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## Effective and appropriate pedagogy

### BRIEF 3

#### Classroom observation

#### Teaching-learning strategies

### **Effective teachers carefully plan and implement appropriate pedagogy.**

Learning is dependent on the pedagogical approaches teachers use in the classroom. A variety of pedagogical approaches are common in schools, but some strategies are more effective and appropriate than others. The effectiveness of pedagogy often depends on the particular subject matter to be taught, on understanding the diverse needs of different learners, and on adapting to the on-the-ground conditions in the classroom and the surrounding context. In general, the best teachers believe in the capacity of their students to learn, and carefully utilize a range of pedagogical approaches to ensure this learning occurs.

### **Issues and Discussion**

**Pedagogy and its Forms:** Pedagogy refers to the “interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment and the learning tasks.”(6, p. 35) This broad term includes how teachers and students relate together as well as the instructional approaches implemented in the classroom. Pedagogical approaches are often placed on a spectrum from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy; though these two approaches may seem contradictory, they can often complement each other in the realisation of educational goals—for example, a teacher-centred approach may be useful to introduce a new theme, while a learner-centred approach may be necessary to allow students to explore these ideas and develop a deeper understanding.

- *Teacher-Centred Pedagogy:* Teacher-centred pedagogy positions the teacher at the centre of the learning process and typically relies on methods such as whole-class lecture, rote memorization, and chorus answers (i.e., call-and-response). This approach is often criticized, especially when students complete only lower-order tasks and are afraid of the teacher.(14) However, whole-class teaching can be effective when teachers frequently ask students to explain and elaborate key ideas, rather than merely lecture.(8)
- *Learner-Centred Pedagogy:* This pedagogical approach has many associated terms (e.g., constructivist, student-centred, participatory, active), but generally draws on learning theories suggesting learners should play an active role in the learning process. Students therefore use prior knowledge and new experiences to create knowledge. The teacher facilitates this process, but also creates and structures the conditions for learning. Considerable research and advocacy has promoted learner-centred pedagogy in recent years for economic,

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cognitive, and political reasons.(13) Some research suggests this approach can be very effective but it is also difficult to measure consistently.(14) It is often challenging for teachers to shift from teacher-centred pedagogy to learner-centred pedagogy, and so considerable support may be needed if this is an important goal for a given education system.(10)

- *Learning-Centred Pedagogy*: “Learning-centred pedagogy” is a relatively new term that acknowledges both learner-centred and teacher-centred pedagogy can be effective, but teachers must consider the local context, including the number of students in the class, the physical environment, the availability of teaching and learning materials, etc.(7) It suggests that teachers should be flexible and carefully adapt their pedagogical approaches based upon the school environment.(11)

Effective and Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Effective pedagogy can lead to academic achievement, social and emotional development, acquisition of technical skills, and a general ability to contribute to society.(2) Among these varied learning outcomes, academic achievement is the easiest to measure, but the others are also important to consider when trying to reform and monitor ongoing changes to pedagogical practice.(1)(3)

Pedagogical effectiveness often depends on ensuring that the approach is appropriate for specific school and national contexts. For example, certain learner-centred techniques that are effective in classrooms with fewer students may be difficult to accomplish in crowded or under-resourced classrooms (see below). Yet, some strategies have been shown to be more effective than others in a broadly-applicable way. These include the following: 1) strong grasp of pedagogical approaches specific to the subject matter and age of the learners (also called pedagogical content knowledge); 2) appropriate use of whole-class, small group, and pair work; 3) meaningful incorporation of teaching and learning materials in addition to the textbook; 4) frequent opportunities for students to answer and expand upon responses to questions; 5) helpful use of local terms and languages; 6) varied lesson activities; and 7) a positive attitude towards students and belief in their capacity to learn.(14)

Pedagogy and the Education System: National examinations, curriculum standards, and other education system policies influence teacher pedagogy. For example, national exams that primarily test discrete factual knowledge, rather than comprehension or analysis, discourage teachers from using pedagogy that develops higher-order critical thinking skills.(12) For this reason, if education planners wish to change pedagogical practice, it is not sufficient to simply issue new pedagogical guidelines—they will also have to explore ways to align other policies and practices throughout the system.

## **Inclusiveness and Equity**

Teacher expectations of disadvantaged students: When teachers have a positive attitude towards their students, they are more socially responsive and attentive, they more often tailor their instruction to particular student needs, and they are more successful at drawing on students’ experiences to make lessons meaningful and contextually relevant.(14) Conversely, students from disadvantaged social groups, such as females, minorities, or the disabled often suffer from teacher prejudices, which translate into low expectations of these students’ capacities. Teachers who have low expectations of their students make less of an effort to help them learn, in addition to discouraging them in other subtle ways, with the final result that these students often achieve lower academic performance.(4)(5)

Adapting pedagogy to mixed-level, large, and under-resourced classrooms. What constitutes

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effective pedagogy is often context-dependent; therefore teachers need to receive specific preparation in how to make contextual adaptations to their teaching approaches through both pre-service and in-service training. In mixed-level classrooms, teachers need to have a deep understanding of students' different ability levels in order to alter their instruction and activities to meet the needs of each student.(14) Group work can also be helpful for students of different ability levels.(8) When teaching in large classes it is vital to [maintain classroom routines](#). Many excellent teachers set up routines for group-work, peer review, distributing papers, etc., to help reduce chaos and increase instructional time.(7) There are also specific techniques for [effective use of questions](#) and [encouraging discussions](#) in large classrooms. In under-resourced classrooms, teachers need to be especially creative about how to use locally-available materials, and how to connect lessons to observations of the social and natural environment. These approaches can, in fact, strengthen teaching even in well-resourced classrooms since teaching and learning materials are most beneficial when they are relevant to students' lives.(14)

## Policy examples

- Ethiopia (pp. 12-16) [[PDF](#)]
- Eritrea (pp. 15-17; 34-39) [[PDF](#)]
- Egypt (pp. 38-40) [[PDF](#)]

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