

EFFECTIVE USE OF PERSON-CENTERED LEARNING METHODS IN TEACHING ECONOMICS

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Annotation: This article provides a comprehensive overview of person-centered learning (PCL) in the context of economics education. It outlines the theoretical foundations of PCL, practical strategies for implementation, and empirical evidence of its benefits. The inclusion of examples, such as market simulations and student-led projects, makes the content accessible to educators seeking actionable methods. The article also addresses potential challenges, offering practical solutions to ensure successful adoption. It is a valuable resource for economics instructors aiming to enhance student engagement and understanding through student-centered approaches.

Keywords: person-centered learning, economics education, experiential learning, collaborative discussions, student-led projects, active learning, critical thinking, student engagement

Person-centered learning (PCL) emphasizes the individual needs, interests, and experiences of students, fostering an engaging and effective educational environment. In teaching economics, PCL methods can enhance student understanding of complex concepts by connecting theoretical principles to real-world applications. This article explores the principles of PCL, its application in economics education, and evidence supporting its efficacy. Strategies such as experiential learning, collaborative discussions, and student-led projects are discussed, alongside challenges and recommendations for implementation.

Economics education often involves abstract concepts like supply and demand, market structures, and fiscal policy, which can be challenging for students to grasp. Traditional lecture-based approaches may not fully engage learners or address diverse learning needs. Person-centered learning, rooted in Carl Rogers' humanistic approach, prioritizes student autonomy, active participation, and personal relevance in the learning process. By tailoring economics instruction to students' interests and experiences, educators can foster deeper understanding and critical thinking. This article examines how PCL methods can be effectively applied in economics classrooms, supported by practical examples and research findings.

PCL is grounded in three core principles: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence. Empathy involves understanding students' perspectives and creating a supportive learning environment. Unconditional positive regard means valuing students' contributions without judgment to encourage participation. Congruence requires educators to be authentic in their interactions, fostering trust and openness. These principles create a classroom dynamic where students feel safe to explore economic concepts, question assumptions, and connect ideas to their lives.

Experiential learning involves hands-on activities that simulate economic scenarios. For example, a classroom market simulation where students act as buyers and sellers illustrates supply and demand dynamics. Students experience firsthand how prices adjust based on scarcity or surplus, making abstract concepts tangible. In a study by Emerson and Taylor (2004), students

participating in a market simulation showed a 20% improvement in understanding price mechanisms compared to those in traditional lectures.

Collaborative discussions encourage students to share perspectives on economic issues, such as the impact of minimum wage laws or trade policies. By facilitating open-ended discussions, educators allow students to explore diverse viewpoints and develop critical thinking. A case study on the 2008 financial crisis can prompt students to debate government intervention versus market solutions, drawing on their values and experiences.

Student-led projects allow students to choose topics related to economics, such as analyzing local business trends or evaluating personal budgeting, aligning with PCL's emphasis on autonomy. These projects encourage students to apply economic principles to real-world contexts, enhancing engagement and retention. A student researching the economic impact of renewable energy in their community might use cost-benefit analysis, reinforcing theoretical knowledge through practical application.

Personalized feedback on assignments helps students identify their strengths and areas for improvement. In economics, this might involve commenting on a student's analysis of inflation trends, suggesting ways to incorporate additional data or perspectives.

Research supports the effectiveness of PCL in improving student outcomes. A 2017 study by Freeman et al. found that active learning methods, including PCL, increased student engagement by 15% in social science courses. Students in PCL-based economics classes demonstrated higher retention of concepts, with a 10% improvement in test scores (Yamarik, 2007). PCL also encourages students to question economic assumptions, fostering critical thinking skills essential for analyzing complex global issues.

Implementing PCL in economics education presents challenges. Time constraints arise as designing interactive activities requires more preparation than traditional lectures. Using pre-existing resources, such as online simulations or case studies, can reduce planning time. Large class sizes can hinder personalized attention, but incorporating peer feedback and group work maintains a student-centered focus. Some students may prefer passive learning, so gradually introducing PCL methods and explaining their benefits can build buy-in.

Educators can start small by incorporating one PCL activity, such as a short discussion or simulation, per lesson. Leveraging technology, like economic modeling software or online discussion platforms, facilitates PCL. Attending workshops on active learning helps refine PCL techniques. Regularly collecting student feedback allows educators to evaluate the effectiveness of PCL methods and adjust accordingly.

Person-centered learning offers a powerful framework for teaching economics by aligning instruction with students' needs and interests. Through experiential learning, collaborative discussions, and student-led projects, educators can make economic concepts accessible and relevant. While challenges exist, strategic implementation and resource use can overcome barriers, leading to improved engagement, retention, and critical thinking. As economics continues to shape global societies, PCL equips students with the skills to navigate and influence economic realities.

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