

There will always be a university. Students need and want a learning community where they interact with professors and peers and learn from one another. The American professorate at traditional colleges and universities is the best prepared in the world. For-profit and corporate teaching institutions will be hard pressed to match our faculty expertise. Our challenge to improve is an exciting opportunity.

Further, most colleges and universities have solid and well-thought-out curricula. We do not need to scrap the curricula, but rather to show how the traditional arts, sciences, humanities and social sciences, and the array of professional courses address and enhance our students' personal and professional lives. And yes, technology can and must be infused into all the curriculum, traditional and non-traditional.

Let us take further comfort in the fact that teaching is a skill that can be improved. Even the lecture method—arguably the least effective teaching medium—can be

improved. Let us realize, however, that there is so much more. While there is no one methodology that suits every instructor, nor every subject, nor every occasion, there is a veritable arsenal available to the resourceful professor.

Let us also recognize that learning is a skill that can be improved. It is imperative that, as part of our teaching, we help our students improve that skill. We do so by first knowing and honoring the many ways people learn (some very different from our own), by teaching students to be more responsible for their own learning, and by creating the awareness that learning is a never-ending, life-long process.

Reaching Through Teaching has never claimed to provide either quick and easy teaching methodologies or pat teaching philosophies. It is, rather a forum for conscientious, intellectually curious, entrepreneurial professors to share their successes (and even failures) and to learn from one another. If this interests you, read on.

Student-Driven Knowledge & Experience Creation: A Theatrical Lesson for Higher Education in the Next Millennium

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"Learning: The Old Paradigm: ... Teachers, by virtue of their own success in the learning system, have come to know what should be known, and so, define the learning tasks. Education is production. Teachers give assignments to students. Error by students is discouraged, detected and corrected; the less error by the student, the more learning taken place, and in the limiting case, no error means that maximum learning has occurred."

"Learning: The New Paradigm...Education is mutual exploration. Teachers write and talk as impetus, creating an environment in which learning can take place. Error is encouraged as the mechanism by which knowledge is generated; in the limiting case, large error may take the learner far from the current equilibrium to higher order of understanding." — Col. Chuck Yoos, USAF (1995)

An introspective analysis of the direction of higher education is not new. Indeed, there has been extensive debate in the academic arena regarding how best to stimulate, guide, and perpetuate the learning process. While the narrative of higher education has substantially evolved over the past one-hundred or so years, the most recent third of this period (the last 30 years) has experienced more revolutionary attempts to modify curriculum and pedagogical approaches. As we approach the milestone of the millennium, it therefore seems appropriate to re-examine alternative perspectives of dynamics of learning.

It may be argued that many involved in systems of higher education adhere to a particular view of students as

"works-in-progress" who are eventually molded into what the University deems finished, quality-controlled, and ultimately salable products. Since, from this perspective, students are little more than raw material or assemblages, decisions regarding curriculum content or requisite learning must be developed by the factory managers or administrators. In a system and vision of this sort, there is a little room for the eventual "products" to participate in the design of the production process. Consider a statement by Herbert Hoover in 1957 as a means to sum up this perspective: "you simply can not expect kids of those ages to determine the sort of education they need unless they have some guidance." (Time 1957). Guidance regarding curriculum is certainly important, and is of course a reasonable expectation of the university mandate/objective as a whole. However, it may be that this manufactory perspective, compounded by the mass-production concept dictates of scale economies (larger and larger masses of students with little opportunity for individual attention or assessment) has led to what might be understood as the McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993) of education. This mold-making and mold-filling approach to curriculum development and delivery has no doubt potentially impeded the growth of creativity and innovation in the learning process.

In order to then augment and rejuvenate this sterilized content and delivery strategy, traditional teaching methods have been expanded to include cases, videos, simulations, or other representations of the "real world". While these

tools do enrich, illustrate, and authenticate the applicability and viability of the provided theories, they perpetuate an institutional "hyper-reality"—simulations derived from simulations which are assumed to represent and provide grounding in reality—(Baudrillard, 1983). Like the droves of tourists who visit the IMAX theater next to the Grand Canyon to see it on film in order "to really experience it" (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), students' passively consume hyper-real representation of discipline-centered experiences as they are delivered in the classroom. It is important to note that in this perpetuation of conventional pedagogy, the danger of educational entropy is nearly inescapable. That is, the inheritance of teaching methodologies from one generation to the next imparts not only the potential for a loss of meaning, but the loss of grounding in reality also may demotivate the teacher as well as the student to create and innovate.

More recent discussions have contemplated the education process from the marketing perspective (i.e., the student as the customer—see Bagley and Foxman, 1996). The positive side to this approach is that the students' needs are met by adapting (some might argue "compromising") curriculum to meet their career or life aspirations. Although this Burger King paradigm of customer choice ("have it your way") has its merits and has provoked a reconceptualization of teaching, it still emphasizes the extreme separation of knowledge production (the domain of the teacher/researcher) from that of knowledge consumption (the domain of the student). Hence, students remain as passive recipients of this "knowledge" rather than active participants in its creation and discovery.

From a third, and again differing perspective, the optimal learning process takes place under conditions in which the teacher both perceives and engages students as providers as well as receivers of knowledge. Under this perspective, active learning can be seen as essentially a problem solving activity, whereby the skills of creativity, innovation, and independent thought can and should be seen as yielding advantage. The mastering of these skills requires the student to retain knowledge for a long, if not infinite, period of time (and at the very least, well beyond the expected life of material memorized for an exam or over the course of a semester).

Addressing the role of the student as an active participant in the creation of knowledge is an essential element of this alternative perspective. As such, teachers cease to be merely the suppliers of a hyper-reality knowledge product designed around perceived and interpreted student needs. Rather, teachers provide the necessary resources (both tangible and intangible) and situations/environment to enable students to construct their own learning "products" (knowledge, experiences, understanding).

The goal of this approach is to strike a balance between student self-determination and university parenting by engaging all parties in the process of knowledge production. Thus, the teacher plays a tri-partite role as a facilitator, a resource-finder, and as a sounding-board or reality-

check. Students, on the other hand, become active participants in the knowledge-creation process. Additionally, assuming that the teacher does not "know it all," he/she can also be a benefactor of discovery in this process, as a result of students' production of knowledge. In this process, each student sets out to acquire knowledge guided by his/her benchmark interpretation of reality, as well as via direction from the teacher/facilitator. By pursuing different avenues of discovery and living up to the responsibility to find and acquire the information and knowledge that will benefit the entire class, the end result is not only one of both production and consumption of a unique educational product/experience, but also the broadening of the pool of information available to every student. In addition, the sum total of information presented to each student is interpreted (consumed) in a manner that is a direct result of his/her experiences and interests. The goal is thus an experience that affords each student the opportunity to take part in a unique and self-directed educational process.

The idea of a class in which each student is allowed to undergo a unique educational transformation can be compared to the play, *Tamara*. Most plays, like many classes, provide a "mass-market" experience in which all members of the audience sit passively and receive a linearly-distributed pattern of enlightenment. As Boje notes (See Boje, 1995 and Boje & Dennehy, 1993), *Tamara*—one of the longest-running plays in Los Angeles—provides the ultimate metaphor for active production/consumption and experience because it allows members of the audience to wander through rooms of a mansion at their own discretion and in the order of their own choosing. In each of these rooms, the audience member encounters actors engaged in various situations, dramatizing various sub-plots of the play. Actors come and go from each room in order to interact with one another in brief scenes. Although there are a number of actors in each room simultaneously, and while the interactions between these actors follow an overall script, the simultaneity of interactions and the fact that audience members choose their own sequence of rooms means that every person produces and consumes a unique entertainment experience.

Tamara, like participation in the real world, unfolds in a variety of realities, experiences, and understandings simultaneously. A single, linear interpretation of these realities, no matter how comprehensive or insightful, cannot adequately explain or relate the multiplicity of this process. The vision of active education or learning, then, is to break up the meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984) or one-dimensional interpretation of reality provided by traditional educational approaches, and replace this with local interpretations of the real world. *Tamara* is also relevant to education in that it engages the audience-member/student as an active participant in the delivery of the experience, rather than encouraging passive or voyeuristic learning.

In a time of global competitiveness when innovation is a key to success, the facilitators of higher learning must heed the call to graduate creative and motivated individu-

als. Innovative and reality based pedagogical approaches that are driven by the opportunity for students to create knowledge and experiences in a synergistic learning envi-

ronment just may be the key to providing a progressive and useful education in the next millennium.

Using Curriculum to Connect Psychology Students and Careers

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Faculty Perspective

I wish I had a dollar for each time a student said to me, "I really love psychology, but I know I can't do anything with a psych degree." If I had another dollar for all the jokes I've heard about what you can or can't do with a psychology degree, I'd be very rich by now. Unfortunately, psychology, like many Liberal Arts degree programs, is often seen as an interesting field of study but not a very "useful" degree in today's society. Certainly the value of liberal arts education has been touted by many people and goes well beyond the scope of this article (e.g., Hersh, 1997; Ridley & Gallaer, 1993). My purpose here is not to address this general issue, but to share with you the story of how our department responded to this paradox for our students. Hopefully our success story will help those of you in disciplines facing similar issues respond to your students' questions.

When our department developed and implemented an assessment plan several years ago, we elected to use senior exit surveys and alumni surveys as part of our methodology. It didn't take us long to realize that our graduating seniors and alumni felt there were many things we were doing very well. That was the good news! For example, our graduates believed our program prepared them quite well for graduate study (Bickes, Lawrence & Noble, 1997). These students were clearly seeing the connection between the skills and knowledge acquired in their undergraduate degree and success in their graduate work. However, only 14% of our students were going on to graduate school. The rest (actually most) of our graduates were going directly to work with their undergraduate degree. This finding was very consistent with natural trends in the discipline (McGovern & Carr, 1989). Our bachelor-level students were in a variety of different jobs and careers, ranging from social service agencies to business. For this group, the relevance of their courses for job preparation was not so apparent (Bickes et al., 1997). The issue for our department then was to find ways to help our students see the value of their psychology degree for career options that did not require graduate study. Our ultimate goal was to address this need without reducing the quality of the program for graduate school preparation. Although we have implemented a number of ways to accomplish this (see our web page at www.kennesaw.edu/psychology/), one of

the more innovative approaches we adopted was to require a one-credit-hour course called Careers in Psychology. We modeled our course after a handful of similar courses offered across the country (e.g., Georgia Southern University, Northern Kentucky University) that have demonstrated success. For example, a recent assessment of the course at Georgia Southern found a significant increase in clarity of career goals for their majors (Kennedy & Lloyd, 1998). I am teaching the first section of our new course this semester and have found the experience very rewarding. The course focuses on career planning and development issues for our majors. Using a variety of instructional methodologies we expose students to a wealth of information designed to assist them in clarifying, selecting, and pursuing a career in psychology or a related field. Students this semester are engaged in several active learning projects that are designed to encourage them to consider seriously the relationship of their major program of study and their career goals.

Student Perspective

When I first decided to become a psychology student, I thought majoring in psychology invariably meant two things: going to graduate school and becoming a psychotherapist. Despite my sincere passion for and fascination with psychology, I initially entered the major rather reluctantly and faithlessly. I responded to people's sometimes patronizing inquiries about my decision to major in psychology by saying that I stumbled into it somewhat by accident and default.

Of course, to echo an old adage, how much I wish I had known then what I know now. After enrolling in Careers in Psychology, I now realize with much confidence and conviction the vast array of opportunities available to those with either an undergraduate or graduate degree in Psychology.

The resources and information offered to students taking the course dismantle the myths of uselessness and limitation so often associated with a psychology degree. Internet exercises, alumni interviews, text readings, guest speakers, in particular alumni and representatives from the CAPS and Career Services Center, have provided tangible and practical insight regarding not simply the multi-faceted utility of a psychology degree but even more so, the degree's many advantages.