Student-focused strategies for the modern classroom

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ABSTRACT

As the method we use to measure the effectiveness of educational institutions changes to focus more on learning outcomes rather than learning processes, teaching styles may need to adapt to facilitate this approach to evaluation. This paper proposes several strategies to build a more student-focused classroom including the "servant-professor" model, techniques to measure student-learning outcomes, and active learning. The application of these strategies in the classroom may be one way to place more focus on the needs of the student, thereby generating stronger learning outcomes. The learning systems and technology provided by textbook publishers and instructional designers to facilitate the development of a student-focused classroom are also discussed.

Keywords: Servant-professor, student-focused, instructional-strategies

INTRODUCTION

Like many other industries, higher education has been forced to adapt to a new reality. Institutions of higher education, particularly public institutions, are increasingly being held accountable not just for the inputs to the education process, but for ensuring that students have attained the required educational outcomes (Bhada, 2002, Mitchell, 2007). The Federal Department of Education, major regional accrediting groups, and discipline-specific specialty accreditors are increasingly requiring that colleges and universities document not only learning processes, but that they also document and measure student learning outcomes. Institutions of higher education must show that they have added value in the student's educational career by documenting a change in skill level from the beginning to the end of the student's tenure at the university (Klein, 2006). The traditional model of academia which was characterized by the lecture-testing loop is being replaced by a more student-focused classroom that focuses on learning.

As a result Bhada (2002) asserts that there has been a paradigm shift in how schools view the importance of teaching, specifically in business schools. However, even armed with the knowledge that teaching methods are under increased scrutiny, many professors continue to deliver the traditional lecture (perhaps with a few power point slides to supplement). As educators we must recognize the need to update our teaching methods to reflect the growing emphasis on the student-focused classroom. This paper proposes several student-focused strategies to facilitate the shift to the new measurement paradigm including an exploration of servant leadership and its application in the "servant-professor model" in the classroom, a discussion of strategies to facilitate the measurement of student-learning outcomes, and the application of active learning in the classroom. We will also review the steps many book publishers and the academic "community" at large have taken in this process and the reactions of students and faculty to a more student-centered classroom environment.

AN OVERVIEW OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Before applying the principles of servant leadership in the college classroom, an overview of the basic philosophy and tenets behind the servant leadership model is necessary. A comprehensive review of servant leadership is provided in Hannay (2009) and we will summarize this discussion in this section.

The concept of servant leadership was introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1977. According to Greenleaf (1977) servant-leaders are driven to serve first, rather than to lead first, always striving to meet the highest priority needs of others, in contrast to a traditional leader who is primarily motivated by the desire to lead others to achieve the objectives of the organization. De Pree (1989) defines the nature of servant leadership as serving not leading. By serving others, leaders lead other people to the point of self-actualization.

While Greenleaf was the first to bring the concept of servant leadership to the management literature, its origins can be found in the biblical stories of Jesus Christ. Washing the feet of his disciples is one well-known story that demonstrates Christ's commitment to serve his followers. Spears (1996) explains that Greenleaf was also influenced by, *Journey to the East*, a short novel written by Herman Hesse.

> "…Hesse's book is the story of a mythical journey by a group of people on a spiritual quest. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as their servant,

> and who sustains them with his caring spirit. All goes well with the journey until one day Leo disappears. The group quickly falls apart, and the journey is abandoned. They discover that they cannot make it without the servant, Leo. After many years of searching, the narrator of the story stumbles on Leo and is taken into the religious order that had sponsored the original journey. There, he discovers that Leo, whom he had first known as a servant, was in fact the head of the order, its guiding spirit, and a great and noble leader" (Spears, 1996, p. 33).

Spears reports that Greenleaf concluded from this story that the greatest leader will first emerge as servant to others. Greenleaf concluded that only when one is motivated by a deep desire to help others will true leadership appear.

Greenleaf (1977) asserted that by putting the needs and interests of others above their own servant-leaders make a clear choice to serve their followers. However, this does not indicate that all servant leaders have a poor self-concept or low self-esteem. Moral conviction, emotional stability and a strong self-image are factors that drive leaders to make this choice (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The primary desire of the servant-leader is to ensure that he or she is serving and fulfilling the highest-priority needs of his or her followers.

Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

Russell and Stone (2002, p. 146) described 20 common characteristics that researchers have consistently identified as being associated with servant-leaders. The first list comprises what they termed functional attributes due to their repetitive prominence in the literature. These functional attributes are the characteristics and distinctive features belonging to servant-leaders and can be observed through specific leader behaviors in the workplace:

1. Vision
2. Honesty
3. Integrity
4. Trust
5. Service
6. Modeling
7. Pioneering
8. Appreciation of others
9. Empowerment

The remaining characteristics are identified as accompanying attributes of servant leadership:

1. Communication
2. Credibility
3. Competence
4. Stewardship
5. Visibility
6. Influence
7. Persuasion
8. Listening
9. Encouragement
10. Teaching
11. Delegation

Russell and Stone assert that these accompanying attributes are not secondary in importance; instead they are complementary and may even be prerequisites to effective servant leadership.

Servant-leaders respect the capabilities of their followers and enable them to exercise their abilities, share power, and do their best (Oster, 1991; Russsell, 2001; Winston, 1999). The servant-leader is primed to share both authority and responsibility through empowerment, thereby involving followers in planning and decision making (Bass, 1990). Manz (1998, p. 99) stated that, "Wise leaders lead others to lead themselves", which ultimately leads to a decentralized organizational structure that focuses on information and power sharing. Managers often struggle with the processes of empowerment and delegation (Argyris, 1998; Sanders, 1994) for fear of losing control of their followers, but these are essential behaviors of the servant-

leader. Covey (2006, p. 5) quotes Greenleaf as saying: "The only authority deserving our allegiance is that which is freely granted by the led to the leader in proportion to the servant stature of the leader". Ultimately the leader gains power by demonstrating empowerment and service to others. This is in contrast to the conventional outlook that sharing power will instead reduce the leader's ability to influence followers.

Transformational versus Servant Leadership

Parallels have been drawn between transformational leadership and servant leadership. Stone, Russell and Patterson (2004, p. 354) identify numerous analogous characteristics between the two theories including: influence, vision, trust, respect/credibility, risk-sharing/delegation, integrity, and modeling. . However, there is one characteristic that establishes a clear contrast between the two theories. Stone et al. state that, "While transformational leaders and servant-leaders both show concern for their followers, the overriding focus of the servant-leader is upon service to followers. The transformational leader has a greater concern for getting followers to engage in and support organizational objectives" (p. 354). Therefore we can conclude that while the transformational leader is focused on the organization and building commitment to organizational objectives through empowering followers, the servant-leader is focused on the followers themselves and the act of serving and empowering them is one key step in employee development.

However, that should not be interpreted to indicate that servant-leaders will dismiss standards of performance. Ferch (2004, p. 235) quotes Greenleaf as stating, "The servant as leader always empathizes, always accepts the person, but sometimes refuses to accept some of the person's effort or performance as good enough". Greenleaf reinforces that servant-leaders are not advocates of marginal or unsatisfactory performance as part of the self-actualization process. While servant-leaders will continue to support and accept the individual, they will not accept the effort or performance if it does not meet the standards set by the organization. Servant-leaders believe that by building an environment of trust they will be better equipped to help followers enhance performance (Kolp & Rea, 2006).

Organizations are only sustainable when they serve human needs (Covey, 2006). Servant-leaders are, by definition, people-oriented and remain primarily focused on determining how to satisfy the needs of their followers. Pollard concludes (1997, pp. 49-50) that a real leader is not the "…person with the most distinguished title, the highest pay, or the longest tenure…but the role model, the risk taker, the servant; not the person who promotes himself or herself, but the promoter of others". Ultimately the servant leadership approach could be applied to and effective in many diverse organizations, including the higher education classroom.

THE ROLE OF THE SERVANT-PROFESSOR

In 2002 Rick Warren published a book that captured international attention. *A Purpose Driven Life* became a best-seller and an inspiration to many. The often-quoted first line of the book stated, "It's not about you." (p. 5). Traditionally, the higher education classroom has been all about "you", the university professor, rather than about the students and what they are learning. Being a servant-professor requires that the focus be shifted to the needs of the student rather than on the opportunity for the professor to put him or herself on center stage. Barker and Stowers (2005) remind us that "…the focus of our teaching is not us but our students and

tailoring the material to their present and future needs" (p. 486). This approach is consistent with the shift in the educational paradigm from a focus on mandating what we are teaching to measuring learning outcomes. Colleges and universities are more and more being held accountable for learning outcomes (Bornstein, 2005). This is particularly apparent in business schools around the nation where the leading accrediting agencies (such as AACSB) are using learning outcomes as a measure of success (Bhada, 2002; Mitchell, 2007).

As this measurement paradigm shifts, it seems like the perfect opportunity to re-examine teaching styles. In many cases we are no longer evaluating what we teach (the professor centered approach,) but rather we are examining the educational outcomes with the student at the center of the measurement scale. In response to this shift, "…business schools have become much more focused on the power of teaching and are taking active steps to promote the scholarship of teaching and assurance of learning" (Shinn, 2002, p. 28). A central component of a professor's professional life is teaching; and it is increasingly important and a source of growth and commitment for most academics (Mitchell, 2007). As we move towards more learning-centered education, "…we are more likely to provide opportunities for self-direction; reshape the authority relations in our classrooms; implement experience-based learning activities; adopt a relational-learning approach,…and foster lifelong learning" (Bilimoria & Wheeler, 1995, p. 426). The values, beliefs, and behaviors of the servant-professor are consistent with fulfilling the needs of the learning centered approach to education.

Describing Effective Teachers

Based on his research, Bhada (2002) developed a list of key characteristics that he found to be common amongst effective teachers. These include:

1. Knowledgeable and current in the field of study
2. Organized and prepared
3. Clear and understandable
4. Enthusiastic
5. Able to establish relevance and connections
6. Respectful and fair
7. Committed to high standards that motivate student accomplishment (p. 26)

These reflect many of the same attributes that characterize servant-leaders such as honesty, appreciation of others, communication, competence, listening, encouragement, empowerment, influence, and modeling. Bhada reinforces the need for successful teachers to focus on the needs of their students in order to help students to develop their skills, abilities and competencies. Mitchell (2007) also states that, "As professors, we hold a unique and honorable role, and the public and our students should be able to place trust in our conduct and confidence in our message" (p. 244). This also points to commonalities between servant-leaders and servant-professors as trust, credibility, and honesty are all common to both groups. Ramsey and Fitzgibbons (2005) also identify attributes of effective professors that reflect characteristics of servant-leaders. These include an emphasis on empowerment (p. 339), trust (p. 342), and listening (p. 344). The attributes common in servant-leaders are very similar to those that characterize effective teachers. Thus the evolution from effective teacher to servant-professor seems inevitable.

Becoming a Servant-Professor

A growing number of graduate and undergraduate courses on management and leadership have incorporated servant leadership within the course curricula (Spears, 1996). Even better than just teaching the principles of servant leadership, professors have the opportunity to model servant leadership behaviors in their classrooms. Barker and Stowers (2005) and Bennett (2001) identify behaviors that professors can adopt to begin the process of becoming servant-leaders. The first step that professors must take is to understand their students. By taking this step professors can make the material more relevant and meaningful to their students. By first inquiring about and exploring the experience students bring to the classroom, Barker and Stowers assert that we can exceed student expectations by tailoring both course content and process to the students' needs and backgrounds. This will ensure that we effectively communicate the information that students are seeking. This can be particularly relevant when we engage cohort teaching groups who may come from a particular industry with unique needs (for example, tailoring an MBA curriculum to students from the health care industry by using cases and examples familiar and relevant to their experience). Bennett (2001) also reminds us that we must be cognizant of the fact that not all learners are the same. Therefore we must seek different ways of communicating information. Using a combination of lectures, videos, experiential exercises, cases, and readings, we should find a learning approach that fits most participants. By putting the needs of the students before the needs of the professor, we demonstrate the first principle of servant leadership.

Barker and Stowers (2005) also stress that while classroom management requires some level of structure, it is important that we also allow for flexibility and fluidity in the classroom. The opportunistic inclusion and discussion of topics and issues allows for generative learning which we hope will create new knowledge. By not sticking unrelentingly to a pre-determined script, we are able to listen for the wisdom of our learners and recognize and appreciate the contributions of the class members (Bennett, 2001). By demonstrating listening, encouragement, communication, and appreciation of others, we are once again modeling the principles of servant leadership.

Effective instruction depends on the professor's ability to connect with the class (Barker & Stowers, 2005). There is no formula for establishing the connection, but Barker and Stowers suggest that it depends upon ensuring students see the relevance in the material presented, encouraging students to create their own learning process, covering topics in a timely and balanced way, stepping out of the comfort zone to allow students to become facilitators, and effectively pushing/pulling information from students (p. 485). Once that connection is made, critical dialogue begins to happen in the classroom. Students are comfortable voicing their opinions and sharing their ideas. Students are empowered by the trust the professor demonstrates in them, and are then given the opportunity and responsibility for leading and teaching the class (Shinn, 2002). Students then have the chance to model servant leadership behaviors themselves.

Perhaps the most important step in becoming a servant-professor is for the professor to be open to learning and change. As professors we must seek feedback on our strengths and weaknesses and use it for our own personal growth (Bennett, 2001). Barker and Stowers (2005) assert that, "…great teachers always are in the process of self-renewal….It takes thought, introspection, evaluative feedback, and a constant review of self, and a willingness to change"

(p. 486). Becoming a servant-professor requires many professors to fundamentally change their approach in the classroom, and the learning curve will likely be steep. Commitment to the growth and development of students will motivate professors to change. Professors must step back and surrender some control of the learning process to the students. This requires trust, communication, empowerment, listening, encouragement, and delegation – all fundamental characteristics of the servant-leader.

TECHNIQUES TO FACILITATE MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

While the servant-professor paradigm provides a starting point for building a student-focused classroom, it is important that we document its success or failure as a teaching style by measuring student learning outcomes. According to Chambers and Fernandez (2004, p. 50-51) professors have traditionally been reluctant to define learning outcomes in precise terms because knowledge is understood to be dynamic and open-ended. Further, because students interact with the educational process, they become co-producers of their own learning. In other words, the amount of effort they put forth and their intrinsic aptitude for the subject, also does, to some extent, define the amount of learning that occurs. These reasons provide some explanation as to why higher education has been slow to respond to the demand for measures of student learning.

A Culture and Context of Student Learning

Barrie, Ginns, and Prosser (2005) report that students adopt qualitatively different approaches to their studies depending upon their prior experiences of studying and the particular context in which they find themselves. Different approaches to studying will lead to qualitatively different learning outcomes. Some students will adopt a more surface approach to learning with little interest in understanding the topic holistically. Others will adopt a deep approach to learning, focusing on integrating the topics covered into a coherent understanding. Barrie et al. found that these latter students tend to experience better learning outcomes (e.g. – higher GPA or final class grades). However, the degree to which the student adopts the surface versus deep learning approach, does, to some extend, depend upon the professor. When students perceived that the professor made a real effort to understand difficulties they may be having with their work or where the professor provided the students with a clear idea of where they were going and what was expected of them in the class, they were much more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning (p. 643). Barrie et al. concluded that in order to improve students' learning outcomes professors must be concerned about the context in which the learning takes place.

Professors will likely only embrace a student-focused classroom when there is a shift to a teaching and learning culture at the university. Barrie et al. (2005) report that at the University of Sydney comprehensive student surveys have been conducted that provide feedback to professors on their students' experiences in their courses. Faculty members and academic departments were then required to submit teaching and learning plans which document their strategic responses to issues identified in the surveys. This ensures an evidence-based approach to the development of strategic teaching initiatives (p. 648). The university also provides funds for research into the scholarship of teaching to further reinforce the shift in the culture from one focused solely on research to one that recognizes the importance of promoting and developing highly skilled teachers who are able to add value to the students' learning experiences.

Measuring Learning Performance

Measuring teaching and learning at the classroom level is a key component to ensure continuous improvement of educational outcomes (Grygoryev & Karapetrovic, 2005). However teaching and learning are very difficult concepts to define and to measure (Tam, 2001). Tam (2001) noted that it is challenging to relate students' characteristics at the points of entry and exit from institutions of higher education due to the fact that these characteristics are being measured over an extended period of time (probably years) thereby making them vulnerable to many intervening factors. Grygoryev and Karapetrovic (2005) have proposed one approach to measure learning at the classroom level. They propose using a Classroom Assessment Technique (or CAT) called a Modified Background Knowledge Probe (MBKP) designed to measure the instructor's contribution to student learning through the knowledge transfer process. According to Grygoryev and Karapetrovic (2005):

Using an MBKP, the instructor asks several questions, each of which reflects a significant issue covered during a lecture. The students answer questions once prior to the lecture, and then again after the lecture. In doing so, an MBKP collects the data not only on student learning (which is subject to more than just the instructor's influence), but also on the quality of the instructor's teaching (which is a variable within the instructor's direct control). The number of "Before and After" (B&A) questions in an MKBP corresponds to the number of important concepts introduced during a lecture. Thus by asking more question than one, it becomes possible for the instructor to determine where exactly the problem in learning and/or teaching actually occurred. In such a case, the instructor does not have to repeat the whole lecture, but only the troublesome part (p. 124-125).

The questions are designed to follow the sequence of the lecture so that the instructor can further reveal the possible causes of the failure or success of the learning process. For example, was timing (starts vs. end of a lecture), delivery mode (slides vs. the board) or some other identifiable factor the culprit? A substantial benefit to this process is the opportunity to identify poor learning soon after is has occurred, rather then waiting for a midterm or final examination, at which point it is often too late to provide remedial attention (Grygoryev & Karapetrovic, 2005).

While this approach requires significant preparation by instructors and may not be feasible in every classroom and every course, it certainly provides a starting point for building a student-focused approach to teaching that provides identifiable points at which to intervene when students do not understand the material. If remedial instruction can be provided early, more positive learning outcomes are likely.

A Competency Approach to Learning

Chambers and Fernandez (2004) propose a competency-based approach to education that assumes students progress through stages of learning, from novice through beginner to competence. Their research was based on students in the School of Dentistry; however there are some principles that they have identified that can be generalized to other areas of learning. According to Chambers and Fernandez in the competency model "…students are required to demonstrate skills, understanding and values characteristic of practitioners in realistic settings prior to graduation" (p. 54). They are evaluated based on traditional examinations and course grades, simulation exercises, faculty ratings and test cases. But the fundamental question that is

asked before a student moves onto the next level becomes, is the student qualified to begin the next set of experiences in the process of become qualified in his/her field? Chambers and Fernandez (2004, p. 52) outline the stages of competency (Table 1).

The main difference between the competency approach and the traditional criterion-based grading approach is that in competency-based education the focus is on mapping student performance to decisions about the educational *process* rather than on grading students. As described in Table 1, if the student is identified as "Becoming qualified" the next stage in the learning process will be different than for a student who is identified as "Qualified". Faculty members focus on determining which educational processes have a documented capability to consistently prepare students to move to the next stage of their education (p. 54), and which do not. In this way they can establish learning processes that provide quality student learning outcomes.

One way to engage students more directly in the learning process is to ensure that they are actively involved in applying the theories and techniques that they are learning in the classroom. Active and experiential learning provide another avenue for professors to build a student-focused classroom

ACTIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

New faculty members generally rely on their past experiences as a guide for instruction, and they teach as they were taught. For some it may mean a few outstanding professors who used active learning techniques. For many it includes mostly professors who lectured and dispensed information for students who then prepared for exams over the content presented. After teaching for a time, faculty become quite comfortable with their chosen techniques and, barring any major problems with students' evaluations, they continue to perform similarly.

Change in instructional techniques is as difficult as change in any workplace situation. Common barriers to instructional change include the powerful influence of educational tradition, faculty self-perceptions and self-definition of roles, the discomfort and anxiety that change creates, and the limited incentives for faculty to change. Active learning is defined as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Barriers to the use of active learning as compared to traditional lecture methods include:

- The difficulty in adequately covering the assigned course content in the limited class time
- available
- A possible increase in the amount of preparation time
- The difficulty of using active learning in large classes
- The challenge of using active learning with online classes
- A lack of needed materials, equipment, or resources

The greatest barrier of all, however, is that efforts to employ active learning involves risks – risks that students will not participate, use higher-order thinking, or learn sufficient content, and risks that faculty will feel a loss of control, lack necessary skills, or be criticized for using non-traditional techniques. Instructors all face the challenge of developing a personal style for leading discussions and involving students in the learning process. Many instructors have never experienced anything other than teacher-centered classrooms in their own education. Very few can point to a powerful role model in their past who consistently and skillfully used active

learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is not surprising that professors rarely use strategies promoting active learning.

Some students will resist the use of active learning because it provides a strange contrast to the more familiar passive listening role to which they are accustomed. Listening to faculty talk is an easier and more familiar role for students. Some learners prefer structured lectures in which instructors describe clearly and precisely what they need to know. Such students expect instructors to maintain control over the class and to simply present the facts while the students pay attention, take notes, and memorize the facts. Learners who are in a later stage of intellectual development take greater responsibility for their own learning, view class participation as an exciting opportunity to exchange differing perspectives, and become willing to teach and critique each other (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg & Tarule, 1986).

Active/Experiential Learning

Active learning, also referred to as experiential learning, is a key element in the emerging paradigm in education that focuses on learning, rather than the traditional paradigm that focuses on instruction (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp & Mayo, 2000). The learning paradigm shifts educators away from simply teaching, towards students actually learning. In the learning paradigm students are expected to apply the concepts, theories and practices discussed in their classes to real world situations (Anselmi & Frankel, 2004). Case studies, business games, and role playing are just some examples of active or experiential learning objects that facilitate the application, rather than just the memorization of new concepts. These activities can add value to the learning process as professors go beyond disseminating information to actually developing student skills.

Polito, Kros and Watson outline numerous examples of the successful implementation of active learning in the classroom. In an operations management class utilizing an experiential activity, they found that it improved student recollection of course-related concepts (2004). Their research compilation includes studies which found that using experiential learning in a business statistics class improved student examination and GPA performance (Hakeem, 2001). Similarly, Sautter, Pratt and Shanahan (2000) found when an active learning component was included in an introductory marketing course, students reported very high levels of satisfaction, value and learning. Azriel, Erthal and Starr (2005) found that games were as useful as lectures in preparing students for exams in strategic management courses. Increasingly, evidence suggests that interactive teaching methods work better than traditional lecture methods.

Experiential learning approaches may be particularly meaningful to adult learners as Cross (2000) reports that they tend to learn best when new knowledge is linked to their prior experience and to the questions they now have. Cheney (2001) confirms that experiential learning reinforces the link by drawing upon students' life experiences and helping students to see connections between knowledge gained in the classroom and its application in real life. Adult learners are among the most demanding students that a professor will face. They are often taking time away from their jobs, spouses and children to complete their degrees, and frequently are assuming the full financial burden of their educational expenses. Because they usually enter the classroom with several years of experience behind them, they are aware that theory does not always easily translate into practice. Experiential learning should allow these students to apply theories in a meaningful way and therefore enable them to better understand the value these concepts can add to the business environment. Providing activity-based learning opportunities,

particularly group-oriented exercises, also allows other students the opportunity to learn from the "real-life" experiences of their classmates.

In order for any experiential or active learning activity to be meaningful and beneficial to students, it must be a valid reflection of the concepts being introduced in the classroom. Cheney (2001) adapted a series of guidelines originally developed by Gentry (1990) that provide an excellent template for the development of experiential exercises in business education. These are outlined in Table 2. By following these guidelines, professors can develop meaningful experiential activities that will not only promote learning but also enhance the classroom experience.

Active Learning in the Virtual Classroom

Nearly 3.2 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2005 term, a substantial increase over the 2.3 million reported the previous year. This addition of more than 800,000 online students is more than twice the number added in any previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2006). As this approach to educational delivery continues to grow, it is imperative that these same principles of active learning be applied to the online learning environment. Simply requesting students read a textbook, view power point slides and answer multiple choice exams reflects the correspondence courses of old and fails to take advantage of the technology available now.

Group discussions can easily be facilitated through software such as Blackboard, and students can be graded on the quality and quantity of their contributions, encouraging their enthusiastic participation in such activities. Students can be placed into small, collaborative learning groups with their own online discussion boards, enabling them to complete interactive group projects and exercises just as they would in the classroom. Peer evaluations can be utilized to help the instructor grade student participation in these group activities. Further, there is evidence to indicate that shy students may feel more comfortable participating in groups and discussion in the online environment, and therefore may contribute more in an online course (Horton, 2001).

Active learning need not be shelved in an online course; rather it may provide the perfect opportunity to encourage discussion, student interaction, and the application of theories and concepts. This is particularly evident in courses such as organizational behavior. As students learn about how teams are utilized in the workplace, they can observe how their own teams develop and interact and can apply some of the team building and team management concepts taught in class. Their own virtual classroom becomes an experiential learning opportunity.

Improving the Classroom Experience

In the more student-focused classroom the professor may need to relinquish some control in order to meet the developmental needs of the students. Strict compliance from students may be sufficient in traditional classrooms, cooperation is required in experiential ones, but in the student-focused classroom where students are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning outcomes, commitment to the learning process is the goal (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005). While this can be an excellent opportunity for students to grow, mature and develop leadership and analytical skills, it also presents a significant challenge. As learning becomes more generative through discussion and example, it by nature becomes more unpredictable.

To engage in this type of learning by definition will require us to give up some of our need for predictability and uniform outcomes (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005) at a time when institutions of higher learning are being compelled by regulatory bodies to demonstrate more accountability for learning outcomes. Therefore we must proceed cautiously. Faculty can successfully overcome barriers to the use of active learning by gradually incorporating teaching strategies requiring more activity from students and/or greater risks into their regular style of instruction. Select a single course to work with, perhaps the course one teaches most often and is most familiar, rather than changing several courses at one time.

Professors who seek a high level of student involvement in the classroom by adding an active learning component to courses should find that it leads to more student learning. Some activities can be more easily implemented and more appropriate for certain classes, but active learning can be promoted in every business discipline with some advanced planning and effort. Indeed it may be relevant to view the issue as a shift in paradigm from the traditional (expert, provider, enabler, facilitator, neutral) model (Saleh & Lamkin, 2008) to a more student learning objective (SLO) based model such as embodied in the concept of the servant-professor. It is important to recognize that in the modern world the student has changed, technology has changed and it may be time for the educator and education system to change.

Strategic Shifts Among the Academic "Community"

Driven in large part by the needs of the current student population, universities, instructors, publishers, system developers and instructional designers are synergistically developing new strategies to meet overall student needs. Many universities are now adopting new course designs that are focused on well-defined student learning objectives (SLO) using clear metrics, such as those established by subject-area accreditation standards, and constructing course delivery strategies around those SLOs and highlighting them in "master" syllabi. Publishers are soliciting assistance from students and instructors in developing new approaches to the structure, printing and distribution of textbooks and supplemental learning materials and "systems" through surveys, face-to-face and online focus groups, hands-on and online demonstrations and interactive reviews. Instructors, system developers and instructional designers are developing and incorporating novel features into course designs, which exploit a vast array of new technology tools meant to optimize the student's learning potential with ample regard for the changing face of today's student population (Cengage representatives, focus group discussions, March 4, 2008). The typical student today:

- Works 5 hrs/day
- Sleeps 8 hrs/day
- Participates in extracurricular activities, e.g. sports
- Takes 5 classes/semester
- Has 4 classes/day
- Studies 14 hrs/week.

Students indicate that, given the constraints and pressures of their current environment, to maximize their learning in the shortest possible time they require:

- More affordable textbooks
- Simple source materials
- Shorter chapters, e.g. 15 pages per chapter
- Bold Tiers

- End of Chapter summaries
- Tear out study cards
- Technology (videos, games, etc.)

In response, the approaches being taken by publishers, instructional designers and system developers span solutions that range from straightforward incremental steps toward an enhanced learning environment to sweeping revolutionary changes (Various publisher representatives, online interactive demonstrations and focus groups, March-April, 2008). These include:

- Conversion of print materials to electronic versions
- Offering electronic support materials (lecture slides, chapter summaries, cases, self-grading homework, practice quizzes) to print versions
- A completely new textbook "system" involving streamlined books reducing page count by 50-60% by moving significant content (cases, data sets, games, quizzes) online; incorporating review pages, "prep" cards and "tear out" flash cards in the print products; unique multi-media learning assets compatible with MP3 players, cell phones, eBooks; and completely electronic resource materials (instructor manuals, data sets, solutions)
- A web-based, individualized learning assistant incorporating a sophisticated, artificial intelligence engine to identify what students know and selection of the next body of material they should learn to meet learning objectives. This learning assistant can be linked to online automatically-graded homework consistent with end of chapter questions that are driven by established student learning objectives. These tools can be used in homework (providing specific feedback) or quiz (anonymous practice) formats. These in turn may be linked to supplementary electronic resources (chapter summaries, flash cards, cases, etc.)
- Online tutoring services offered 24/7 in real-time or asynchronously, featuring tracking and search through previous tutoring sessions, transcripts of sessions, and secure chat among students

The focus of all these systems is clearly being placed upon student learning objectives and directly reflects the recognition of the importance of student-focused learning.

CONCLUSION

Just as the material we teach is constantly evolving, so must our teaching styles. As the process of evaluating the effectiveness of institutions of higher learning focuses more on the outcomes of the education system rather than just the processes, we recognize that our teaching styles may also need to change. Building a student-focused classroom can be a challenge and will compel professors to focus more on the needs of the students and less on what is easy, comfortable or familiar. Table 3 provides a summary of the differences between the "Traditional" and the "New" paradigms of teaching as defined by Cook (1998, p. 60). While the traditional approach is professor and process centered, the "new" approach is more student and learning centered. Applying some of the student-focused principles of servant leadership, focusing on techniques to promote student learning, utilizing the principles of active learning, and applying the new learning systems and technology that are available, all provide a starting point for the development of a "new" paradigm of teaching.

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Table 1 – Competency Based Evaluation Categories

Category	Learner characteristic	Process response
Qualified	Learning potential in current experience exhausted	Move to new learning experience
Becoming qualified	Learning occurring as expected	Continue
Not becoming qualified	Confusion, errors, disengagement	Diagnose problem, provide remediation
Unqualified	Failure of remediation, outrageous errors	Remove from system

Table 2: General Guidelines for Experiential Learning in Business Education	
Business Curriculum-Related	Activities are designed to develop knowledge and skills directly related to course objectives
Applied	Students are given adequate guidance and a theoretical base to perform and evaluate the activities.
Participative	Students are active participants in the learning activities rather than passive listeners.
Interactive	Activities include not only student/instructor interaction but also student/student, student/client, or student/environment interaction.
Whole-Person Emphasis	Activities focus on all three dimensions of learning: behavioral, affective, and cognitive.
Contact with the Environment	Experiences are as similar as possible to real-world business situations.
Variability and Uncertainty	Activities are designed to expose students to the complexity and ambiguity of real-world business situations.
Structured Exercise	Experiences are sufficiently structured and organized to allow for some student autonomy while providing guidance and ensuring quality.
Student Evaluation of the Experience	Students have the opportunity to reflect upon and articulate the learning gained from their experience.
Feedback	Instructors provide students with feedback on the experiential learning activity, placing greater emphasis on the processes involved than on the outcomes. Instructors help students to put learning into a broader perspective.

Table 3 – Paradigms of Teaching		
	Traditional	New
Knowledge	Transferred from faculty to student	Jointly constructed by students and faculty
Students	Passive vessel to be filled by faculty's knowledge	Active constructor, discoverer, transformer of own knowledge
Faculty purpose	Classify and sort students	Develop students' competencies and talents
Relationships	Impersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students	Personal transaction among students and between faculty and students
Context	Competitive, individualistic	Cooperative learning in classroom and cooperative teams among faculty
Assumptions	Any expert can teach	Teaching is complex and requires considerable training