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## Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning into Practice

by Terry Doyle; foreword by Todd Zakrajsek  
(Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2011, 220 pages)

"It is the one who does the work who does the learning" (p. 7). This oft-repeated phrase is the foundation of Terry Doyle's latest book, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning Into Practice*.

The book is divided into 12 well-defined chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of learner-centred teaching (LCT). Reflecting the practical nature of the text, the chapter topics are based in Doyle's many years of teaching and presenting.

Chapter 1 encourages instructors to "Follow the Research." Doyle provides the answer to why an instructor would want to employ LCT: because the research supports it! Unlike past teaching practices, LCT is based on empirical evidence, which Doyle synthesizes by reviewing recent research into how the brain works and how learning happens. (Throughout the remaining book chapters, Doyle frequently returns to this research to augment his instructional techniques and strategies.)

Chapter 2 addresses "Getting Students to Do the Work." Doyle concedes that LCT is not a natural fit for students who have come out of teacher-focused K-12 systems where students may not have been required to do much work in order to attain good grades. To be comfortable with the LCT approach, students have to be made aware of expectations and processes.

Chapter 3 focuses on "The Power of Authentic Learning." Doyle discusses how authentic learning connects what is taught in the classroom to the real world of work and the attributes employers seek in employees. He provides a definition, learning activities, and numerous examples, and closes with authentic assessment.

Chapter 4, "From Lecturer to Facilitator," takes the reader through the transition from lecture-based instructor to learner-centred facilitator. Doyle does not dismiss the lecture model completely, but offers ways to use it more effectively. He also offers transitioning techniques and a web address with supplemental video materials to support the concepts.

In Chapter 5, "Who Are Our Learners And How Do We Get to Know Them Better?," Doyle focuses more closely on the learners. The chapter is further divided into three sections: "The Mindset of our Students," "Building Relationships That Enhance Learning," and "Principles of Relationship-Driven Teaching."

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### *Learner-Centered Teaching*

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In Chapter 6, "Sharing Control and Giving Choices," Doyle discusses student participation in classroom decision-making. Consistent with the practical nature of the book, Doyle offers a checklist of 16 power-sharing activities that fall into three categories: course policies, organizational issues, and teaching and content issues.

The use of student-centred discussion is key in LCT and is the focus of Chapter 7, entitled "How Teachers Can Facilitate Student Discussions by Not Talking." As the subject of discussion has been extensively researched, Doyle chooses to focus on developing meaningful discussions and helping students to understand its power in learning.

Aptly titled "Teaching to All the Senses," Chapter 8 suggests that the best way to learn new material is by engaging as many senses as possible. Doyle furthermore offers strategies to deliver course content in a multisensory way.

Chapter 9, entitled "Patterns: A Major Element in Effective Teaching and Learning," examines the importance of patterns in learning. We all look for patterns and use them to connect new information with what we already know. Doyle recognizes that there is a plethora of information on this topic and focuses his discussion on two aspects: recognizing patterns in specific content materials, which allows for connections between courses; and patterns of relationships, which assist students in building memory.

The tenth chapter delves into "Repetition and Elaboration." How do you ensure that your student has stored information in their long-term memory? This chapter suggests strategies to ensure the retention of information by reviewing how the brain forms memories, why we forget, how to teach so students recall, and how to create an environment to optimize study.

In Chapter 11, "Is a Revolution Coming? Movement, Exercise, and Learning," Doyle discusses how exercise optimizes learning and how to incorporate exercise into course delivery, sharing suggestions from faculty members on how to get movement into learning.

Doyle concludes his text with "Getting Others to Embrace Learner-Centered Teaching." Recognizing the challenges LCT could raise in higher education, Doyle offers strategies for addressing three identified sources of resistance: administrators, colleagues, and students.

Doyle has written an accessible but strategy-packed text encompassing current developments in the fields of cognitive psychology, biology, and neuroscience that instructors in higher education could readily utilize in the classroom. The chapters could furthermore be used as a series of workshops offered through teaching and learning centres on campus. The book would also be a great resource for instructional designers. Terry Doyle's expressed desire is that this book will generate discussion focused on LCT on campuses across the country, and it certainly has the potential to do that.

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