LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH TO TEACHING

Presented

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READ THIS STATEMENT

"Our convention pedagogy… centers on a teacher who does little more than deliver conclusion to students. It assumes that the teacher has all the knowledge and the students have little or none, that the teacher must give and the students must take, that the teacher sets all the standards and the students must measure up".

- Parker Palmer, The Courage to Teach

And this

"You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself". Galileo

And this

- "It is not what you say to people that count; it is what you have them do. If most teachers have not yet grasped this idea, it is not for the lack of evidence." Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner

Intended Learning Outcome

- This workshop will introduce the concept of a learner-centered classroom. Specifically, you will:
- □ Learn the difference between a learner-centered class and a traditional teacher-centered class – in relation to the areas of power, content, the role of the teacher, the responsibility for learning, and evaluation.
- □ Discuss the strength and problems of developing a learner-centered class.
- □ Brainstorm ways to incorporate these ideas into your teaching.

Who is a Good Learner?

- **A good learner is someone who……..**
- -actively participates.
- -always tries.
- -interacts with other students.
- -is a good listener, loves what he/she is learning.
- -is a listener, really listens- -retains what is being said.
- -asks questions, any questions.
- -begins with being present—physically, mentally.
- -is curious.
- -cares about what they are learning.
- Give More……

Definition of “Learner Centered”

- The term “learner centered” refers to environments that play careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting.
- Teachers who are learner centered recognize the importance of building on the conceptual and cultural knowledge that students bring with them to the classroom.
- Learner-centered teachers also respect the language practices of their students because they provide a basis for further learning.

Learner-Centered Education

- Learner-centered education places the student at the center of education, it begins with understanding the educational contexts form which a student comes. It continues with the instructor evaluating the student's progress towards learning objectives. By helping the student acquire the basic skills to learn, it ultimately provides a basis for learning throughout life. It therefore places the responsibility for facilitating the student's education. This approach strives to be individualistic, flexible, competency-based, varied in methodology and not always constrained by time or place.

Benefits of learner-centered

Evidence is abundant and accumulating that motivation, learning and achievement are enhanced where learner centered principles and practices are in place

- practices that address the personal domain, which is often ignored. The benefits of learner-centered practice extend to students, teachers, administrators, parents, and all other participants in the educational system.
- The changes in our society necessitate a change in the role and function of schools so that person is a student, teacher, administrator, or parent.
- Change itself requires a transformation in thinking (and thus a process of learning); this transformation can be facilitated by an understanding of basic principles about learning and learners.

Philosophy of Learner-Centered Model

- Learners are distinct and unique. Their distinctiveness and uniqueness must be attended to and taken into account if learners are to engage in and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Learners' unique differences include their emotional states of mind, learning rates, learning styles, stages of development, abilities, talents, feelings of efficacy, and other academic and nonacademic attributes and needs. These must be taken into account if all learners and self-development.
- Learning is a constructive process that occurs best when what is learned is relevant and meaningful to the learner and when learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding by connecting what is being learned with prior knowledge and experienced.

Philosophy of Learner-Centered Model Contd.

- Learning occurs best in a positive environment, one that contains positive interpersonal relationships and interactions, that contains comfort and order, and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected and validated.
- Learning is a fundamentally natural process; learners are naturally curious and basically interested in learning about and mastering their world. Although negative thoughts and feelings sometimes interfere with this natural inclination and must be dealt with, the learner does not require “fixing.”

Principles of Learner-Centered

- **Nature of the learning process**
- The learning of complex subject matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experienced.
- **Goals of the learning process**
- The successful learner, over time and with support and instructional guidance, can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge.
- **Construction of knowledge**
- The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways.
- **Strategic thinking**
- The successful learner can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals.
- **5. Thinking about thinking**
- Higher order strategies for selecting and monitoring mental operations facilitate creative and critical thinking.
- **6. Context of learning**
- Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices.

7. Motivational and emotional influences on learning

- What and how much is learned is influenced by the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking.

Principles Contd.

- **8. Intrinsic motivation to learn**
- The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiously all contribute to learning. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control.
- **9. Effects of motivation on effort**
- Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion.
- **10. Development influences on learning**
- As individuals develop, there are different opportunities and constraints for learning. Learning is most effective when differential development within and across physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains is taken into account.
- **11. Social influences on learning**
- Learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others.

Principles Contd.

- **Individual differences in learning**
- Learners have different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are a function of prior experience and heredity.
- **Learning and diversity.**
- Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds are taken into account.
- **Standards and assessment.**
- Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing the learner as well as learning progress – including diagnostic, process, and outcome assessment – are integral parts of the learning process.

The Instruction paradigm- Learning Theory

- Knowledge exists “out there”
- Knowledge comes in “chunks” and “bits” delivered by instructors
- Learning is cumulative and linear.
- Fits the storehouse of knowledge metaphor.
- Learning is teacher centered and controlled.
- “Live” teacher, “live” students required
- The classroom and learning are competitive and individualistic.
- Talent and ability are rare.

The Learning Paradigm- Learning Theory

- Knowledge exists in each person's mind and is shaped by individual experiences
- Knowledge is constructed, created, and "gotten"
- Learning is a nesting and interacting of frameworks
- Fits learning how to ride a bicycle metaphor
- Learning is student centered and controlled
- "Active" learner is required, but not "live" teacher
- Learning environments and learning are cooperative, collaborative, and supportive
- Talent and ability are abundant

Comparison of Conventional and Learner-Centered School Level

- **Characteristics**
- **Non-Learner-Centered (Conventional) Focus**
- **Relationships** are hierarchical, blaming, controlling.
- **Curriculum** is fragmented, nonexperiential, limited, and exclusive of multiple perspectives.
- **Instruction** focuses on a narrow range of learning styles, builds from perceptions of students deficits, and is authoritarian.
- **Grouping** is tracked by perceptions of ability; promotes individual competition and a sense of alienation.
- **Evaluation** focuses on a limited range of intelligences, utilizes only standardized tests, and assumes only one correct answer.

Learner-Centered focus

- **Relationships** are carrying and promote positive expectations and participation.
- **Curriculum** is thematic, experiential, challenging, comprehensive, and inclusive of multiple perspectives.
- **Instruction** focuses on broad range of learning styles; builds from perceptions of student strengths, interests, and experiences; and is participatory and facilitative.
- **Grouping** is not tracked by perceptions of ability; promotes cooperation, shared responsibility, and a sense of belonging.
- **Evaluation** focuses on multiple intelligences, utilizes authentic assessments, and fosters self-reflection.

Questions that emerge when the balance of power changes.

- How much power is enough?
- How much freedom can they handle?
- When do teachers compromise professional responsibilities?

The Function of Content

- **Questions that emerge when the function of content changes.**
- How much content is enough?
- How do we change attitudes about the role of content?
- What about students at different skill levels?
- How do I adapt generic learning activities to fit the content I teach?

The Role of the Teacher

- **Questions that emerge when the teaching role changes.**
- Do you intervene, and if so, when?
- What do you do when you intervene?

The Responsibility for Learning

- **Climates that build student autonomy and responsibility**
- Principle 1: It's All About Who Is Responsible for What in the Teaching-Learning Process
- Principle 2: It's About Logical Consequences, Not Discipline.
- Principle 3: It Is About Consistency in Word and Deed.

Evaluation Purpose and Processes

- **Elements of Evaluation That Promote Learning**
- Focus on learning processes
- Reduce the stress and anxiety of evaluation experiences
- Do not use evaluation to accomplish hidden agendas
- Incorporate more formative feedback mechanisms
- **Questions that arise when the purpose and processes of evaluation change.**
- Should students have any involvement in the actual grading process?
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Ways to Make Your Classroom More Learner-Centered

- **The KEY questions to ask yourself:**
- What is it my students need to know and to be able to do after teaching?
- What skills and knowledge will stand the test of time, given the dynamic nature of knowledge and information?

Class Structure

- □□ Use of class content to cover learning skills and to promote a self-awareness of learning.
- □□ Use of short activities routinely.
- □□ Utilize learning center staff.
- □□ Use supplementary materials—note taking, learning style inventions, etc.
- □□ Teach students how to read the texts.
- □□ Let students learn how to summarize—don't do it for them—by writing short summaries or possible test questions at the end of class.
- □□Have students provide the illustrations/examples, not the teacher.

Assignments

- □□ Have students discuss the details of an assignment.
- □□ Have students self assess own work before submitting it.
- □□ Allow time for students to discuss how their projects are going, when they are in the midst of doing them.
- □□ Allow time for students to debrief their experiences—exams, projects, and papers—and write their own suggestions for next time.

Assessments

- □□ Have students determine the content of the review sessions—topics and specific questions.
- □□ Have students develop a plan for studying for the upcoming exam—with a time-line and list of activities.
- □□ Leave one question blank on the exam. Have students write a question that was anticipated but not asked and answer it.
- □□ Have students process “what can I learn from my exam result?”—What questions from lecture, book, etc.; which ones did they miss; why? Do a free write for themselves about what they should remember when preparing for the next exam. Begin the review session for the next test by having them read what they’ve written.
- □□ Ask students to meet individually with you if they do poorly on the exam. Use the meeting to have students do self analysis about what worked and didn’t work.

Feedback

- Solicit feedback early and often. Don't wait until the end of the term.
- Have students complete a "start", "stop", "and continue" feedback sheet on the class.
- Use questions like "talk to me about how much and how well you learned from this activity?" not "did you like this activity?"
- Ask students: "how did this activity affect your learning?" "What about it needs to change so that if we do it again, you will learn more?"

Implementing the learner-Centred Approach

- Talk about why you are teaching this way. Focus on how the teacher and students want the same thing –a course worth the money they've paid for it.
- Use questions like "talk to me about how much and how well you learned from this activity?" not "did you like this activity?"
- Be encouraging—this approach will cause students (and teachers) to be frustrated.
- Allow time for students to discuss how their projects are going, while they are in the midst of doing them.
- Allow time for students to debrief their experiences –exams, projects, and papers—and write their own suggestions for next time.
- Be willing to make changes if/when things don't go well.
- Ask, "what do you remember from this course?"
- Sequence educational activities in an order that facilitates growth.
- Use matrices and concept mapping. You'll need to take the time to teach students how to do both of these.

Implementing

- Use matrices to help students break large tasks into steps, sequence the steps (with approximate time needed to complete the step), and assign to individuals with specifics about what is to be done (if it's a small project).
- Be aware—write a one paper describing how you teach—try to make be sure that is neutral and self-descriptive. You will find that you cant separate out the emotional aspect of teaching.
- Devise your own feedback mechanisms.
- Solicit feedback early and often. Don't wait until the end of the term.
- Ask students: "how did this activity affect your learning?" "What about it needs to change so that if we do it again, you will learn more?"
- Pick your instructional peer collaborators carefully.