International J. Soc. Sci. & Education
2020 Vol.10 Issue 1, ISSN: 2223-4934 E and 2227-393X Print

Understanding the Use of Learner-Centered Teaching Strategies by Secondary Educators

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ABSTRACT

Secondary educators do not consistently demonstrate the use of learner-centered teaching strategies (LCTS) in their classrooms. Academic achievement is improved by using these strategies. The purpose of this research study was to investigate how secondary educators were using LCTS in their instruction perceived support needed for these strategies. The conceptual framework for this research study was the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. This basic qualitative design examined classroom practices of secondary teachers and the support needed to use LCTS. The collection instrument was an individual interview protocol of 12 randomly selected secondary education teachers from a midwestern high school in the United States. Thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes: (a) student ownership, (b) use of LCTS, and (c) content-specific professional development. The overall findings indicated that secondary educators used LCTS in their classrooms by having students take ownership of their learning and using a variety of LCTS in their classes.

Keywords: professional development, secondary teachers, classroom teaching, learner-centered teaching, teacher development, secondary teaching.

1.1 Introduction

Student engagement is essential for academic achievement. Students who are engaged in their learning have a better attitude toward learning and achieve higher academic success (Erdogdu, 2019). However, fewer than half of students' report being engaged in their education, primarily those in secondary schools (Greenleaf & Valencia, 2017). One issue that may lead to a lack of engagement in secondary schools is that many secondary educators use teaching strategies that are considered teacher centered. In teacher-centered strategies, the teacher acts as the primary source of knowledge, conveying that knowledge to the students, primarily in the form of a lecture (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018). In addition, the teacher controls the learning environment, such as what and how the content will be learned, at what pace it will be learned, and how it will be assessed (Arseven, Sahin, & Kiliç, 2016). Teacher-centered instructional strategies may dampen student curiosity because of the high level of control teachers have in these classrooms, leading to lower levels of engagement and academic achievement (Carrabba & Farmer, 2018).

Learner-centered strategies are different from teacher-centered strategies in that students have more control of their learning, which often leads to higher engagement. Learner-centered education includes instructional approaches that engage the student in active construction of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015). During learner-centered instruction, students are active participants in their learning, which increases student motivation and engagement significantly and statistically more than traditional, or teacher-centered, instruction (Edwards, 2017; Scarrow, 2017). However, secondary teachers often struggle with implementing

learner-centered teaching strategies (LCTS) (Ndirangu, 2017; Sendurur, 2018). Although LCTS are taught in most teacher preparation programs, many preservice and novice teachers do not subscribe to student-centered pedagogy (Edwards, 2017; Sendurur, 2018). In addition, secondary educators often find that professional development is irrelevant to them. Bonghanoy, Sagpang, Alejan, and Rellon (2019) found that secondary educators did not deem professional development useful because it was not specific to their content area and, therefore, not applicable to their classroom.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem is the that secondary teachers across the nation do not consistently demonstrate the use of LCTS in their classroom practices. According to Scarrow (2017), teachers could identify both learner-centered and teacher-centered methods. However, they could not demonstrate the skills of learner-centered methods in their practices. Researchers have found that although teachers express the belief that they are utilizing LCTS in their classrooms, observations in these classrooms show teacher-centered strategies are predominantly used (Arseven et al., 2016). A disconnect occurs between what teachers believe they are doing (student-centered) and what they are doing in the classroom (teacher-centered).

LCTS, also known as student-centered learning and student-centered education, motivate students intrinsically to construct meaning for knowledge (Walker, 2015). Many teachers believe they have adopted student-centered practices; however, studies show that these perceptions are not accurate (Arseven et al., 2016). Learner-centered education includes instructional approaches that engage the student in active construction of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015). Teachers recognize the importance of students having an active role in the learning process but often consider students as passive learners and describe themselves as transmitters of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015). Students have a similar outlook as they perceive they lack control over their education, including instruction and evaluation methods (Lattimer, 2015).

Local school administrators and teacher mentors in a Midwestern town identified a gap in the practice of using LCTS. Secondary school administrators observed teachers defaulting to teacher-centered strategies by primarily using a lecture and note-taking approach (High School Assistant Principal, personal communication, January 16, 2019). Surveys indicated that students saw themselves listening to the instructor much more than being actively engaged in the learning process (High School Assistant Principal, personal communication, January 16, 2019). Secondary school classrooms tended to be traditional, with teacher-driven activities being the primary method of teaching (Academic Dean, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Curriculum Director, personal communication, January 17, 2019).

In traditional, or teacher-centered classrooms, students passively observe what the teacher is doing rather than being active participants (Lattimer, 2015). Direct instruction can result in "low creative thinking and teamwork skills among students", although these skills improve when paired with LCTS such as problem-based learning (Carrabba & Farmer, 2018; Winarno, Muthu, & Ling, 2018, p. 119). One source of student motivation is curiosity; however, traditional instructional strategies may dampen student curiosity because of the high level of control teachers have in these classrooms (Carrabba & Farmer, 2018). Students who are passive participants in the classroom are not motivated by what they are learning, leading to low creativity and curiosity.

Novice and preservice teachers experience a disconnect between their knowledge and use of LCTS. Studies indicated that preservice teachers need more exposure to LCTS in their teacher preparation programs to successfully implement these strategies in their own

classrooms (Scarrow, 2017; Sendurur, 2018). The most helpful resources for new teachers are support from school administrators, adequate resources, and mentors (Edwards, 2017). By understanding secondary teachers' use of these strategies in secondary classrooms, school administrators can create professional development opportunities that support the use of LCTS and university teaching programs can analyze the preservice teacher curriculum and determine any needed adjustments in the area of LCTS.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate how secondary educators are using LCTS in their instruction and what support they needed to use such strategies. There appears to be a disconnect between teachers believing they are utilizing LCTS and demonstrating the use of such strategies in their classroom practices (Arseven et al., 2016; Onurkan & Ozer, 2017; Scarrow, 2017). This study focused on secondary educators and their perception of how they are using LCTS in their instruction, in addition to the support they needed to use such strategies. The research paradigm for this study was that of constructivism. The central assumption of constructivism was that the participants bring their own reality to the study, based on their individual experiences, and the researcher's role was to understand the multiple perspectives of the participants. The phenomena studied was teachers' perceptions of LCTS and the support needed to use such strategies.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed in relation to the conceptual framework for this study, which was the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) model of skill acquisition.

1) How are secondary educators using LCTS in their classrooms?
2) What support do secondary educators perceive to need to use LCTS in their classroom?

2.1 Literature Review

Many benefits exist for students when teachers use LCTS. LCTS and student-centered education motivate students intrinsically to construct meaning for knowledge and encourage students to be self-motivated and independent learners (Lattimer, 2015; Walker, 2015). Although these teaching strategies are known to be effective for student learning and teachers can identify LCTS, teachers do not always demonstrate the skills of these strategies in their practice (Arseven et al., 2016; Scarrow, 2017). Teachers express the beliefs that they are utilizing LCTS, but observations of these classrooms do not support that belief (Arseven et al., 2016; Onurkan Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Scarrow, 2017).

Student engagement is essential for learning. LCTS are effective because students are engaged in the learning process, resulting in the active construction of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015). However, fewer than half of students' report being engaged in their education (Gallup Student Poll, 2017). LCTS increase student motivation and engagement significantly more than tradition, or teacher-centered, instruction (Edwards, 2017; Scarrow, 2017). Although teacher-centered strategies do not engage students at the same level as LCTS, they do have benefits.

Teacher-centered, or traditional, strategies can be beneficial to student learning when done well. In teacher-centered strategies, the teacher acts as the primary source of knowledge (Weimer, 2013). This puts the responsibility for learning directly on the teacher, instead of sharing that responsibility with the students. Direct instruction is a common teacher-centered strategy where the assumption is that all students can learn with well-designed instruction (Stockard, Wood, Coughlin, & Rasplica Khoury, 2018). The teacher is responsible for

ensuring that the instruction is designed so all students can learn. Direct instruction can be an effective and efficient form of instruction that allows students to learn new material in less time (Head, Flores, & Shippen, 2018). Teachers often feel pressured to cover a certain amount of material so direct instruction is a way of meeting that goal. Drawbacks to direct instruction are that students become passive observers in their education resulting in lower problem-solving skills, less creativity, and poorer teamwork skills (Lattimer, 2015; Weimer, 2013). This leads to the issue of students being less engaged in their learning. Direct instruction tends to be the primary teaching method among secondary educators (Sendurur, 2018). Direct instruction is effective but secondary educators need to ensure their students are engaged during direct instruction for effective learning to occur.

In secondary schools, educators teach a specific content area and rely heavily on teacher-centered strategies. Unfortunately, these strategies do not tend to engage students. Instruction that engages students is uncommon in United States secondary schools (Greenleaf & Valencia, 2017). In addition to lecturing, secondary educators use notetaking, quizzes, tests, demonstration, and discussion as their primary modes of teaching strategies (Sendurur, 2018). Some content areas are better suited for direct instruction than others. For instance, math and science instruction is well-suited for teacher-centered strategies (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018). However, some math and science teachers do implement student-centered strategies. Studies have found that when math and science teachers attempt to implement LCTS in their classrooms, they are often unsuccessful (Lattimer, 2015). In other content areas, LCTS are more successfully implemented. When LCTS were used in secondary physical education courses, students were more willing to engage in physical activity (Lattimer, 2015). In addition to physical education, LCTS make history relevant to students (Edwards, 2017). For teachers to be expected to use LCTS, they should have had training either in their teacher-preparation program or as professional development.

It is not only experienced teachers that have difficulty implementing LCTS. Although LCTS are taught in most teacher preparation programs, many preservice teachers do not subscribe to student-centered pedagogy (Sendurur, 2018). Studies indicated that preservice teachers need more exposure to LCTS in their teacher preparation programs in order to successfully implement these strategies in their own classroom (Scarrow, 2017; Sendurur, 2018). As graduates from teacher preparation become novice teachers, they continue to experience a disconnect between what they learned about LCTS and what they put into practice (Edwards, 2017). Both experienced teachers and preservice secondary educators struggle with implementing LCTS. The reasons why are unclear and need to be studied further.

The gap in practice this research study addressed was secondary educators understanding the importance of LCTS but using primarily teacher-centered strategies, such as lecture and note-taking. Current research reports the need for further investigation into the underlying reasons for discrepancies between the knowledge and use of secondary educators regarding LCTS (Arseven et al., 2016; Scarrow, 2017). Researchers reported the need for development of effective teacher training in the adoption of LCTS (Scarrow, 2017; Sendurur, 2018). Novice teachers reported experiencing a disconnect between what they learned in their teacher preparation programs and their experiences as a novice teacher (Edwards, 2017). This study investigated the perceptions of secondary educators about LCTS and the support they needed to carry out these strategies.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) model of skill acquisition, which described how learners acquire skills by formal instruction and practice. According to this model, the learner passes through 5 stages of professional

practices - novice, advanced beginner, competent performer, proficient performer, and expert (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). The Dreyfus and Dreyfus model informed this research study as a conceptual framework for "conceptualizing the development of teacher expertise, in a way that recognizes the role of practicing and context, as well as the development and shifts toward expertise from preservice teaching to experienced teaching" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 107).

Within the context of the skill acquisition model, the novice and advanced beginner levels are relevant to preservice teacher education. At this level, preservice teachers develop their knowledge of teaching practice, with a concentration of "remembering the rules for specific skills" (Miles & Knipe, 2018, p. 106). In the advanced beginner level, preservice teachers apply the knowledge learned in the novice level to real-life situations such as practicum experiences and student teaching. As graduates of a teacher preparation program, novice teachers are considered "competent performers" within the context of the skill acquisition model (Miles & Knipe, 2018). As a competent performer, novice teachers take personal responsibility for their decisions made in the classroom, from instructional strategies to classroom management. Teachers grow in their teaching expertise through professional development and personal experience, and it is in this stage of learning that teachers become proficient performers. At this stage, teachers use their experience to respond to situations and make decisions in their classrooms (Miles & Knipe, 2018). Finally, as experts within this model, teachers use their intuition to demonstrate a "flowing, effortless, performance" as they conduct the teaching and learning in their classrooms (Miles & Knipe, 2018).

3.1 Research Design

For this study, the researcher used the research tradition of a basic qualitative design that focused on secondary teachers' use of LCTS in their classrooms. The rationale for choosing a basic qualitative design was because the purpose of this research study was to investigate the phenomena of LCTS and secondary educators' perceptions about them. The sample population for this study was full-time secondary educators teaching in a secondary school in the Midwest. This study employed a purposeful sampling strategy. The justification for using purposeful sampling was that it allowed the researcher to deliberately select individuals who could answer the study's research questions because they were secondary educators teaching in a school in proximity to the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participant site selection was a local secondary school in the Midwest. The site selection was relevant to the researcher because of the proximity and availability of the faculty.

The criteria for selecting participants was that they were full-time educators at a Midwest secondary school with varying years of experience and having graduated from different undergraduate teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, the study included participants from various content areas. The researcher established that the participants met the criteria by confirming with the principal of the participating teachers. The sample size for this study was 12 secondary education teachers purposively selected from staff of approximately 20 teachers from a secondary school in a Midwestern city.

3.2 Participation

For this study, the researcher anticipated needing between 12 and 15 participants to reach data saturation, and 12 interviews accomplished data saturation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher requested in the email that if the faculty member was willing to participate in the study, they send a response expressing their interest in participating in the study. Twelve teachers responded within a few days of the researcher sending out the email, and all twelve of those respondents participated in the study. After the data collection was underway, another teacher expressed willingness to participate, but the researcher did not, ultimately,

need that teacher for the study. After receiving emails expressing interest, the researcher contacted the teachers via email, welcomed them, and explained the process of the study, and asked if they have any questions. Informed consent was obtained by emailing the consent form to those identified by the school's administration as meeting the participant criteria.

4.1 Data Collection

The locations of the interviews were all chosen by the participants, which ended up being in their classrooms. The researcher set up an interview time, in advance, with each participant and met them in their classrooms at the agreed-upon time. The frequency of data collection events (interviews) was one interview per study participant, although participants could contact the researcher with additional information by the end of the week interviews took place. A responsive interviewing style of qualitative interview was employed by the researcher, with the researcher devising additional questions during the interview to obtain depth and detail to the participants' responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The duration of the interviews was no longer than a half-hour, which the researcher explained to the participants at the onset of the interviews. Setting a time limit on the interview showed respect for the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher recorded the interviews using Rev, an Apple application, which produced a written transcript of the interview. The researcher had used this application before and found it easy to use, and it provided an accurate transcript of a conversation. It provided a convenient location for storing both the audio recording and transcript, in the event, the researcher desired repeated interactions with the recording and transcript. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stressed the importance of researchers discussing the use of such technology and possible issues that could arise with the research participants. Researchers should have a plan in case the data are compromised (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

5.1 Data Analysis

The results of this study yielded insights on how teachers are using LCTS and the support they needed to implement these strategies. From the broadest perspective, teachers believed students should have ownership of their learning, and their role, as a teacher, was to be a guide in the learning process. More specifically, teachers gave examples of the LCTS they used, such as PBL's, discussions, debates, student-choice activities, and using online resources.

In response to RQ2, participants identified content-specific professional development as a resource that would assist them in using LCTS. Content-specific training through AP, NMSI, NEED, and STEM was recognized as effective professional development because they gave specific strategies according to the teachers' content areas. Participants identified peer observations and mentoring as a resource they felt would help them effectively use LCTS in their classrooms.

Themes for RQ1

The first research question for this study was: How are secondary educators using LCTS in their classrooms? In order to answer this question, the researcher asked the participants to define LCTS and describe instructional practices that supported that definition. Furthermore, the researcher asked participants if they identified as being learner-centered or teacher-centered educators. Finally, the researcher asked participants what LCTS they used in their classroom and how prepared they felt to use LCTS. The themes that emerged for the first research question were: student ownership, teacher as facilitator, engaged learners, PBL, student choice, active learning, online resources, practicum, and student teaching, and authentic problems.

i. **Student ownership.** The participants shared similar beliefs about students having ownership of their learning by defining LCTS as those strategies in which students were the owners of their education. Participant N01 stated, "I would define them as having the students taking ownership of their learning. So, instead of me standing in front saying, 'This is what you should learn,' it's them trying to find it themselves or discover it themselves". Participant N04 added, "someone from outside the classroom would see students as the driver and teacher as more of a tour guide." Another participant described LCTS as instruction that was tailored to the students and expressed the reflective question, "…how much of the day was spent lecturing and how much of the class are students actively engaged with the material?" (N02). The strategies participants gave as examples that supported this definition included student-driven questions, ideas, activities, and assessments. Some participants described activities where students knew the objectives for the lesson and could choose how to accomplish the objectives.

ii. **Teacher as facilitator.** Another common component of the definition of LCTS was that the teacher was a facilitator of learning. Participant N06 stated, "I define them as the students are doing the most work, and the teacher is there to facilitate." Participant N07 added, "I define it as the students take the major role in their learning, and I'm just there as a guide to point them in the right direction."

iii. **Engaged learners.** The third predominant theme to the definition of LCTS was engaged learners. Participants used phrases such as "engaging with the material," "students doing the most work," and "monitoring their own progress" to describe what engaged learners are doing when using LCTS in the classroom. Participants gave examples of engaged learners as when students were involved in PBL's, student-choice activities, mock trials, discussions, debates, stations, and using online resources. The study site school was in its second year of professional development on the implementation of project-based learning, and PBL was the most used example of LCTS used in the classroom.

iv. **Student-centered instruction.** Nine out of twelve participants described themselves as student-centered teachers or that their goal was to be more student-centered. Some participants confidently answered that they were student-centered in their instruction, such as when Participant N08 confidently stated, "I am student-centered, for sure!" Others shared that they were working toward being more student-centered. Participant N01 stated, "I strive to be much more student-centered, but it's been a process." Participant N05 added, "I'm progressing more and more towards student-centered, but I started as teacher-centered." Although no one claimed to be teacher-centered in their instruction, some participants acknowledged they were more teacher-centered than learner-centered. Participant N07 admitted, "I try to be student-centered, but I'm still more teacher-centered in my instruction." The other 3 participants described themselves as both learner-centered and teacher-centered educators. Participant N03 shared, "A lot of my practice is learner-centered, but my instruction also tends to be teacher-centric." Participant N04 shared, "my goal is definitely to be student-centered. some days, it seems I'm more teacher-centered. So, I would say I'm a hybrid."

v. **Preparation.** When the researcher asked participants how prepared they felt to implement LCTS in their classrooms, half of them felt "prepared," 5 participants felt "somewhat prepared," and one did not feel prepared at all. Many of those who felt "somewhat prepared" said they were "more confident than in the past" (Participants N01 and N09), "More prepared than when I got out of college" (N05), and "more prepared than when I started teaching" (N03). The researcher asked participants what experiences prepared them for using LCTS, considering both teacher preparation and professional

development once they were fully licensed teachers. All but one participant reported having had exposure to LCTS during professional development. This aligns with the fact that the study site school was in its second year of PBL training. Four of the 12 participants identified content-specific training such as AP, NMSI, NEED, and STEM as exposure to LCTS in professional development. Half of the participants did not remember or recognize learning about LCTS during their teacher preparation programs. Of note, these participants graduated from their teacher preparation programs more than 10 years ago. The other half of the participants expressed that they learned about these strategies during practicum and student teaching experiences. Those who had experiences with LCTS in their teacher preparation program did so primarily in a practicum experience or during student teaching. Participant N02 shared, "When I went through student teaching, I got to do a project-based learning opportunity, and that taught me a lot about tailoring things to students, and how much time lecturing is too much time and things like that." Participant N06 added, "One of my [teacher preparation program] teachers was really good… had a good amount of background on student-centered [learning]." Participant N09 responded to what informed her definition of LCTS with, "… my different practicums". Five of the 12 participants did not recall learning about LCTS in their teacher preparation courses. These five participants all graduated from their teacher preparation programs more than 10 years ago.

Themes for RQ2

The second research question was: What support do secondary educators perceive to need to use LCTS in their classrooms? The researcher asked participants what obstacles they had encountered when implementing LCTS and what support they needed to use LCTS. The themes that emerged as a result of the participants' answers to this question were: content-specific professional development, time and resources, and collaboration with experts.

i. **Content-specific professional development.** The most common response from participants when asked what support was needed to use LCTS was content-specific professional development (8 out of 12 participants). Multiple participants discussed the benefits of participating in programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) workshops. Participant N01 had participated in several content-specific professional development sessions and stated, "I had NMSI and AP training… those two pieces of training changed so much about how I taught and looked at things… and they were specific to English… and that has been instrumental in helping me become a better teacher." Another participant expressed appreciation for the professional development training but acknowledged struggling on how to incorporate the strategies in a specific content area. Participant N05 stated that "knowing about them (NMSI, STEM)" is an obstacle to utilizing the professional development offered by these initiatives. Two participants added that they were members of Facebook groups whose members shared content-specific strategies and found their participation in these groups helpful. Participant N04 offered an insight into professional development, "Okay, we are given a broad strategy, but how can I incorporate that into my specific subject matter?"

ii. **Time and resources.** The theme of time and resources emerged when the researcher asked participants about the obstacle's teachers have when they implement LCTS and what support they need to implement the strategies. Participants wanted more time to teach (longer class periods or block scheduling) and more time to find resources for teaching LCTS. Participant N03 stated, "A modified block schedule would allow me to see students for longer periods a couple of days a week so I could front-load during the

shorter periods and have more activities during the longer periods." Two participants explained that they are often asked to substitute teach during their planning periods, which takes time away from exploring resources that would help them implement more LCTS.

iii. The participants who thought resources would help support them in their use of LCTS gave examples such as technology, money, and pre-made resources. A few participants relayed that not every teacher has access to computers, and those that did have computers expressed the need for professional development in the effective use of technology. Other participants defined resources in budgetary terms and referred to budget constraints as an obstacle to using LCTS.

iv. **Collaboration with experts.** When asked what support teachers need to implement LCTS, collaboration with experts emerged as a predominant theme. Collaboration with experts included mentorship and coaching by other teachers or experts. Participant N02 stated, "I think it'd be good to have a coach, somebody who is really well-practiced in employing these strategies." Participant N05 added, "I had a really good mentor so that mentorship helped." Collaboration with experts meant observing other teachers' classes where learner-centered teaching strategies are effectively implemented, as expressed by Participant N07, "I would like to observe my (content) area… to see a class using these strategies in my content area." In addition, participants expressed the desire to "collaborate with other teachers," "use the experts within our building," and "work with the talented teachers around me" (Participants N10, N11, and N04). Table 1 represents the themes and codes that correspond to each research question.

Table 1. Themes and Codes

RQ	Themes	Codes
RQ1	Student Ownership	Discover it themselves Ownership of their learning Directly involved Students take a major role Monitor their own progress Students control where they're going
	Teacher as a facilitator	Tour guide Facilitator Resource
	Engaged learners	Engaging with the material Curiosity Instruction centered around their involvement Active learning Students doing the most work
RQ1	Student-centered instruction	Focus on the students How students learn best Discussion Choice Stations Debates

		Mock trials PBL Collaboration Labs Active learning Online resources Hands-on
	Preparation	Practicum experience Student teaching Professional development Prepared Somewhat prepared Not prepared
RQ2	Content-specific PD	NMSI NEED AP STEM PBL
	Time and Resources	More teaching time Computers/technology Planning time Limited budget Pre-made resources
	Collaboration with experts	Coach Observe in the content area Mentorship Peer experts

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how secondary educators used LCTS in their instruction and what support they needed to use such strategies. This qualitative study involved interviewing 12 secondary educators about their perspectives of LCTS and examining their responses. The overall findings of this study indicated that secondary educators used LCTS in their classrooms by having students take ownership of their learning, with the teachers being facilitators and students monitoring their learning, students being engaged with the material, exhibiting curiosity, and learning by doing the most work. These findings were congruent with Weimer's (2013) methodology in learner-centered teaching. The common components of this study to Weimer's (2013) learner-centered teaching strategies included: (a) the role of the teacher as facilitator, (b) the balance of power shifting toward the students, and (c) the responsibility of learning being primarily on the students. Secondary educators should provide their students with opportunities to take ownership of their learning as teachers take on the role of facilitator. Several strategies constitute being learner-centered, so secondary educators need to become comfortable implementing these strategies in their classroom. Although direct instruction has its place in effectively helping students gain new knowledge, LCTS enables students to engage in deep learning that involves an application, synthesis, and evaluation of that knowledge.

The findings of this study indicated that teachers considered content-specific professional development an important means of support for using LCTS in their classrooms. This study brings to light the value of professional development opportunities for teachers that meet their specific needs. Similar to the importance of differentiating instruction for students, professional development should be differentiated for teachers, as well. Additionally, teachers identified a means of support as observing and collaborating with other teachers/mentors who use LCTS successfully in their classrooms. These findings are important for school administrators as they plan professional development opportunities for their teaching staff. Through the process of teacher evaluations, principals are aware of the teachers who use LCTS. Through this awareness, principals should facilitate partnerships that include time for teachers to observe each other using LCTS in their classrooms, in addition to collaboration time.

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