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Re-center Education

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After all the time and effort invested in reforming the United States of America s (USA) education, why hasn't the government been able to create a rigorous system, academically engaging for all students? Researcher Krista Kaput answers this question by stating: "The design and intention of our country's public education system was never to educate nor meet the needs of all students. Rather, its purpose was to prepare students, in mass, to work in an industrialized and standardized economy" (Kaput 6). In other words, the American public education system is doing what it was designed to do, and that design is failing our students. If we want to fix the public education system in the USA in order to guarantee the students' success and outcomes, it must be redesigned. Instead of maintaining a hierarchical, teacher-centered structure where students receive determined knowledge from the teacher, it's time to student-center the system and meet each one's unique needs.

Student-centered education is necessary when developing their skills, even though it is difficult to put it into practice. With this type of teaching, the learning outcomes of the class increase, allowing college graduates to finish it with the knowledge and abilities required for their level. Therefore, their chances of being successful multiply. According to the glossary of Education Reform, created by the Great Schools Partnership, "the term 'student-centered learning' refers to 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." (Partnership, Great Schools). To implement a new student-centered system, teachers may employ new methods and redesign their ways to teach.

Generally, student-centered education is necessary in order for students to develop crucial skills that will serve them to go further in their future lives as

society members and workers. Author Bell with communications and human relations studies in Western Connecticut State University asserts that "Cooperation, independent thinking, negotiation and communication" (39) are fundamental skills to have a successful career in life. Student-centered classes involve the practice of these abilities, challenging students to elaborate different tasks that require the proper development of them.

To give an illustration of what I mean, let's look at the case of the Project Based Learning (PBL). PBL is a student-centered education method, which involves learning by "pursuing solutions through asking questions, debating ideas, designing plans, and communicating with others" (Junghee, Ju-Ho and Booyuel 46). Since this method increases pupils' abilities of creativity and improvement through communication among them, it resembles a real-life situation, and their skills to face real problems enhance. Thus, students learning through this method are more likely than others to respond properly in future workplace situations.

Furthermore, switching from a passive (teacher-centered) learning to an active (student-centered) learning significantly benefits the students, as well as the teacher. In a student-centered education, according to Indiana University professors Charles M. Reigeluth and Sinem Aslan, students "develop both a love of learning and the self-regulation skills to be effective lifelong learners." (68). As they have to learn how to be responsible for their own learning, students have the freedom to choose their own way of working and exigency. This freedom allows them to make things their way—a way they may like more—and thus, they develop that "love of learning" (Reigeluth and Aslan 68) and become self-regulated. Above all, they develop their ability to learn more and more effectively.

An increase in student-centered methods not only benefits students, but also improves the teacher's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura 3). Thus, the teacher's self-efficacy would be the teachers' beliefs in their own capabilities to be effective teachers. How students perceive teachers' effort affects how teachers act and perceive their own teaching.

Results of a Korean study on how project-based learning is associated with teacher self-efficacy showed that when students had positive changes in the perception of their teacher's efforts and class preparation, the frequency with which they shared ideas with other students in class also increased (Junghee, Ju-Ho and Booyuel 53). In any case, student-centering the education improves

the teacher's self-efficacy, which changes the way teachers teach, and which in turn benefits the whole classroom.

Finally, another benefit of implementing student-centered education is that the learning outcomes of the class increase. Again, we will use the example of "Problem Based Learning". Some writers on the *International Journal of Scientific Technology Research* assert that "Learning that involves students in learning to solve real-life problems can increase motivation and curiosity to increase." (Malmia et al. 1142). This quote illustrates that if the motivation of the students increases, there are more chances for them to improve their job, and consequently, learning is more effective and outcomes are easily increased. This allows students' skills to improve for the remaining future.

It is true that implementing student-centered education implies several challenges for both teachers and pupils, such as changing their mindsets, having large numbers of students within a group, the lack of financial support, not being subjective when it comes to grading. However, long term results are worthwhile and the difficulties are compensated by the benefits of focusing on the student: The student-centered method can meet the needs of all students, without leaving anyone behind, and can show the best of each student as well as improve their future career, and therefore, the future society.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that a redesign of the US education system is needed in order to academically engage all students, and meet their unique needs. Student-centering the system is necessary when developing students' skills to have a successful career in life. Moreover, applying student-centered methods benefits both students' self-regulation and the teacher's self-efficacy. As a result, learning outcomes of the classes increase, and college graduates finish their studies with greater academic preparation and are more transformative thinkers, and thus more effective in facing future situations.

Since education develops society members' mindsets and largely determines people's future acts, it is a significant tool to change the world into a better one. The problem is that we need to know how to use this tool in order to reach the optimal results. Implementing student-centered education methods is a pathway to approach a better society with more transformative thinkers. On the contrary, if education gets stuck in the teacher-centered style where predetermined knowledge is transmitted to students and new ideas are rejected, brilliant students won't be able to show off and a lot of wisdom will be lost, resulting in a society that won't progress. Consciousness of this issue must be spread out as quickly as possible, since it affects everyone. Teachers and pupils

must be willing to change their mindsets in order to achieve great results for changing society.

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