

# ESSENTIALS OF LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING (LCT)

Suzanne Kurtz, PhD

## Learner-centered teaching:

- 1** engages learners directly in the hard work of learning, meeting them non-judgmentally wherever they are; shifts the focus from what teachers are doing to what learners are doing.
- 2** empowers learners by giving them some control, for example, by involving students in development of learning objectives associated with learning experiences and using Agenda-Led Outcome-Based Analysis (ALOPA) to drive learning and feedback. Learners and teachers share responsibility for learning – neither learners nor teachers drive the curriculum without active participation from the other.
- 3** alters the role of teachers – they provide structure and conceptual scaffolding, set up problem-solving activities, challenge thinking, offer suggestions/questions if learners encounter difficulties, support/guide/facilitate learning rather than directing it. The balance of power shifts.
- 4** encourages collaboration; recognizes interaction (with peers and teachers) and reflection (about what and how people are learning) as fundamental learning processes. Both teachers and learners must develop communication skills that differ from skills they use during lectures, for example, skills associated with peer interaction, peer assessment, and feedback on learners' performance (ALOPA).
- 5** perceives mistakes, fears, and conflict as positive tensions that are inevitable and healthy parts of the participatory learning process; enhances confidence to risk engagement, respect and work with different points of view.
- 6** requires flexibility and ongoing planning to align learning activities and assessment strategies with intended and emergent learning outcomes/goals; supports higher level learning and develops problem solving and critical thinking skills.

### References:

1. Weimer M (2013) *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, 2e. John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ. (this reference pertains to parts of each bullet point)
2. Kurtz SM, Carunungan MP, Chuchat A, Foreman KJ, Spronk BJ (1997) Approaches to participatory education for development: Perspectives from the Canada-Asia Partnership education course. In Brinkerhoff M (Ed), *Dialogue on Partnership: Proceedings from the International Participatory Development Symposium*. Division of International Development, University of Calgary, Alberta. 44-55. And reference 4.
3. Armbruster P, Patel M, Johnson E, Weiss M (2009) Active learning and student-centered pedagogy improve student attitudes and performance in introductory biology. *CBE-Life Science Education*, 9 (3), 203-2013.
4. Kurtz S, Silverman J, and Draper J. (2005) Analyzing interviews and giving feedback in experiential teaching sessions (Chapter 5), Running a session: facilitating communication skills teaching in different learning contexts (Chapter 6), Running a session: facilitation skills to maximize participation and learning (Chapter 7) in *Teaching and Learning Communication Skills in Medicine*, 2e. Radcliffe Medical Press, 109-183.
5. References 1, 2, and 4
6. Biggs J (1996) Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *Higher Education*, 32, 347-364.

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