

Lead Article:

• **Who Does What
in your
Classroom?**

Inside:

- Learning Styles
- Types of Learners
- Discovering Learning Styles
- The "Apprenticeships" of Theological Education
- Communications

Incorporating Student Experience and Transformative Learning into Curriculum Design and Planning of Undergraduate Theological Degrees.

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Who Does What in your Classroom?

"What happens on the field stays on the field." So goes the well-worn mantra regarding conduct in football games. However, does it also apply to classrooms, especially theological classrooms? If what happens in the classroom stays in the classroom, surely that would be a travesty. If the lessons of the classroom do not translate into active implementation and application beyond the classroom, then there is a question over the purpose and efficacy of what goes on in the classroom. If teachers of theology want to see their students actively and effectively transfer their learning into life beyond the classroom, then what goes on in the classroom is their main opportunity to equip their students to do so.

This leads to the question, "Who does what in your classroom?" This is a significant question, since

learners will take with them only that which has become meaningful to them, only that which they have personally appropriated in some way. In your classroom, are the students the beneficiaries of the teacher's learning? Or, are the teachers the facilitators of the students' learning? What's the difference? How do we know? In the ideal class, of course, the two dimensions come together in a nice symbiosis of teaching and learning. However, the two sides of the question need to be constantly kept in focus and under critical review, or else we run the risk of continuing to "teach" students all the material they need to know, but not actually ensuring that they have really "learned" anything of life-changing significance.

The question has much to do with the concepts of teaching and learning

styles. A teacher-centred approach puts the spotlight on the teacher as performer, with the student being a more or less passive recipient. The focus is on the teacher's selection and preparation of material and effective means of presentation of a pre-determined set of data ie effective information transmission. Depending on the motivational talents of the teacher, this may result in further enthusiastic research and exploration by the student. A student-centred approach puts the spotlight on the learner as active participant in the educative process, with the teacher taking the role of facilitator of that learning. While a teacher-centred approach has the advantage of efficient mass content coverage, the student-centred approach is more likely to lead to personal appropriation of content and concepts.

From the Research: Learning Styles



Not all people learn in the same ways, not all readily take in all the information communicated in lectures and tutorials.

While most people learn in multi-modal ways, around 40% are significantly disadvantaged if they are not afforded the opportunity to use their dominant learning style.

*How do your students learn?
How do you find out?
(Do you find out?)*

Types of Learners

Type of Learner	Means of Learning
Visual learner	diagrams, displays, body language
Auditory learner	lectures, discussions, reading aloud
Read/write learner	information in words, PowerPoint, lists, handouts
Kinesthetic learner	moving, drama, doing, touching

Locating the student in theology

Some key questions about theology and personal (trans)formation

- *Where are you: in your understanding of God?*
- *Where are you: in your place in society?*
- *Where are you: in your understanding of yourself?*

(from Archbishop Rowan Williams, TEAC Principals Consultation 2011)

Discovering Learning Styles

How, when and where does a teacher discern the dominant learning styles of the students?

- Pre-teaching (eg Orientation Week)
 - Use a quick online test for all new students
Eg the VARK test created by Neil Fleming at www.vark-learn.com
- Beginning of teaching
 - Ask students!
 - Use a variety of methods to allow for different styles
 - Note who responds how
- During teaching
 - Use several (creative) types of formative instruments
 - Ensure all types of learning styles are catered for
 - Note who performs how in different styles of instruments
- In assessment
 - Use a variety of summative instruments to ensure fairness
 - Use performance as basis of ongoing teaching methods
- In unit evaluations
 - Take seriously the feedback provided by students re methods

The “Apprenticeships” of Theological Education

Charles Foster and associates discerned three basic “apprenticeships” which characterize theological education of clergy:

- *Cognitive* apprenticeship: “knowing what”
 - the interpretation of texts, situations and relationships
- *Practical* apprenticeship: “knowing how”
 - the ministerial skills required for vocational purposes
- *Normative* apprenticeship: “knowing who”
 - the process of personal and spiritual identity formation.

These apprenticeships are generally achieved with descending degrees of mastery, with the normative often left to extra-curricular activity (if at all included in the agenda of a college or university).

[Foster, Charles R, Lisa E Dahill, Lawrence A Golemon, Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).]

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