Learning in a Student-Centered Environment

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Abstract— **This study focused on the experiences of teachers and students in the student-centered environment to understand how learning takes place and identify dimensions of learning based from their revelations. A qualitative phenomenological study method was used. An interview was done to collect the data from the teacher while a focused group discussion was used in collecting the data from the students. There were 10 teachers and 20 students who participated in the study. The gathered data were analysed using the process of Husserl (1938) and the process and procedures of Colazzis' (1978) focusing on the common themes emerging from their experiences in the student-centered classroom. The teachers' and students' lived experiences in the student-centered classroom revealed 5 common dimensions of learning namely: employing appropriate pedagogy, developing classroom climate and culture, providing support for learning, designing contextualized learning and assessing student learning. However, one dimension was added based from the revelations of the teachers which was managing student behaviour. The findings of the study are recommended for considerations in the university's efforts for continual improvement in making a more student-centered environment.**

Index Terms— **learning, student-centered environment, dimensions of learning.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education has implemented the new curriculum, K to 12 Education to respond to the needs of the modern times. Students have to undergo additional two years in their high school life. With this current paradigm shift in education, there is a need to focus more on the student's engagement. DepEd's K to 12 curriculum was advertised as more centered to learners. The main focus of this curriculum is the ideal development of every Filipino learner. (K to 12 Toolkit: Reference Guide for Teacher Educators, School Administrators, and Teachers, 2012)

Student-centered learning in Southwestern University PHINMA is shown in its implementation of the Parallel Classes. It started implementing the Parallel Classes (PC) since the beginning of the Senior High School Program way back in School Year 2016 – 2017. In the Parallel Classes, four sections are clustered into one with simultaneous schedule. Each teacher handles a subject in the four parallel classes in one schedule with 1 1/2 hour time allotment. Within 90 minutes, the teachers are required twenty (20) minutes to discuss the particular

important concept. After meeting one section, the teacher transfers to another section until all four sections have been met. While the teacher is in the other class section, students are answering the Student Activity Sheet(SAS) designed primarily to meet the competencies stated on the day's lesson.

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Many challenges are being encountered in the full implementation of the K to 12 curriculum especially in the additional two years: the Senior High School. Since the program of DepEd is new, few resources or learning materials were available for the Senior High School. With the initiative of SWU PHINMA, modules were readily made addressing all the competencies stipulated in the curriculum guides identified by DepEd. These modules are considered substitutes to books or manuals in all subjects. Moreover, these learning plans are patterned with the student-centered approaches calling it "active learning plans".

Another challenge that has been observed is the teachers handling the subjects. Because of the two-year drought of the enrolment in the college freshmen, some college teachers were transferred to teach the Senior High School subjects. Teacher preparation in college was for single classes and not for parallel classes. They were not trained to teach in parallel classes. Although modules and learning guides were provided, teachers were having difficulty in managing four parallel classes within ninety minutes.

Since this is a new approach, the researcher is curious about how the students and teachers adapt to this new set up and how learning happens in this new environment.

The purpose of this study is to capture, retell and analyse the learning experiences of students and instructors in a student-centered environment.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

This phenomenological study described the lived experiences of twenty students from different strands of the Senior High School Department. The study explores on the grand tour question: **How does learning take place in a student-centered environment?**

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Teachers' Perspectives of Learning in Student-Centered Classroom

This section provides the learning experiences in a student-centered classroom as perceived by the teacher. There were six dimensions crafted from the answers given by the teachers. These were managing student behaviors, employing appropriate pedagogy, developing classroom climate and culture, providing support for learning, designing contextualized learning and assessing student learning.

1. Managing Student Behaviors

This section presents how teachers manage student behaviors and plan instruction.

According to Chandra (2015), the role of a teacher is not to assess a student and to control them. However, the main role of the teacher is to extend help to every student so that they reach the highest possible level of achievement.

Southwestern University PHINMA uses the Active Learning approach in its system in the Senior High School Department. This philosophy is achieved through the

implementation of the Parallel Classes. Having Parallel Classes is a system where the sections are clustered by four sections. This cluster will have the same schedule on its academic subjects. For example, Section A will have General Mathematics in a 7:30-9:00 schedule, the rest of the Sections B, C and D will have the same time slot and day. The teacher has to meet these sections. Her time is divided into four thus, there will be twenty minutes teacher-time in every section in this particular cluster. During teacher time, he/she is expected to discuss important concepts, do demonstrations, use Socratic dialogue, presentations and other related activities that can be done within twenty minutes. The remaining 10 minutes is spent for monitoring students through checking their attendance and other announcements. While the teacher is in the other class, the other classes will be taken over by the student-facilitators. These facilitators make sure that students are on track while the teacher is away. They take down notes of the questions that students raised and gave this list to the teacher for her/him to answer (PHINMA, 2016).

Given this system, the teachers felt the need to meet all the sections first before discussing to one section. Here's an example of an extract reported during in-depth interview with teachers that describes their ways on how to manage student behaviors:

"…before starting the class, I see to it that activity sheets are distributed to all students. Students Activity Sheet (SAS), or SLAS (Self-Learning Activity Sheet). It is where there are different parts of the lesson. There's the title, objective, lesson review for the students and teachers to connect the previous topic to the present and then the developmental activity wherein you can let the student study it even if you are not around, and then the guided practice and independent practice for their practices and closure and enhancement or explore if there are some enhancement to be given in the lesson".

She further mentioned that in meeting her students, instructions were given to all sections first before doing the discussion proper.

"…I give instructions to them. Once I give it to students, they need to listen well since I cannot repeat it again and again since I'm in the other section."

Another teacher mentioned that instructions are given per section so that the students will be informed that she is already around. She even sometimes assigned officer-in-charge to disseminate the instructions to their classmates.

"…Before giving the discussion, I give instructions per section so that they know that I am already present. I tap the officer-in-charge or leaders and give instructions."

Given these statements, these lead to the idea that in the student-centered classroom, teachers meet the four sections first before discussing to one section. It has been noted also that teachers made it sure that all students understood the instructions given. Moreover, teachers provided guidance to students who were not on track on the lesson.

The teacher served as facilitator inside the student-centered classroom. He sets the focus of learning at the very beginning and guides students throughout the process (Gordon & et al., 2001).

In creating a conducive environment of a learner-centered classroom, teachers should make efforts on how to manage the class by coming to class on time, attending classes and running the class instruction as planned which are pre-requisite for effective learning to take place (EQUIP, 2006).

Aside from meeting the classes on time and providing instructions, one of the activities that the teacher has to do is checking the attendance of the students. School attendance is a baseline determiner of the success of the students. The attendance rate is needed because when they go to school regularly, they more succeed in academics. There will be no difficulty among the class and the teacher to build the class' competencies and relationship even if there will be many students who are frequently absent (GreatSchools Staff, 2019).

In connection with this, Teacher A is already inside one class, one of the activities mentioned by the teachers is the checking the attendance. This helps them in monitoring the students. Teacher A explained:

"…I monitor their attendance and performances through checking of their scores in the formative records since the student activity sheets have to be recorded every day."

This monitoring done by the teacher includes the student's attendance, performances, test scores, formative records and activity sheets. Moreover, they draw the attention of the students and investigate the reasons of absences, misbehavior or poor performance. One teacher quoted, "I ask the students about what happen to the class. I understand their behavior because they have family problems, financial problems and even peer problems." This results to teacher understanding the sources of students' misbehaviors like family, financial, peer problems.

Understanding the reasons of the misbehavior or poor performance of the students provides an important role in the success of the students. Considering the needs of the students as central to the design and delivery of instruction is one of the most commonly observed attributes of student-centered education (Pillay, 2001).

Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) explained that in order to be culturally responsive, a teacher must acquire "cultural content knowledge". The teacher must learn, for example, about his/her students' family backgrounds, their previous educational experiences, their cultural norms for interpersonal relationships, their parents' expectations for discipline, and the ways their culture treat time and space.

In making sure that the needs of the students are met, teachers often communicate the performance of the students to their parents. Teacher H mentioned "I called up the attention of the parents to come to school and discuss the performance of their child". However, some students do not give correct contact information of their parents that is why some teachers have difficulty contacting their parents and opted to other options just like Teacher I. She said," I inform the parents through chat the problems of their child since the number given by the student is incorrect". True enough, in the Nellie Mae Education Foundation report of Reif, Shultz and Ellis (2014), parent-teacher conferences are highly effective mechanism to help parents grasp a competency-based grading

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system. In this way, parents will be aware of their roles in helping their children learn in school. Parent-teacher conferences connect the home and school. This provides avenue for the teachers to understand their students better.

Another important concept that came out is how the teachers collaborate with each other to monitor and help the students. Oftentimes, subject teachers relay the information to the advisers about the problematic students. One teacher mentioned: "I checked the attendance and follow-up the students especially those who have consecutive absences. By executing this, you can keep track of the students and make necessary actions like calling the attention of this student or coordinate with the adviser for monitoring".

Teacher Collaboration is a key factor in improving student learning. Once there is collaboration among teachers, there will be a positive school and student outcomes (Poulos, Culbertson, & Piazza, 2013). Teacher discusses with the other teachers on how they can help and contact the parents of the students so that the students will receive any help he wanted.

2. Developing Classroom Climate and Culture

This section presents the significant statements, formulated meanings, cluster themes that constitute to the classroom climate and culture. Classroom climate is a broad construct, made up of students' feelings about their instructor and peers (Barr, 2016). The classroom culture represents, from a psycho-sociology point of view, an important feature of a social and learning group. This is a dynamic ensemble where there are developments taking place, multiple formative processes subordinated to the teaching, learning and assessment activities (Fat, 2015).

Classroom climate and culture cover the following sub themes namely: cultivating interests and attention, encouraging focus in learning, promoting confidence, using of positive reinforcement, providing reinforcement through positive feedback, learning through examples and questioning, motivating students to learn and exploring real-life applications.

One of the importance of a positive learning environment is considering students perform better in their schoolwork. The school environment mostly influences the student's performance. It sets its own pillars that promote students' positive learning. Moreover, if love and care are present in a school set up, then good outcomes will be obtained (Sithole, 2017).

Interest is considered a powerful motivational process provides energy to learning, guidance to academic and career trajectories, and essence to academic success. Interest is both a mental state of attention which affects toward a specific object or topic, and an everlasting predisposition to reengage over time. Stimulating interest can contribute to a more engaged, motivated, learning experience for students (Harackiewicz, Smith, &Priniski, 2016).

One of the teachers mentioned:

"I think learning will take place if students are actively engaged or participating inside the classroom. They are actively engaged inside the classroom if they have the interest and attention wherein nobody will roam around if not necessary."

Once student is interested and attentive, he definitely has the focus in learning. Having focus is very essential because it is the access to the different forms of thinking such as perception, memory, learning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making. Without good focus, these forms of student's thinking will be affected and students will not be as effective in their work. They will not have concentration on the right things or become distracted, affecting their capability of getting the work done (Taylor, 2014).

True enough when there is focus, learning will take place. One teacher said, "Everyone is focused with the task given and in discussion time, they are able to answer the question that I asked to them." When students give focus on the task on hand, the better that they could think on how to do it and finish the task on time.

Another sub theme is the promoting of confidence. When students have more confidence, there will be sense of belongingness among students. With this, they will gain more responsibility and will eventually build positive outlook in school (VanHuosen, 2013).

Teachers need to provide venue where the students develop their confidence. One way of boosting their confidence is appreciating their work. Here's an excerpt from one of the teachers:

"Yes, because students really need appreciation even if they are not good in the particular subject, it is better it can boost their confidence that I am good in Mathematics. One way or another, it really helps students in their confidence. Actually, it makes them more responsive especially if I give instructions to them."

Another is the giving of positive reinforcement. Otero and Haunt (2015) mentioned that one way to ensure the best learning environment outcome is to encourage our learners through positive reinforcement. Students learn to self-monitor themselves, manage their time, set goals, and self-evaluate through the reinforcement of the teacher.

In addition, once students are motivated enough, they will definitely ask questions where their curiosity is being ignited. In the student-centered classroom, asking questions is very visible. Teacher A exclaimed:"They will ask question especially when topics are not so familiar to them. In Filipino, they asked questions like the meaning of a Filipino term so that they can relate to their previous knowledge and then they realized". Teacher B added: "…so I'll ask them if there will be questions about the lesson so that's the time they will raise their questions and sometimes even if I am teaching in the third or fourth section, there are some students or the mayor will go to my class and ask me if there are some clarifications about the lesson".

This is supported in the inquiry-based classes which is an off-shoot of the student-centered philosophy. In this type of classes, teachers will be regarded as catalysts who act largely through guiding questions (Juntunen&Aksela, 2013). In this class, the teacher is not an information provider or classroom controller. Rather, they act as facilitator and coach and model the problem s(Yukhymenko, Brown, Lawless, Brodowinska, & Mullin, 2014).

3. Providing Support for Learning

This section shows how teachers provide support for learning. As perceived by the teachers, a learning support should scaffold learning. Scaffolding learning is very evident in the student-centered classroom of SWU PHINMA. The use

of the Student Activity Sheets (SAS) is the main ingredient why student-centered learning occurs. It contains activities that contain different parts. These are: Writing the lesson objectives, Review or Lesson Preview, Writing of Concept Notes, Developmental Activities, Guided Practice, Independent Practice, Closure Activity, Enrichment Activity and Explore Activity.

Students have to write first the objectives of the lesson. These are specific, measureable, attainable, result-oriented and time-bounded (SMART) statements describing what students will know and be able to perform at the end of the lesson. These are taken from the DepEd curriculum guide.   In the Review Exercise, students answer questions that are in relation to the previous topics they had.

After the lesson objectives, review or lesson preview comes next. This could be a review of a specific lesson of previous day's work or pre-requisite course/ lower grade level subject to gauge student's mastery level; a review of a past lesson to activate students' prior knowledge and a review of a particular skill for practice purposes.

Concept notes writing is the next part after the review/lesson preview. This part shows the notes that students will copy (Copying of notes can happen before or after content presentation/modeling. The notes should include questions that will require students to think about the content. This could be useful in doing the remaining activities.

In the developmental activity part, organized and focused lessons that show the steps, process, or procedure to develop the lesson are given. After this, the guided practice comes next. In the guided practice, short individual and collaborative activities to give students opportunities to apply what they have learned and to develop skill. During guided practice, students may receive coaching and feedback from either peers or teacher. This is opposite in the independent practice. In the independent practice, there's individual activity without teacher/peer guidance which also serves as a continuation of the guided practice. This also provides an exercise for the students to apply what they've learned independently.

After the independent practice is the closure activity. This activity brings closure to the lesson. Students may be required to give a summary of the lesson; list questions they want to be answered; give specific applications of the concepts learned; etc. Additional two parts are added to the Student Activity Sheet (SAS). These are Enrichment and Explore activity. Enrichment activity is an activity designed for distributed practice and cumulative practice. This provides students with multiple practice attempts, in order to address issues of retention as well as automaticity. This aims to provide more exercises for more deliberate practice to help the students master the skills and concepts they've learned.

The last part is the explore activity. Explore activity is an activity designed for students to appreciate more their lesson and pursue applied and higher learning. Effort should be observed to ensure that the activity is interesting and a reward in itself for students who show diligence in doing class activities. This activity may be additional information or an opportunity for the students to read more or do a research that will make the lesson more interesting for them.

All these activities contribute to the learning of the students. This also promotes independent learning. One teacher mentioned:

"…It's really useful to have SLAS because it's independent learning wherein students can learn on their own especially cooperative learning because of course Mathematics is not easy for them since more of the students really have hard time in Mathematics so it's better if they can help each other even if I am not around since I am in the other section for the discussion."

With the student activity sheets, students answer the activities as instructed. It provides an avenue for them to do things on their own. Aside from that, it scaffolds learning which makes them become independent learners.

Another teacher mentioned that "Student Activity Sheets are provided. It gives the learner ways easier than what it is used to since the notes are there already and a lot of activities to further their knowledge. The SAS already have a lot of activities and the student's role is to complete the activities with the support and help of the teacher and classmate."

It has been noted that all activities under the activity sheets are aligned to the lesson objectives, meaning to say, activities are well-crafted in compliance with the Deped standards.

Since majority of the time the teacher is not in the class, participation by students through individual oral work is limited. However, student's participation is shown in answering and accomplishing all the activities in SAS. One teacher narrated, "Answering the SAS shows participation because they also got to discuss their answers during group discussions. We have oral participation where they give their stand or opinion on a particular matter".

"They answer everything whatever is on their activity sheets. They copy the concept notes, lesson objectives on their SAS. I believe that when they write more or copy more, there will be more retention of learning," she added. Copying of the concept notes is indeed very important since this gives better retention of the concepts discussed, better retention, better learning. It is supported by the fact that those students who take more course lecture notes in general are higher achievers (Kiewra, 1985).

In a student-centered classroom, students were responsible for their learning; using and answering activity sheets, not guides, the syllabus and the assessment structure. It was found out as well that because of this, it promoted the self-esteem of the students (Wilkinson, Treagust, Leggett, & Glasson, 1988).

Aside from this printed material, technology also plays a vital role in learning in a student-centered environment. Doubtlessly, technology has been playing an essential role in every walk of life. With technology, most of the manual tasks if not all can be automated. Also, with the help of modern technology, complex and critical processes can be executed with ease and greater efficiency. Significant changes of one's life have been noted because of technology. Education arena has been transformed by technology as well. Its importance in schools cannot be ignored. One of the impacts of technology is that imparting of knowledge and skills to students by the teachers has become easier due to computers and other forms of technology. Teaching and learning process becomes more fun and enjoyable because of the use of different

technological forms and applications (Raja &Nagasubramani, 2018).

In the study of Means and Olson (1995), they found out that the effects of using technology included enhancement of the work of the students, more motivation among students, development of self-esteem among students and the shifting of roles of the students and the teachers.

One form of this is the use of calculators in Mathematics. One teacher mentioned "And the calculator, since my topic is Probability and Statistics so they need to have calculator because it is not easy to solve without calculator. It should be prepared as well together with the SAS".

Students learning becomes effective when their teacher supports his/her explanation with instructional aides, when students themselves got an opportunity of learning by manipulating the simulated or real tools that experts in the real world are using (So, 2002).

Because of the use of technology, learning is no longer limited within the four walls of the classroom. Learning can be accessed by students anytime and anywhere. As discussed by Kaput (2018), by providing options for anytime, anywhere learning, school is being responsive to the needs of their students.

Lastly, in a student-centered approach, students need to have unrestricted access to learning materials such as textbooks, worksheets, handouts, laboratory equipment, models and the like so that they may learn through interacting the learning materials (Hunde, 2009).

4. Employing Appropriate Pedagogy

This section presents the perception of the teachers towards employing appropriate pedagogy. One of the essential factors under pedagogy to consider the success of your instructional activities is the reinforcement. Once there is a positive reinforcement, motivation among students will also occur. Student-centered pedagogy defines successful teaching in terms of student learning—and a necessary condition of learning is the motivation to learn. Student motivation is particularly important in learner-centered pedagogy, because the active, engaged learning envisioned in learner-centered pedagogy is hard work (Green, 2015).

Positive reinforcement does not only limit to students but also to teachers. Teachers collaborate in order to achieve the success they have set for their students. Another reason why teachers collaborate is they plan together how they will improve the activity sheets and discuss the coverage of the lesson. As one teacher said: "I collaborate with the other Math teachers to know the topics to be collated, lumped or clustered in order to meet the expected competencies".

Teacher collaboration is also visible in the system. Teacher collaborates with other Math teachers to agree on the topics to be collated, lumped, or clustered to meet the expected competencies. This collaboration makes them create a professional learning community (PLC) where openness and coordination take place. Professional learning community is another form of teacher collaboration. When there is collaboration among teachers, student learning also improves. Schools that are more collaborative have been shown to have stronger academic outcomes than schools that are less collaborative (Schleifer, Rinehart, &Yanisch, 2017).

All teachers have agreed that group activities have been observed in their student-centered classroom. Here's an excerpt of the responses of some teachers:

"I do sometimes group activities and think-pair-share activities. Since majority of the time is students' work, it would be boring if they work on their own all the time. I pair them so that they are not only learning but also camaraderie in each other. Majority of the students are into the activities, because they are helping with each other at the same making learning easier."

Another teacher added: "They are more engaged especially in doing group tasks. When they are engaged, I can say that they are also motivated and encouraged. Groupings boost their confidence since they have each other to rely on. They are also committed to learning. I see this when they are given tasks and they are eager to do it and go directly to their groupings and plan the work. They are also excited to present their work."

Passman (2002) applied the student-centered teaching approach to teaching social studies to 5th-graders. It was found out in this approach, students worked in a small group. The teacher covered the curriculum first; the students chose a question, did research and discovered the answer, prepared the report and gave the presentations in class (Passman, 2002).

It is clearly stated that students do most of the work. It develops students to be independent learners. They look for information, have their research and present it to the class. This is discovery learning.

In his study, Wallhead (2004) used a peer-assisted method in teaching college. The method was effective in developing the participants' knowledge of lower complexity content, but was not effective in developing their higher order content knowledge due to the inability to elaborate content (Wallhead, 2004).

Using pairing of students in order to teach one another with academic skills is shown in an instructional strategy known as peer tutoring. It has been used successfully across different types of students, subject disciplines, educational settings, and grade levels (Ginsburg-Block, 2005).

In a student-centered classroom, peer tutoring helps students learn better since they become more comfortable with the language that they are using. One teacher mentioned: "Sometimes, it's dyad or groupings since I know that there some students who are fast learners and are that fast so instead of doing the more talk, I used to let the students teach their classmates, in a way that they can understand it in their own level because there are some students that it's not always the teacher who is the source of learning, sometimes it's their peers."

Teachers recognize the importance of student talk inside their classroom. It is a way of helping students excel and use their strengths to mentor or coach their classmates.

5. Designing Contextualized Learning

This section shows the theme on contextual learning. As perceived by the teachers, the student-centered classroom makes learning easier if the problems and examples given are in real life context. Here's an excerpt of one of the teachers:

"I motivate them to solve problems by telling them the importance of solving these problems. I give problems which

are in reality. For example, in electricity, I used samples that are reality-based like they calculate the amount they will pay for their electrical consumption. This will give them a picture and will help them retain the concept.'

In one of the methods of the student-centered approach, problem-based learning requires groups of students to explore real-world problems. This increases the students' performance, enhances science content knowledge and improves critical thinking (Burris &Garton, 2007).

Though teaching for real world application is critical to the instruction of mathematics, it is important that teachers consider what "real life" constitutes for students (Pogrow, 2004). If a teacher tries to incorporate math and uses situations that students are not aware of due to a student's cultural background, socio-economic status, background knowledge or life experiences, the notion of real life application could be irrelevant and more confusing than helpful to students (Pogrow, 2004).

According to the survey conducted by UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI), educators found that students are more focused on their work when it is relevant to them—when they make critical decisions about what to learn and how to learn it. Acknowledging that teachers may cover less curriculum content in an SCL environment than in a traditional setting, some respondents asserted that such approaches increase students' depth of understanding and their ability to retain information. Teachers reported that their students remember the projects they complete and the information they learn in the process because of the connection they have to topics they pursue (Reif, Shultz, & Ellis, 2015).

When students can connect new concepts to the real world capitalizing their own experiences or the experiences their teachers provide to them, majority of them learn best (CORD, 1999).

6. Assessing Student Learning

This section shows the perception of the teachers of assessment in the student-centered classroom. What dominates among the answers of the teachers is the idea of providing students an opportunity to do peer or self-assessment.

According to Allal (2010) and Andrade (2010), there are different processes done in a student-centered assessment. These include the active participation of students in setting goals for their learning and growth, monitoring their progress toward those goals, and determining how to address any learning gaps. This is also called self-regulated learning where students have the ability to manage one's own learning and growth which is a key type of expertise needed for 21st-century life and career success. There are different classroom assessment practices that do not help only students to learn core content knowledge, skills and values but also to develop important self-regulatory habits. These are self-assessment, peer assessment, and portfolios.

One teacher mentioned," I checked their participation in the group by asking them to grade their group mates about their performance in that group. That is peer assessment. This will encourage them to really participate and contribute in the group activities."

Another teacher added: "Formative assessments, I let them check their own paper and go over about the mistakes they have committed. This will allow them to reflect on what went through with their answers and make them more responsible in correcting their own mistakes and give them the time to plan for the next exams so that they won't get the same mistake again. It is also important they can assess how far they have learned and will have them the idea on what to focus for the next tests."

In having self-assessment, more realization can be drawn and better retention will take place. Studies are conducted to examine the effects of self-assessment in a wide range of content areas, including writing (Evans, 2013). Results of these studies suggest that student achievement and learner autonomy can be promoted by self-assessment. Self-assessment has been accepted and adapted by the students with positivity, but they report also that they are needing support and practice to reap the full benefits of the process (Andrade & Du, 2007).

Peer assessment helps students who are engaged in the process identify strengths, weaknesses, and target areas for improvement among each other. Keith Topping mentioned that peer assessment happens anywhere. It can happen both inside and outside of school and across different times and contexts, leading to the development of valuable skills from metacognitive, personal, and professional aspects. Similar to self-generated feedback, peer feedback is available in much greater volume and with greater immediacy than is teacher feedback (Topping, 2017).

This is evident of what the teacher has said, "For my Writing class, after I ask them to do Literary Fair wherein they will handle their literary piece without their names. After that, they will read and critique the paper they have. They will grade and rate them and choose their top 3 best works. Afterwards, they share it to the class their reasons why they chose these works. Then after this, they will select the Top 10. This activity encourages more students to do better in writing. Others are really committed to produce good write-ups."

B. Student's Perspective of Learning in Student-Centered Classroom

This section provides the learning experiences in a student-centered classroom as perceived by the student. There are six dimensions crafted from the answers given by the students. These are developing classroom climate and culture, managing student behaviors, employing appropriate pedagogy, providing support for learning, developing classroom climate and culture, , designing contextual learning and assessing student learning.

1. Developing Classroom Climate and Culture

This scetion presents the experiences of the students in a student-centered classroom under the classroom climate and culture. Based on the answers of the students, it is very obvious that classroom atmosphere plays a vital role in learning. There are answers that talk about the connection and the relationships they have formed inside their classrooms. No conflicts have been noted thus providing a peaceful atmosphere to everyone. Here some of the excerpts from the answers of the students.

"I think no one is in conflict since we already learn that it is collaborative learning. We discuss our opinions. We divide it. So that everyone helps. I learn in group activities to adjust to people. This also enhances our socialization and

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communication skills. We boost our confidence as to how we approach people."

Another student discussed, "It is really helpful because it will make us do well if they comfortable with the people they have in a group. If they don't like their groups Sir, others will not cooperate and will do individual work. Not excellent collaboration if we are not comfortable with our group."

Having a conducive, relaxing and non-threatening environment is a prerequisite for an effective learning to take place (MOE, 2005). It is very true that when students are not threatened in their classroom, they will feel comfortable. One student exclaimed, "Our room has no conflicts. There is interaction with each other and it feels us home and learns more."

With a non-threatening environment, students will not be afraid to speak out and volunteer to do tasks according to his interest and strength. This will also allow them to speak and stand on their voice and choice. According to Moustafa et al., (2013), in a student-centered classroom, teachers have to motivate and welcome student autonomy and create a comfortable atmosphere where students can express themselves. (Moustafa, Assaraf, &Eshach, 2013).

Moreover, once students are able to express themselves, they build the trust for themselves. Once the trust and confidence are already formed, students won't do any act that can destroy their reputation. In a study conducted by Spurlock (2001), he found out that students who felt a sense of autonomy were not likely to cheat on tests and had high test scores.

2. Providing Support for Learning

Table 2.2 presents the support of learning as perceived by the students. Support of learning includes the visual aids, online applications and technology used by the teachers e.g. TV. The importance of the use of visuals most especially pictures are recognized by students. One student exclaimed," we learn easier if there are pictures so that we clearly see the parts of the plants, tissues etc. It is better learning since we realized right away."

Aside from pictures, students noticed that teachers also used different forms of instructional materials. "Our teachers use visual aids. They use the TV for presentations which include the videos, pictures and texts", one student added. Different forms of instructional materials make learning more meaningful. These are representations of a range of materials which can be used to increase the range of vicarious experience' of learners in a teaching and learning situation. The use of the different kinds of instructional materials to explain one particular concept must also take into consideration the individual differences among the learners (Samuel, 2009).

3. Employing Appropriate Pedagogy

This section presents the learning routines and opportunities or the appropriate pedagogy experienced by students in a student-centered classroom. It is very obvious that most of the students' works is on group activities. Group activities have a greater impact on student learning. It promotes more collaboration and communication on a particular topic. It allows students autonomy in selecting their group mates. As what one student answered, "We answer the activity sheet. We discuss the group work which takes most of our time. Groupings will be sometimes chosen by the students and sometimes, it's given by the students. We have the independence and freedom to select our group mates." "For me, it sis good. Since we are now in Grade 12, we really have to master and learn time management", she added.

Aside from promoting autonomy, students also become motivated to learn since they are given roles to perform in a group. Here are some excerpts of the students:

"Everyone is helping inside our class. I am motivated to really learn and do stuff since I want to go to bigger universities."

"We also need someone to lead per group. Our classmates don't take it as a disadvantage. It is easy to gain support from people/classmates. Responsibilities are shared and we see everyone working without hesitation."

Because of group activities, we are able to showcase our intelligence. We become confident and we are building trust to ourselves since we are given a responsibility. Students exclaimed, "In group activities, I am assigned to do the presentation. I'm in charge of the coding. I am in charge of the design of the system. I am doing the budgeting and technical editing."

According to Cipeland (2005), critical thinking skills can be promoted in the student-centered methods of teaching. These incorporate several learning styles, cooperative activities, simulations, technology and so much more (Copeland, 2005). Recognizing students and giving them opportunity to have input on the teaching-learning activities give students a responsibility to promote their self-learning and come to class prepared (Zabit, 2010).

4. Designing Contextual Learning

This section presents the contextualized learning perspective of the students in a student-centered classroom. It is noted that students recognize the examples and problems given by their teachers which are timely, relevant, practical and real-life based. One student said that, "In our performance tasks, very practical activities were given. These are those we can relate to and where our skills can be applied."

With the real-life examples given, the students are able to learn easily. One student mentioned, "When our teacher gives the examples, he makes sure these are real-life. We imagine ourselves what really is discussed. It's helpful to us in applying this to situations."

True enough, student-centered class environment helps students to apply content knowledge to a practical real world problem (Zabit, 2010). Students believe that knowledge is retained if these are related to life applications. This is supported by the idea of Freire (2010), in the sense that students learn by integrating theoretical and practical knowledge simultaneously. It also illustrates that students learn better in student-centered class atmosphere, because students learn better by doing rather than hearing. Moreover, this opportunity of linking theory with practice goes beyond acquiring theoretical knowledge and encourages students to reflect upon and use their knowledge into practical situations in the future (Freire, 2010).

5. Assessing of Learning

This section presents the assessment of student learning as perceived by the students in a student-centered classroom. Students agreed that they have daily activity sheets to be answered and submitted to the teachers. This can be checked

by themselves or by their teachers. Regardless of who checked the paper, the important thing is it's given back to them. It has been noted that students are given the chance to reflect on their learning through the scores they got. They think of ways on how they can improve next time such that they won't commit the same mistakes. One student shared, "I learn from my mistakes. I go over with my paper about the part which I got wrong and check the correct answer. This helps me so that next time, I will be wrong again". Another also exclaimed, "We learn in a group at the same time we learn individually. We learn by our mistakes. We reflect in our mistakes and we learn."

Learning should be enhanced through the involvement of students in assessment and their role in designing the course. Numerous challenges are associated assessment in general. In his paper, Black (1999) discussed issues about assessment. These are over emphasis on marks to the deterioration of the learning process; comparison of students with each other fostering unnecessary competition over personal improvement; and students taking responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, self-assessment demands sincerity; integrity; honesty; recording skills; time keeping skills; ability to follow instructions; paying attention to details; and independent thought. Within a model of self-regulated learning, Butler and Winne (1998) locate the giving of feedback, where the learner assumes responsibility for his/her improvement.

Another kind of assessment that is dominant also in the answers of the students is the peer assessment. "We have teachers wherein the leaders will have a chance to rate the work of the group and the performance of my group mates, "shared by one student. Students do their best since their classmates rate their work. Peer assessment involving writing and using marks, grades and tests had shown positive formative effects on student achievement and attitudes. These effects were as good as or even better than the effects of teacher assessment (Topping, 2017).

Lastly, students also take into account the variety of the assessment tools given by the teacher. Since this is varied, teachers can see the clear picture of how far their students learn. This practice becomes fair since not all are only good in paper and pencil test. In the schools using case study method, varied and multiple approaches are being employed by the teachers to assessing individual student progress over time, in real time settings, and in a variety of contexts. Those students who are not performing well in certain activities or tasks are given opportunity to demonstrate their learning in others. These varied assessments also draw out information on students' ability to transfer learning to new situations. Ability to transfer learning is a skill emphasized as important to learning to learn and on how student understanding might be corrected or deepened (Center for Educational Research Innovation).
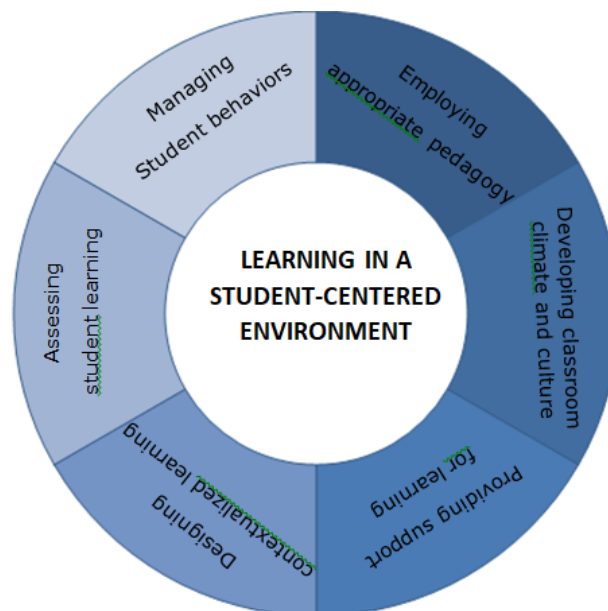
Figure 1
Dimensions of Learning
in a Student-Centered Environment

The diagram shows the dimensions of learning in a student-centered environment. As shown in the figure, there are six dimensions of learning in a student-centered environment. This is already a consolidated report of the perceptions of both teachers and the students. The only dimension that is not seen among students is managing student behavior.

Student-centered learning is defined as an approach to learning in which learners choose not only the content of their course but also of how and why this blossoms their interest (Rogers, 1983). In simple terms, the learning environment has put emphasis on the responsibility of the learner and the essence of activity as its heart which is opposite to the emphasis on instructor teaching (Cannon, 2000).

Managing student behavior

Managing student behavior is one of the activities that the teacher does in a student-centered environment. In managing student behavior, a teacher has to show accountability and authority to students. According to Marzano&Marzano (2003), dominance is characterized as the ability of the teacher to provide clarity on the purpose and guidance regarding both academics and student behavior. This contrasts with the more negative connotation of the term dominance as forceful control or command over others. Teachers can establish exhibit appropriate dominance by establishing clear behavior expectations and learning goals and by exhibiting assertive behavior. By providing clear instructions to students, teachers are able to provide clear behavior expectations.

Once misbehavior occurs, teachers suggest that they need to identify first the reasons and sources of the student's misbehavior rather than being reactive to it. This provides them the chance to think of ways on how to help the student. Marzano and Marzano (2003) noted that school may be the only place where the needs of many students who face

extreme challenges are addressed. Classroom teachers are demanded by the schools in addressing these severe issues even though this task is not always considered a part of their regular job. They found that the most effective classroom managers did not treat all students the same; they tend to use different teaching strategies considering the different types of students. On the contrary, ineffective classroom managers did not appear emphathetic to the diverse needs of students. Awareness to different causes of misbehavior and appropriate actions for the misbehavior can help teachers build strong relationship to diverse students (Marzano&Marzano, 2003).

Also, when the student's behavior is out hand, it is but timely to communicate with the colleagues and/or parents of these students to get help that is needed. Misbehaviors of the students as discussed by the teachers include irregularity in attendance, ss performance, peer problem etc. These are reported to the parents and the teacher-adviser so that proper actions will be made. Because of such, this allows the parents to get involved in their child's education. This is supported by the study of Chohan and Khan (2010) which discovered that parent's contribution to their children's education has a consistent and positive effect on academic achievement and on the self-concept and change of behavior.

Employing appropriate pedagogy

The ultimate goal of the student-centered classrooms is for students to gain independence and make decisions about their life-long learning (Pai&Mallya, 2016). To achieve this independent learning, it is evident that in most classrooms, group activities are being employed. Group activities show how students collaborate and coordinate with each other to be successful of the learning goals set for a particular session.

In a student-centered learning environment, students are encouraged to learn independently, with the appropriate guidance from the teacher as it becomes necessary. We adopt teaching methodologies that provide our students with opportunities to do independent work, either alone or in a group. The desire to learn much more than what the teacher presents in class drives the students to read, to do research, and to discuss on their own. Collaboration is a prime feature of a student-centered learning environment. Students share information, help each other out and provide support for each other's learning. While students are driven to learn independently, they also enjoy working with classmates because they actually see for themselves that many heads are better than one (Ang, Gonzales, Liwag, Santos, & Yu, 2001).

Developing Classroom Climate and Culture

In a student-centered environment, students and teacher create the relationships that can make experiences of both meaningful and memorable. Learning activities in a student-centered environment allow for a maximum of student choice, control, and regulation. They should promote students' acceptance of personal responsibility for their actions through the exercise of personal choice and decision-making (within the appropriate course parameters). Opportunities for strategic choice making also help develop student competence and self-discipline, while the teacher's role as guide, facilitator, and supervisor remains critical (Ang, Gonzales, Liwag, Santos, & Yu, 2001).

Moreover, all planned learning activities must be infused with the goal of promoting our students' "inner cultivation" of their person and growth in the human qualities of compassion, caring, sensitivity, good faith, and authenticity.

Once we listen to our students more often, we create an atmosphere where love and care dominate. This helps them feel safe and secured. Once the environment is safe, learning will take place.

Providing support for learning

It is true that students learn by doing provided that there are authentic and relevant learning materials (Surikova, 2008). Students' learning becomes effective when their teacher supports his/her discussion with instructional materials. These instructional materials are useful not only for putting students hand and mind in action but to make the lesson immediate, tangible, relevant and motivating for students' learning (So W. , 2002).

As presented, these instructional materials include the use of visuals, video, audio and other multi-sensory materials, activity sheets and worksheets that enhance learning. Also, this includes the integration of the different forms of technology which supplements learning.

Designing contextualized learning

Classroom tasks and activities that connect with students' interests, needs, and personal goals, and are considered important within the accepted domain of the course, will make learning more meaningful, and therefore intrinsically motivating. Learning occurs best when what is being learned is relevant and meaningful to the learner. Designing such tasks requires, however, that we get to know our own students well — what they are interested in, what they are capable of (Ang, Gonzales, Liwag, Santos, & Yu, 2001).

Moreover, attention, focusing, critical and creative thinking are necessary processes for lifelong learning. Teaching methods and learning activities that increase the students' power of concentration and elaboration on the material inside and outside of the classroom, facilitate the development of lifelong learning strategies.

The main goal is to provide opportunities for the students to apply their knowledge and transfer their skills into a more meaningful result. This is achieved by providing learning experiences and challenges framed into real-life situations which are relevant and timely to the needs of time. This is what we call contextualized learning.

Contextualized learning links the learning of foundational skills with academic or occupational content by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student (Gavilan College). As Moltz (2010) remarks contextualization is a form of "deep learning" which aims to make the learning process profound, objective and meaningful through placing the target language in a vivid and realistic situation (Moltz, 2010).

Assessing Student Learning

Students reflect on what they have learned and how they went about learning this. It is important to note that our students need to be constantly nudged to assess their own work and adjust their goals and behavior accordingly. In this event, students conduct self-appraisals and peer assessments to determine whether or not they are achieving their objectives (Ang, Gonzales, Liwag, Santos, & Yu, 2001).

In this event, we monitor our students' work and provide feedback. This becomes their guide in determining individual success or failure as well as in defining areas where learning methods need to be improved by teacher and student. Moreover, results should be communicated to students so that they can plan for remediation and other means of improvement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that their lived experiences had influenced the learning in a student-centered environment. The identified dimensions of learning were authentic areas that can be used in designing a student-centered classroom. Learning could not only be seen in one side. It is a two-way process which involves the participation and experiences of the students and teachers.

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