

EXPLORING BENEFITS OF NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM ON DIPLOMA STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

This study is intended to explore the benefits of negotiated curriculum on Diploma students. As they are now young adults, they have new expectations towards the new style of learning in the university. This in turn suggests for negotiated curriculum to be implemented onto them. Boomer, 1992, describes classrooms in which instructors allow students to assist in fabricating the learning process as “negotiating the curriculum”. Relatively, “curriculum negotiation means giving a room for students’ say in selecting and developing learning opportunities: both the “what” and the “how” of the curriculum” is (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). A total of 30 Diploma students in a private university in Shah Alam participated in this study. A set of interview was used to collect the relevant data. Findings revealed that the respondents were not aware of the implementation of negotiated curriculum in the classroom. It was also discovered that the main reason for the implementation of negotiated curriculum was to gain their interest to participate in the classroom. The major implication of it is that it encourages them to be active in participating in the lesson. The outcomes from this study will assist students and also instructors through the implementation of negotiated curriculum in the classroom.

Keywords: Negotiated curriculum

1. Introduction

Boomer, 1992, states “negotiating curriculum” in classrooms in which lecturers offer and allow students to help constructing their learning process. This method does not mean that the lecturers are abandoning their responsibility to prepare for the curriculum, nor letting the students to have limitless minds in making decisions as it is actually a technique of teaching where students share authority in the classroom (John Kordalewski, 2006). Agreeing to Kim Murdoch, 2006, a negotiated approach means that curriculum is "not solely emergent for the child or from the teacher but is negotiated - it is child initiated but teacher framed". Students actively involved in curriculum discussion, voicing their opinions and having their say over class content and activities to be undertaken during class time. It is mentioned as a process of teachers empowering students by allowing them to have a strong voice in classroom discussion, as well as input into the essential learning activities that being implemented in their classroom, (Kim Murdoch, 2006). At this stage, the teacher will become a co-learner and facilitator as well as a the source of knowledge (John Kordalewski, 2006). Henceforth, negotiating the curriculum lets the learners to have the chance and be exposed to share their needs in which at the same time it assists the teachers or lecturers to provide what is best for their students’ learning process.

2. Research Objectives

The main purpose of the study is to identify the benefits of negotiated curriculum among Diploma students. Hence, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the implementation of negotiated curriculum in the respondents' classroom.
2. Discover the reasons that lead to the implementation of negotiated curriculum in the respondents' classroom.
3. Identify how negotiated curriculum could assist the respondents' learning.
4. Identify the benefits of negotiated curriculum on the respondents' learning process.

3. Research Questions

This study pursued in answering the following research questions:

1. Is negotiated curriculum implemented in the respondents' classroom?
2. Why is negotiated curriculum implemented in the respondents' classroom?
3. How does the implementation of negotiated curriculum assist students in their learning?
4. What are the benefits of negotiated curriculum on students' learning process?

4. Literature Review

Negotiated curriculum is admirable in that it pursues and attempts for maximum students engagement, involvement and interest; thus seeking for the highest quality of learning for each individual student (Boomer, 1992). This learning style distributes responsibility and highlights the rights of both lecturers and students.

This learning style includes not only what is important to the lecturer or the university, but also the questions and concerns that students may have about themselves and their world (Beane, 2005). It gives students a platform for the students to have their voice heard in what the learning topics are and also how the assessment of those topics will be presented and conducted. It does not happen by chance but are a result of obvious efforts by lecturers to put in place arrangements and opportunities that will bring democracy to life in a classroom dynamic (Apple, 2007). This is done by giving the students sense of citizenship, freedom and community where critical thinking, empathy and dialogue are purposely stimulated.

A democratic institution will clearly establish the rights and responsibilities of both lecturers and students. It requires participation of the students with guidance of the lecturers and as students

move though the institutions, they take a wider accountability and contribution in planning, evaluation and curriculum (Knight, 1985).

By negotiating the curriculum with students, lecturers are able to clearly initiate not only it's main objective of students engagement, but also form on the knowledge and skills that the students require as opposed to what a set curriculum requests students to gain. Thus the support and the similarity of democratic education in that, all ideas have to be taken into consideration in order to create the best curriculum for the personnel. It is intentionally inviting students to contribute and modify the educational program, so that they will have a real investment in both the learning progress and in the final impacts of it (Boomer, 1992).

5. Methodology

5.1. Sampling

This study employed cluster random sampling technique in order to gather all the data. In this study, the respondents were 30 Diploma students who come from different courses. The respondents were required to answer four questions which being asked during the interview.

5.2. Research Instrument

This study aimed to explore the benefits of negotiated curriculum among Diploma students. Four questions were being asked to 30 Diploma students from various courses during the interview with each of them. This instrument has provided qualitative data which then analysed thematically.

6. Results

6.1 Research Question 1

Is negotiated curriculum implemented in the respondents' classroom?

Responds	Percentage
Yes	60%
No	20%
Not sure	20%

Table 6.1.1

Based on Table 6.1.1, 60% of the thirty respondents have experienced negotiated curriculum being implemented by their lecturers in the classroom, meanwhile 20% of all responded negatively and the remaining 20% stated that they are not sure about it. Although majority of the respondents gave positive responds, most of all of the respondents did not understand what 'negotiated curriculum is' and the researcher had to explain in details of what does the subject matter means. Then only the respondents were able to integrate their experience to what is negotiated curriculum.

6.2 Research Question 2

Why is negotiated curriculum implemented in the respondents' classroom?

Based on the interviews done on the thirty respondents, there were many factors that bring to the implementation of negotiated curriculum in the respondents' classroom. These factors are analysed thematically and simplified into few themes and projected in Table 6.2.1

Factors of negotiated curriculum	Percentage
Motivation	30%
Students engagement	10%
Interest	50%
Varying learning styles	10%

Table 6.2.1 Factors of negotiated curriculum

According to Table 6.2.1, it is exhibited that integrating students' interest in learning is the major factor of why negotiated curriculum is being implemented in the respondents' classroom with the number of 50% of them. One of the respondents (Interviewee 7) stated that he experienced a lesson where his lecturer asked a question of "What topic does attract your attention for us to be discussed for essay exercise today?". Other than that, Interviewee 18 specified there was once when one of her lecturers in English classroom asked the students to draw a picture that shows their interest then they have to speak in front of the class about the picture, and according to her, it was a fun activity done by the lecturer as it initiated their confidence to speak in English besides letting them drew whatever they had in mind. Secondly, motivation is the second highest factor of all with the number of 30% of the respondents. Interviewee 12 claimed that negotiated curriculum does motivate her to participate in a more active manner in the classroom or else she will just be passive and let others to accomplish tasks given by their lecturers. Students' engagement and varying learning styles marked the same number (10%) of the total respondents' answer.

6.3 Research Question 3

How does the implementation of negotiated curriculum assist students in their learning?

100% of the respondents agreed that negotiated curriculum does assist them in their learning. This is because they have the opportunity to explore more on their ability and understanding on a particular topic without restriction. Besides, to them, values and gives worth to each individual student, honouring their dignity and listening to their ideas, questions and concerns are one of the ways to show that they have their own rights to plan on what they are learning. Interviewee 27 stated that when his lecturer implemented negotiated curriculum in that particular lesson, he was able to cope with the topic as the lecturer gave the freedom to the students to draw their own method in producing the notes of the topic, rather than just accomplishing the exercise given by

the lecturer. Other than that, Interviewee 14 claimed that when every time when her lecturer practices negotiated curriculum in the classroom, the lesson will be livelier and it is more interesting to be participated together with her peers, and as a result, she understands better and able to explore more than she expected.

6.4 Research Question 4

What are the benefits of negotiated curriculum on students' learning process?

The respondents stated that negotiated curriculum does bring a lot of benefits in their learning process. One of the benefits is that it helps them in terms of catering their needs in learning. As we know, there are seven learning styles represented by students as each personality has their own strengths and drawbacks which limit the ability to cope more in their learning progress. Thus, when the lecturer implements negotiated curriculum in the classroom, it helps the students to plan for their own learning progress based on their needs and ability. For example, Interviewee 5 who is a tactile learner claimed that he cannot cope if the lecturer just projects the slideshow in front of the class and explains in details. He needs more and when the lecturer allows them to do their own practical project; he has more understanding on that particular part.

Apart from that, the respondents also feel the sense of 'belonging' in the lesson. This is because negotiated curriculum enables them to participate more in the lesson. Besides, it enables them to explore beyond what they have expected. This is said by Interviewee 3 where she experienced a lesson that she discovered new general knowledge about a culture in the other side of the world.

7. Recommendations

Entering the tertiary level of education which is university gives a new dimension of learning styles to the students. They have to be motivated to develop their own style of learning in order to gain more in the classroom. Thus, instructors should play an important role to advise and emphasize on the student-centered or self-directed learning so that they will be more independent and responsible towards their own learning path. Instructors should bear in the students' minds with advices and ideas of structuring their own learning and not depending wholly on their lecturers. In fact, these young adults should experience this type of learning to retain as much autonomy as possible. Based on the findings gained out of this study, there are numbers of positive impacts of the implementation of negotiated curriculum towards the tertiary-level students, as well as to the lecturers themselves. Due to this, lecturers should always know how to implement this kind of strategy in the classroom. They can strategize by giving the freedom to the learners to decide on the course content, class schedule, activities, topics, and any other negotiable elements in learning. These elements can be negotiable such as setting up suitable date and time in handing in assignments so that they have ample time to do it, but then again, lecturers must always bear in mind to pose as the authoritative figure in the classroom once in a while as this is to make sure that the students do not get overboard with their own decisive ideas. In addition, this finding also entails that students need information on what and how to use negotiated curriculum in their classrooms and not just as the lecturers' responsibilities. These tertiary level adult learners have to be assisted in accepting responsibilities and strategies in their own learning to make them ready for student-directed learning. Brenda's (2008) suggests strategies similar to Harris' (2010) where students should be exposed to the idea of empowering

them with choices and criteria in deciding certain elements like setting up due date for their assignments, topics for assignments, or maybe give them a chance to set up their own class schedule at some point. After implementing all of these suggested strategies, feedbacks from the students on the effectiveness of using negotiated curriculum in the classroom and how it fares in terms of students' learning process should be collected by the lecturers as to improvise into better lesson plans in future.

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