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HOW TO CREATE A
**LEARNER-
CENTRED
CLASSROOM**

The following resource is derived from a presentation by Jabulani Thethwayo and Quinton Dirks, participants of the GTI Axis Summit 2018. Here, you will find a brief discussion on learner-centred classrooms, and tips to help you create a learning environment that puts your learners at the centre.

1. What is a learner-centred classroom?

At the centre of a traditional instructional model, the teacher is the provider of education and learners are the recipients. The limits of this 'teacher-centred' model are that it fails to address the unique needs and interests of each learner, and worse still - it does not allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning. As we move through the 21st century and beyond, it is vital that educators prepare learners to be independent and critical thinkers.

In a learner-centred classroom, learners are the focus of education, while teachers facilitate the learning process. There are several strategies to ensure that a classroom environment is learner-centred. They are explored further along in this resource.

2. Why do we need a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning?

- **To offer teachers mentorship opportunities:** learner-centred classrooms give teachers the opportunity not just to teach but also to mentor, inspire, nurture and coach their learners. Both learners and teachers may learn together.
- **To motivate learners:** learner-centred classrooms motivate learners to work hard - every learner wants to shine, to prove themselves. This approach encourages learners to improve their communication, listening and collaboration skills.
- **To encourage lifelong learning:** learner-centred classrooms encourage learners and teachers alike to be reflective, to be seekers of information, to be open-minded and willing to learn as well as being willing to be corrected.
- **To foster independent thinking:** learner-centred classrooms encourage learners to develop the skills required for independent problem-solving and lifelong learning.

- **To meet individual needs:** learners are all different - learner-centred classrooms allow learners to learn at their own pace, in a way that suits their personality and encourages them to think critically. Learners are more responsive and responsible when they are encouraged to create their own learning experiences, and this in turn improves learning outcomes.
- **To establish a secure learning environment:** we all learn more easily when we feel relaxed and emotionally secure. Learners need emotional availability to be willing and able to learn. Learner-centred classrooms are a safe emotional environment that supports learners whilst encouraging them to engage with the unknown.
- **To foster collaboration:** learners are more interested in learning activities when they can interact with one another. Learner-centred classrooms encourage collaborative learning and the active participation of all learners.

3. How do I create a more learner-centred classroom?

- Provide training in thinking skills and how to face various learning situations. Encourage learners to be aware of their own learning processes (this may be achieved through self-reflection exit tickets).
- Learner-centred learning cannot occur without teamwork, so encourage learners to work together in groups. Some ways in which learners can be encouraged to work as a unit include:
 - Arrange desks so that it's easy for learners to collaborate
 - Draw up classroom rules for group work and involve learners in setting the rules and consequences.
 - Set assignments that require groups to complete a task - give the group that gets the correct answer first a reward.
 - Create group roles and processes, such as peer feedback (ensure frequent rotation of roles).
 - When setting group assignments, give the same mark allocation to everyone in the group so all are involved.
 - Use a rubric for large group projects.

4. How do I teach in a more learner-centred way?

Criteria of Learner-Centred Instruction

- **Problem of the day:** when introducing a new topic/lesson, have learners figure out a problem related to said topic. Remember that as a teacher your role here is not to instruct directly, but rather to function as a guide to help learners avoid misconceptions.
- **Immerse learners in the experience:** encourage learners to come up with different methods to solve the aforementioned problem. Allow every learner to come up with a solution. Try not to step in just yet; allow the learners to work on their own and become immersed in the learning experience.
- **5 minute concept segments:** once learners have devised various solutions, you may begin to correct any misconceptions, and deduce the correct solution.
- **Peer-to-peer tutoring:** allow learners who understand to assist those who don't. This helps learners master the topic/lesson in question (i.e. learn by teaching someone else).



Learners are not blank slates. Learners have knowledge that they have acquired through previous learning and experiences that they bring to class. Therefore, as a teacher your job is to develop and shape their knowledge by correcting misconceptions.