



CHILD-CENTRIC APPROACH IN EDUCATION: A NEED BASED ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT Child-centric education has emerged as a significant approach in modern educational practices, emphasizing the learner as the focal point of the teaching–learning process. The present study examines the concept, nature, and characteristics of child-centric education and highlights its importance in promoting meaningful and effective learning. The study also analyses the transition from traditional teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred educational practices, reflecting a paradigm shift in the philosophy of education. This research is based on secondary data collected from journals, books, articles, and websites. The descriptive method has been used to analyse relevant literature and theoretical perspectives related to child-centric education. The study further explores the role of teachers as facilitators who guide learners, encourage participation, and create supportive and inclusive classroom environments. The study further analyses the provisions of the National Education Policy 2020 that support child-centric education, with emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), experiential learning, flexible curriculum, multilingualism, and competency-based assessment. These initiatives promote holistic development and foster creativity, critical thinking, independence, and inclusive learning, contributing to a more effective and learner-oriented educational system.

KEYWORDS : Child-Centric Education, Holistic Development, Teacher-Centric Education, NEP 2020

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, child-centric education is an approach to teaching and learning that places the child at the center of the educational process. Unlike traditional teacher-centred methods, where the teacher is the primary source of knowledge, child-centric education emphasises the needs, interests, abilities, and learning pace of each child. It recognises that every learner is unique and therefore requires personalised attention and meaningful learning experiences. This approach is strongly influenced by educational thinkers such as John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget, who emphasised experiential learning, active participation, and developmental readiness. According to them, children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information. In a child-centric classroom, the teacher acts as a facilitator or guide rather than an authority figure. Teaching methods include discussion, project work, hands-on activities, collaborative learning, and problem-solving tasks. This approach not only promotes academic achievement but also supports the holistic development of the child—socially, emotionally, intellectually, and morally.

This approach also encourages critical thinking, creativity, self-expression, and independence. It respects children's voices and provides opportunities for them to make choices in their learning. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, this approach helps learners develop confidence, motivation, and lifelong learning skills. Overall, child-centric education aims to nurture well-rounded individuals who are capable of adapting to real-life challenges and contributing positively to society.

Objectives

- To understand the definition, concept, nature and characteristics of child-centric education
- To understand the changing status from teacher-centric education to child-centric education
- To study the role of teachers in achieving the goal of child-centric education
- To highlight the provisions of NEP 2020 towards holistic development.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data collected from various sources such as journals, articles, books, and websites. The descriptive method has been employed for analysis. The primary objective of the study is to examine the relevance of the child-centric approach in the modern educational process and its role in enhancing effective learning and holistic development.

Concept of Child-centric Education

Child-centric education is an educational approach in which the child becomes the central focus of the teaching–learning process. It emphasises the needs, interests, abilities, developmental level, and

experiences of the learner. Unlike traditional teacher-centred education, where knowledge is transmitted from teacher to student, child-centric education promotes active participation, exploration, and experiential learning. This concept is rooted in progressive educational philosophy. Thinkers such as John Dewey advocated “learning by doing,” emphasising experience and interaction. Maria Montessori highlighted self-directed activity and freedom within limits, while Jean Piaget stressed the importance of developmental stages in learning. Their ideas collectively shaped the foundation of child-centred practices. The core idea is that education should support the holistic development of the child—intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and physical—rather than focusing solely on academic achievement.

Nature of Child-centric Education

The nature of child-centric education refers to its fundamental features and underlying philosophy. It reflects how the teaching–learning process is organised around the child's needs and development. Child-centric education is deeply rooted in psychology, as it focuses on understanding each child's interests, abilities, intelligence, and stage of development. This approach is flexible and dynamic, adapting curriculum and teaching methods to suit students' needs and interests. Most importantly, child-centric education aims at the holistic development of the learner, nurturing intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and physical growth. Through active engagement with their environment, children construct their own knowledge, making learning a more meaningful and lifelong process.

Characteristics of Child-centric Education

Child-centric education is based on the principle that the child is the focal point of the teaching–learning process. It emphasises the overall development of learners by respecting their individuality and active participation. Child-centric education places the learner at the heart of the entire teaching–learning process, rather than focusing only on the teacher or the subject matter. It recognises that every child has unique needs, interests, abilities, and a different pace of learning, and therefore teaching methods are carefully designed to suit these differences. Learning in this approach is active and engaging, taking place through activities, experiments, discussions, projects, and real-life experiences, reflecting the idea of “learning by doing” advocated by John Dewey. It also respects individual differences, understanding that each child has a distinct background, intelligence, and learning style, and adapts teaching strategies accordingly.

Role of a Teacher in Child-centric Education

In child-centric education, the teacher plays a dynamic and facilitative role rather than acting as the sole authority or transmitter of knowledge. The focus shifts from “teaching” to “guiding learning,” where the child becomes the centre of the educational process. In child-centric education, the role of the teacher is no longer limited to simply delivering knowledge but extends to being a facilitator, guide, and

mentor in the learning process. The teacher creates meaningful learning experiences by encouraging discussion, exploration, and active participation, rather than relying only on lectures. At the same time, the teacher acts as an observer and diagnostician, carefully understanding each child's interests, abilities, learning pace, and difficulties. Additionally, the teacher adapts the curriculum and teaching methods according to the needs of learners, using activity-based learning, group discussions, projects, and problem-solving tasks. Importantly, the teacher promotes the holistic development of the child by giving equal attention to intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and physical growth. Thus, in a child-centric classroom, the teacher is not a dictator of knowledge but a supportive guide who nurtures the overall development of each learner. The success of this approach largely depends on the teacher's sensitivity, creativity, and deep understanding of individual differences.

A Paradigm Shift from Gurukul Approach to Child-centric Approach

The history of education reflects a gradual shift from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred practices. In ancient India, the Gurukul system was one of the earliest forms of education, where students lived with their guru and learned through oral instruction, discipline, and close guidance. The teacher held complete authority, and learning mainly involved memorisation of texts like the Vedas, along with moral and spiritual development. During the colonial period, education became more formal under the influence of Thomas Babington Macaulay, introducing structured curricula, textbooks, examinations, and English as the medium of instruction. However, this system remained rigid and teacher-dominated, with limited scope for creativity.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, educational thinkers like John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget brought significant changes by emphasising experience-based and child-focused learning. This led to the development of child-centric education, where the learner's needs, interests, and pace are prioritised. Modern policies like the National Education Policy 2020 further support this approach by promoting holistic development, critical thinking, and active participation, making education more meaningful and relevant.

Holistic Development in Child-centric Education: Provisions of the National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 strongly promotes child-centric education by placing the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process. It emphasises holistic development, flexibility, and the overall well-being of children. A key provision is the focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), recognising that the early years are crucial for cognitive, emotional, and social growth. The 5+3+3+4 structure includes a foundational stage where learning is play-based, activity-oriented, and stress-free, helping children develop foundational literacy and numeracy.

The policy also encourages experiential and activity-based learning, where students learn through real-life experiences, inquiry, and problem-solving rather than rote memorisation. It promotes holistic development by integrating academics with arts, sports, vocational, and life skills. NEP 2020 supports multilingualism by recommending the use of the mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction in the early years, improving understanding and inclusivity.

Additionally, the policy ensures flexibility in subject choices and promotes inclusive education for all learners, including those from disadvantaged groups. It also introduces competency-based assessment, focusing on understanding, creativity, and skills instead of only exam performance. Overall, NEP 2020 aims to create a more meaningful, inclusive, and child-friendly education system.

CONCLUSION

Child-centric education represents a significant shift from traditional teacher-dominated methods to learner-focused educational practices. It emphasises the needs, interests, creativity, abilities, and developmental stages of children, ensuring meaningful and participatory learning experiences. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators who guide and support learners in a supportive and inclusive environment. Furthermore, the National Education Policy 2020 strongly advocates child-centred pedagogy by emphasising experiential learning, flexibility, and holistic development. By focusing on intellectual, emotional, social, and moral growth, child-centric education prepares learners to face real-life challenges and contribute responsibly to society.

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