticisms have been made to Nigeria education

in the current literature, these studies pointed to the common feature that keeping children under control was regarded as the prerequisite of teaching book knowledge. Such control was a main feature of traditional curriculum and as well as the features of the Nigerian teachers in managing the learning environment. Parental and child training attitudes, both at home and in Schools are characterized by over-control, overprotection, and harshness; placing great emphasis on proper behavior, and neglecting (even inhibiting) the expression of opinions, independence, self mastery, creativity, and all round personal development. Summarizing a bred of studies on Nigeria education, one would reflect on the values in education which is embedded in the beliefs of teachers and students as follows:

- students are socialized to respect, not to question the authority of teachers
- students regard written words as the authoritative source of knowledge and wisdom
- teachers stress the need for memorization and repeated practice in the learning process
- teachers and students believe that diligence holds the key to good academic performance
- students believe that good academic achievement is a route to personal success which would in turn bring glory to the family.

The above Nigerian way of learning and teaching assimilates largely the absolutist epistemology and the behaviorist model of learning which were being criticized in other clime as mechanic, which ignores humans as an individual in learning process. The Nigerian classroom features were characterized as Three Ts:

teacher-centered, textbook-centered and test-centered in fact, education in Nigeria predominantly a highly utilitarian means to economic and vocational ends. The emphasis on schooling has so far been by necessity on academic success, this at some cost to personal development and sense of personal fulfillment to the majority of students.

When we compare the prevailing teaching and learning approach in Nigeria with the progressive pedagogy as captured above; apparently Nigeria education system still practices the traditional model of education often regarded as “school-centered” or “teacher-centred”. For example, many traditional approaches to schooling could be considered “school-centered,” rather than student-centered, because schools are often organized and managed in ways that work well for organizational operations, but that might not reflect the most effective ways to educate students. For example, it’s far more manageable from an institutional, administrative, or logistical perspective if all students are being taught in classrooms under the supervision of teachers, if they are given a fixed set of course options to choose from, if they all use the same textbooks and learning resources, or if their education unfolds according to a predetermined schedule.

In addition, in teacher-centered classrooms, teachers may also decide to teach students in ways that are easy, familiar, or personally preferred, but that might not work well for some students or use instructional techniques shown to be most effective for improving learning. Whereas the need to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students, among educators known as “Learner-centred instruction” is the major concern of the progressivisms. Below is the comparative analysis of Teacher-centered versus Learner-centered paradigms:

**Teacher-centered vs. Learner-centered paradigms**

<b>Comparison of Teacher-centered and Learner-centered paradigms</b> (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses by Huba and Freed 2000)	
<b>Teacher-Centered Paradigm</b>	<b>Teacher-Centered Paradigm</b>
Knowledge is transmitted from professor to students	Students construct knowledge through gathering and synthesizing information and integrating it with the general skills of inquiry, communication, critical thinking, problem solving and so on
Students passively receive information	Students are actively involved
Emphasis is on acquisition of knowledge outside the context in which it will be used	Emphasis is on using and communicating knowledge effectively to address enduring and emerging issues and problems in real-life contexts
Professor's role is to be primary information giver and primary evaluator	Professor's role is to coach and facilitate Professor and students evaluate learning together
Teaching and assessing are separate	Teaching and assessing are intertwined
Assessment is used to monitor learning	Assessment is used to promote and diagnose learning
Emphasis is on right	Emphasis is on generating better

answers	questions and learning from errors
Desired learning is assessed indirectly through the use of objectively scored tests	Desired learning is assessed directly through papers, projects, performances, portfolios, and the like
Focus is on a single discipline	Approach is compatible with interdisciplinary investigation
Culture is competitive and individualistic	Culture is cooperative, collaborative, and supportive
Only students are viewed as learners	Professor and students learn together

**Teacher-centered vs. Learner-centered paradigms**

<b>TEACHING-CENTERED versus LEARNING-CENTERED instruction</b> (Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)		
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Teacher-Centred</b>	<b>Learner-Centred</b>
Teaching goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover the discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learn:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o How to use the discipline</li> <li>o How to integrate disciplines to solve complex problems</li> <li>o An array of <b>core learning objectives</b>, such as communication and information literacy skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Organization of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses in catalog</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohesive program with systematically created</li> </ul>

the curriculum		opportunities to synthesize, practice, and develop increasingly complex ideas, skills, and values
Course structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty cover topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students master learning objectives</li> </ul>
How students learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Independent learning, often in competition for grades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students construct knowledge by integrating new learning into what they already know</li> <li>• Learning is viewed as a cognitive and social act</li> </ul>
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on delivery of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on engagement of students</li> </ul>
Course delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture</li> <li>• Assignments and exams for summative Purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active learning</li> <li>• Assignments for formative purposes</li> <li>• Collaborative learning</li> <li>• Community service learning</li> <li>• Cooperative learning</li> <li>• Online, asynchronous, self-directed learning</li> <li>• Problem-based learning</li> </ul>
Course grading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty as gatekeepers</li> <li>• Normal distribution expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades indicate mastery of learning Objectives</li> </ul>
Faculty role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sage on the stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designer of learning</li> </ul>

		environments
Effective teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teach (present information) well and those who can will learn</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage students in their learning</li><li>• Help all students master learning objectives</li><li>• Use classroom assessment to improve courses</li><li>• Use program assessment to improve programs</li></ul>

Excerpt from *Teacher-centered vs. Learner-centered paradigms*, accessed on the 12/12/201, from [assessment.uconn.edu/.../TeacherCenteredVsLearnerCenteredParadigms](http://assessment.uconn.edu/.../TeacherCenteredVsLearnerCenteredParadigms)

### **Correlating the Characteristics of Learner-Centred Pedagogy, Drama-in-Education and Progressive Pedagogy**

**1. Teaching engages students in the hard, messy work of learning:** This researcher believes teachers are doing too many learning tasks for students. We ask the questions, we call on students, and we add detail to their answers. We offer the examples. We organize the content. We do the preview and the review. On any given day, in most classes teachers are working much harder than students. I'm not suggesting we should never do these tasks, but I don't think students develop sophisticated learning skills without the chance to practice and in most classrooms the teacher gets far more practice than the students.

**2. Teaching includes explicit skill instruction:** Learner-centered teachers, like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy

teach students how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyze arguments, generate hypotheses and all those learning skills essential to mastering material in the discipline. They do not assume that students pick up these skills on their own, automatically. A few students do, but they tend to be the students most like us and most students aren't that way. Research consistently confirms that learning skills develop faster if they are taught explicitly along with the content.

**3. Teaching encourages students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it:** Learner-centered teachers like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy talk about learning in casual conversations. They ask students what they are learning, so that learners may talk about their own learning in the classroom. They challenge student assumptions about learning and encourage them to accept responsibility for decisions they make about learning; like how they study for exams, when they do assigned reading, whether they revise their writing or check their answers. Learner-centered teachers include assignment components in which students reflect, analyze and critique what they are learning and how they are learning it. The goal is to make students aware of themselves as learners and to make learning skills something students want to develop.

**4. Teaching motivates students by giving them some control over learning processes:** The researcher believes that teachers make too many of the decisions about learning for students. Teachers decide what students should learn, how they learn it, the pace at which they learn, the conditions under which they learn and then teachers determine whether students have learned. Students aren't in a position to decide what content should be included in

the course or which textbook is best, but when teachers make all the decisions, the motivation to learn decreases and learners become dependent. Learner-centered teachers like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy search out ethically responsible ways to share power with students. They might give students some choice about which assignments they complete. They might make classroom policies something students can discuss. They might let students set assignment deadlines within a given time window. They might ask students to help create assessment criteria.

**5. Teaching encourages collaboration:** It sees classrooms as communities of learners. Learner-centered teachers recognize, and research consistently confirms, that students can learn from and with each other. Certainly the teacher has the expertise and an obligation to share it, but teachers can learn from students as well. Learner-centered teachers like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy work to develop structures that promote shared commitments to learning. They see learning individually and collectively as the most important goal of any educational experience. Thus Progressive schools, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach are characterized by what this researcher like to call a “working with” rather than a “doing to” model. In place of rewards for complying with the adults’ expectations, or punitive consequences for failing to do so, there’s more of an emphasis on collaborative problem-solving: and, for that matter, less focus on behaviors than on underlying motives, values, and reasons.

**6. Teaching embraces the idea that we should teach children how to think and that a test cannot measure whether or not a**

**child is an educated person:** The progressivists' philosophy, like DIE and Learners-Centred pedagogy is complete anathema to conservative educators who cling to outmoded ways of teaching. They would rather teach children what to think than teach children to think for themselves through a process of discovery.

**7. Attending to the whole child:** Learner-centered teachers like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy are concerned with helping children become not only good learners but also good people. Schooling isn't seen as being about just academics, nor is intellectual growth limited to verbal and mathematical proficiencies.

**8. Community:** Learner-centered teachers like DIE teaching approach and progressivism philosophy hold the view that learning is not something that happens to individual children; separate selves at separate desks. Children learn with and from one another in a caring community, and that's true of moral as well as academic learning. Interdependence counts at least as much as independence, so it follows that practices that pit students against one another in some kind of competition, thereby undermining a feeling of community, are deliberately avoided.

**9. Social justice:** A sense of community and responsibility for others isn't confined to the classroom; indeed, students are helped to locate themselves in widening circles of care that extend beyond self, beyond friends, beyond their own ethnic group, and beyond their own country. Thus Progressive schools, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach offer not only opportunities to learn about, but also to put into action, a commitment to diversity and to improving the lives of others.

**10. Intrinsic motivation:** When considering (or reconsidering) educational policies and practices, the first question that progressive educators, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach are likely to ask is, “What’s the effect on students’ *interest* in learning, their desire to continue reading, thinking, and questioning?” This deceptively simple test helps to determine what students will and won’t be asked to do. Thus, conventional practices, including homework, grades, and tests, prove difficult to justify for anyone who is serious about promoting long-term dispositions rather than just improving short-term skills.

**11. Deep understanding:** As the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead declared long ago, “A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God’s earth” (cited in James 32). Facts and skills do matter, but only in a context and for a purpose. Thus progressive education, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach tends to be organized around problems, projects, and questions; rather than around lists of facts, skills, and separate disciplines. The teaching is typically interdisciplinary, the assessment rarely focuses on rote memorization, and excellence isn’t confused with “rigor.” The point is not merely to challenge students; after all, harder is not necessarily better, but to invite them to think deeply about issues that matter and help them understand ideas from the inside out.

**12. Active learning:** In progressive schools, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach students play a vital role in helping to design the curriculum, formulate the questions, seek out (and create) answers, think through possibilities, and evaluate how successful they and their teachers have been. Their active participation in every stage of the process is consistent with the

overwhelming consensus of experts that learning is a matter of constructing ideas rather than passively absorbing information or practicing skills.

**13. Taking kids seriously:** In traditional schooling, as John Dewey once remarked, “the center of gravity is outside the child”: he or she is expected to adjust to the school’s rules and curriculum. Progressive educators, Learner-centered teachers and DIE teaching approach take their cue from the children and are particularly attentive to differences among them. (Each student is unique, so a single set of policies, expectations, or assignments would be as counterproductive as it was disrespectful.) The curriculum isn’t just based on interest, but on these children’s interests. Naturally, teachers will have broadly conceived themes and objectives in mind, but they don’t just design a course of study for their students; they design it with them, and they welcome unexpected detours. One fourth-grade teacher’s curriculum, therefore, won’t be the same as that of the teacher next door, nor will her curriculum be the same this year as it was for the children she taught last year. It’s not enough to offer elaborate thematic units prefabricated by the adults. Progressive educators realize that the students must help to formulate not only the course of study but also the outcomes or standards that inform those lessons.

### **Conclusion**

Arising from the above explication, it is evident that drama-in-education as teaching method and progressive pedagogy has a meaningful and relevant role to play in student-centred learning; especially with reference to considering learners to be active constructors of knowledge in their learning process. Drama-in-

education for instance, accomplishes many current trends of modern teaching. One of them is to take away attention from the teacher and give space to the learners instead who can direct their own learning and learn how to be autonomous. Phillips supports this idea while saying: “Dramatizing is learner-centred so that teacher can use it to contrast with the more teacher-centred parts of the lesson” (8) and thus make the lesson more active and diverse. Fleming states further that “drama is inevitably learner-centered because it can only operate through active cooperation” (29). It is therefore a social activity and thus embodies much of the theory that has emphasized the social and communal, as opposed to the purely individual, aspects of learning.

Drama used in education gives participants the chance to submerge into fiction, take on different roles, explore them, try things on their own, learn through their proper experience and thus form their positions and attitudes to the surrounding reality. In this manner, an experienced teacher using drama can link the learning experience with the students’ own experience in life. Such personalization of the subject matter can be very motivational and favourable for effective learning. Subsequently, early progressive educationalists championed child-centred pedagogies as a main feature of teaching. Pring explains “child-centred education by a metaphor that the child is the sun and education should revolve around the child” (23). Child-centred philosophy posed a great challenge on the mechanic and controlling methods of learning which mainly influenced by early behaviorist learning model. Thus, this paper concludes that in order to foster learner-centred pedagogy in Nigeria schools; there is need to adopt progressive curriculum and as well as drama-in-education as a teaching method.

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