Creating and Developing Learner-Centered Classrooms

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Learning Outcomes

• As a result of attending this session, participants will
  – Be able to describe the differences between an instruction centered and a learning centered institution.
  – Be able to describe the differences between a teacher centered classroom and learner centered classroom.
  – Formulate new learner centered ideas for classroom strategies
“But despite Walker it was a successful seminar, one of the best classes Stoner had ever taught. Almost from the first, the implications of the subject caught the students, and they all had that sense of discovery that comes when one feels that the subject at hand lies at the center of a much larger subject, and when one feels intensely that a pursuit of the subject is likely to lead – where, one does not know. The seminar organized itself, and the students so involved themselves that Stoner himself became simply one of them, searching as diligently as they.”

---Stoner, by John Williams, p. 134
2006, NYRB Classics
The class Dr. Stoner taught was a graduate level seminar, *Latin Tradition and Renaissance Poetry*.

Could this quote just as easily describe teaching in classes you teach or other learning environments?

If yes, in what ways?
If no, why not?
Foundations
learning centered classrooms

• Arthur Chickering & Zelda Gamsen
  – "Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, March 1987, AAHE Bulletin"

• Robert Barr and John Tagg
  – "Change Magazine article, November-December, 1995"

• Maryellen Weimer
  – "Learning Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice, Jossey-Bass, 2002"

• Phyllis Blumberg
  – "Developing Learner-Centered Teaching: A Practical Guide for Faculty, Jossey-Bass, 2009"
Good Practices in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

- Student-faculty contact
- Active learning
- Prompt feedback
- Time on task
- High expectations
- Respect for diverse learning styles
- Cooperation among students
Comparing Educational Paradigms

from the 1995 Change Magazine article
by Robert Barr and John Tagg
Instruction = Learning
Mission & Purpose

**Instruction**
- Provide/deliver instruction
- Transfer knowledge from faculty to students
- Offer courses and programs

**Learning**
- Produce learning
- Elicit student discovery and construction of knowledge
- Create powerful learning environments
Criteria for [Institutional] Success

**Instruction**
- Quality of entering students
- Quality and quantity of resources
- Quality of faculty, instruction

**Learning**
- Quality of exiting students
- Quantity and quality of outcomes
- Quality of the students, learning
Educational Structures

**Instruction**

One teacher, one classroom

End of course assessment

Degree = accumulated credit hours

**Learning**

Whatever learning experience works

Pre/during/post assessments

Degree = demonstrated knowledge and skills
Learning Theory

**Instruction**

Knowledge exists “out there”

Learning is teacher centered and controlled

The classroom and learning are competitive and individualistic

**Learning**

Knowledge exists in each person’s mind and is shaped by individual experience

Learning is student centered

Learning environments and learning are cooperative, collaborative, and supportive
Nature of Roles

**Instruction**

Faculty are primarily lecturers

Faculty and students act independently and in isolation

Any expert can teach

**Learning**

Faculty are primarily designers

Faculty and students work in teams with each other and other staff

Empowering learning is challenging and complex
Assess your current environment

On a scale of 1 to 12, how would you describe your institutional context?

1 = my institution is a teaching paradigm institution
10 = my institution is a learning paradigm institution
Weimer’s Key Changes toward learner-centered teaching

- The function of content
- The role of the teacher
- The responsibility for learning
- The purposes and processes of assessment
- The balance of power
The Function of Content

includes building a knowledge base, how the instructor and student use the content

teacher centered approach

Instructor allows student to memorize content

learner centered approach

Instructor encourages student to transform and reflect on most of the content to make their own meaning
The Role of the Instructor

an essential role of the instructor is to assist student to learn

**teacher centered approach**

Instructor does not have specific learning goals and/or uses teaching and learning methods that conflict with learning goals

**learner centered approach**

Instructor intentionally uses various teaching and learning methods that are appropriate for student learning goals
The Responsibility for Learning

students should assume greater responsibility for their own learning

teacher centered approach
Instructor assumes all responsibility for student learning (provides content to memorize, does not require student to create their own meaning of content, tells student exactly what will be on exams)

learner centered approach
Instructor provides increasing opportunities for students to assume responsibility for their own learning, leading to achievement of stated learning objectives.
The Purposes and Processes of Assessment

there are additional purposes and processes of assessment beyond assigning grades

**teacher centered approach**

Instructor uses only summative assessment in making decisions on grades. Provides no constructive feedback.

**learner centered approach**

Consistently throughout the learning process, the instructor integrates formative assessment and constructive feedback.
The Balance of Power

shifts so that the instructor shares some decisions about the course with the students

teacher centered approach
Instructor mandates all policies and deadlines, or instructor does not adhere to policies

learner centered approach
Instructor is flexible on most course policies, assessment methods, learning methods, and deadlines. Instructor always adheres to what instructor has agreed to with the students.
Application Exercise
Small group discussion
Weimer’s Key Changes

application possibilities various learning settings

• The function of content
• The role of the teacher
• The responsibility for learning
• Evaluation purpose and process
• The balance of power
What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1
• 2
• 3
David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete experience [1]

Testing in new situations [4]

Observation and reflection [2]

Forming abstract concepts [3]
By learning you will teach; by teaching you will learn.

- Latin Proverb
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THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1

• 2

• 3
THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER
What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1
• 2
• 3
THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1

• 2

• 3
THE PURPOSES AND PROCESSES OF ASSESSMENT

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1

• 2

• 3
THE BALANCE OF POWER

What are three ways you can apply this principle in teaching?

• 1

• 2

• 3