



# PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN WESTERN PANGASINAN ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VARIOUS CHILD CENTRED APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

*The central theme of this paper revolves around the effectiveness of child-centered approaches to early childhood education as perceived by public elementary school teachers in Western Pangasinan. One of the key educational goals of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically under SDG Goal 4.2 is early childhood education which according to existing empirical literature has immense potential to benefit society. Looking into the effectiveness of child-centered approaches to early childhood education is significant since most of the foundational literacy skills are acquired during a learner's early childhood stage. Using descriptive method of research, the researcher determined the effectiveness of these approaches as perceived by public elementary school teachers in Western Pangasinan. The results showed that public elementary school teachers in Western Pangasinan are quite familiar and utilize child-centered approaches in instruction as it had significant influence on imparting learning skills to the students. Most teachers in Western Pangasinan utilized the child discovery approach ( $M=3.38$  and  $SD=0.65$ ) more as compared to other child-centred approaches. The study recommends that public elementary school teachers strengthen their existing practices in the use of learner-centered approaches in their pedagogical activities.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Learner-centered strategies, child-centered approaches, SDG goal on Education, early childhood education*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) defines early childhood as the period from birth to eight years old, is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. Accordingly, children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them during this stage. UNESCO emphasizes that early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic

development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens (UNESCO, 2019).

In fact, ECCE is perceived as one of the best investments for any country to promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes. It is for this reason that the international

community gives high premium to the promotion of early childhood education as one of its topmost educational agenda. It is emphasized in particular as target 4.2 of the SDG Goal on Education which aims to ‘By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.’

Quality pre-primary education is the foundation of a child’s journey: every stage of education that follows relies on its success. Yet, despite the proven and lifelong benefits, more than 175 million children, according to the UNICEF (2019) – nearly half of all pre-primary-age children globally – are not enrolled in pre-primary education.

The learner-centered approach in education is key to providing quality early childhood education for every child. Citing Morrison, Ponitz and McClelland (2010), Andriema and Kitainge (2016) stress that in a child-centred approach a child is able to construct knowledge by her/himself without having to impart knowledge, hence stressing child’s autonomy in teacher-centred classrooms. They mentioned that for many years, child-centeredness has dominated discourse about best practice in ECDE teaching (Collins & O’Brien, 2003; Madlela, 2014). Child-centred approaches have been supported by philosophers like John Dewey, Rousseau and Pestalozzi (Morrison, Ponitz, & McClelland, 2010).

This paper aims to look at on the benefit of teachers utilising child-centred approaches in improving quality teaching and learning in ECDE centres in contrast to traditional didactic approaches (teacher centred) to pedagogy.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVE

Essentially this paper aimed to determine the effectiveness of various child-centered approaches in teaching language and numerical skills as perceived by public elementary school teachers at Western Pangasinan.

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Western Pangasinan specifically on municipalities with attached primary schools. The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of fifty (50) teacher-respondents took part in this study. In particular, the researcher used the descriptive method of research. Ethridge (2004) describes the descriptive method of research as as a statement of affairs as they are at present with the researcher having no control over variable. Moreover, “descriptive studies may be characterised as simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is, while analytical research attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be”

A survey research design was used. Questionnaires, interview and observation checklist were used to collect data. Data collected was analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1. On the Profile of the Respondents

Data were sought on the profile of the respondents as they are deemed insightful on the utilization of child-centered approaches to early childhood education. In terms of gender, 35 or 70% of the respondents are female, whereas only 15 or 30% are male which indicates that public elementary school teachers engaged in early childhood education are mostly female.

In terms of age, 13 or 26% are of the ages between 36--44; 10 or 20% are of the ages 55 to 60; and 27 or 54% are of the ages 20-35. Apparently, public elementary school teachers engaged in early childhood education are predominately in the early stage of their teaching career.

Finally in terms of highest educational attainment, 35 or 70% are bachelor’s degree holder; whereas only 15 or 30% are master’s degree holder. This finding is expected as most of the teacher-respondents are merely on the early stages of their career.

### 4.2. On the Utilization of Child-Centered Approaches

There are five (5) child-centered approaches investigated in this study, to wit: Child discovery approach, child-interest approach, child needs approach and activity-based approach. The study computed the average score of each child-centered approach through descriptive statistics to check the most frequently utilized and the least frequently utilized based on a Likert scale responses (1-Never to 5-Always). The results of the analysis disclosed that most teachers in Western Pangasinan utilized the child discovery approach ( $M=3.38$  and  $SD=0.65$ ) more as compared to other child-centred approaches. The second most utilised teaching approach was the child needs approach ( $M=3.23$  and  $SD=0.74$ ). However, the results show that the third most utilized method of instruction by teachers was the child interest approach and it was sometimes or occasionally used ( $M=3.15$  and  $SD=0.67$ ). The last teaching method used occasionally ( $M=3.07$  and  $SD=0.66$ ) was the activity based approach. Child discovery and child needs approach had positive skewness as opposed to child interest approach and activity based approach. Normally was observed in the two that had negative Skewness  $\pm 1.94$  as opposed to discovery and needs approach whose

Skewness was greater than  $\pm 1.93$ . From the results, it is evident that most of the public elementary school teachers in Western Pangasinan occasionally used child-centred approaches in teaching and learning activities in their classrooms. The findings corroborate to what some head teachers affirmed during the interviews in response to questions asked on the degree to which child-centred approaches were used by their teachers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the analysis and findings of this paper, the following conclusions were drawn:

- (1) Most of the teacher-respondents are female with bachelors' degree in education and between the ages 20-45 which suggest that majority of public elementary school teachers engaged in early childhood education are quite familiar with the modern and more progressive child-centered approach of the teaching-learning process;
- (2) Most of the public elementary school teachers utilize the various approaches in child-centered pedagogy. Most teachers in Western Pangasinan utilize the child discovery approach more as compared to other child-centred approaches.

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