

Teaching Philosophy

Why are your teaching philosophies important? In education, particularly at the university level, understanding the underlying teaching philosophies is crucial for effective teaching, as teaching approaches are strongly influenced by the lecturer's underlying beliefs (Kember, 1997). By comprehending these philosophies, lecturers can better align their teaching methods with the goal of fostering deep, meaningful learning experiences.

Understanding Teaching Philosophies



Cognitivism: Learning through insight and realisation

Cognitivism focuses on the internal processes involved in learning. It posits that the mind functions similarly to a computer, where information is received, organized, stored, and retrieved (see Meier, 2019).



Constructivism: Learning through personal experience and interpreting

Constructivism posits that learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and reflection. Unlike cognitivism, which views knowledge as something to be transmitted, constructivism sees learning as an active, contextualized process (see Meier, 2019). In higher education, a constructivist approach is generally more effective than a cognitivist one as it enhances student's self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and openness to challenge which leads them to be academically more successful (Alt, 2015, 2016; Ayaz & Sekerci, 2015). While cognitivism focuses on structured content delivery, constructivism encourages students to actively construct their own understanding through experiential learning and social interaction. Constructivist environments, emphasizing collaboration and active participation, better prepare students for future careers and lifelong learning (Alt, 2015; Beynon & Harfield, 2007).

	Cognitivism	Constructivism
<i>Nature of Knowledge</i>	Cognitivism views knowledge as a static entity to be transferred from lecturer to student.	Constructivism sees knowledge as dynamic and constructed by the learner.
<i>Role of the Lecturer</i>	In cognitivism, the lecturer is the primary source of knowledge and authority.	In constructivism, the lecturer acts as a facilitator or guide, supporting students as they construct their own understanding.
<i>Learning Environment</i>	Cognitivist classrooms may focus more on lectures and direct instruction.	Constructivist classrooms emphasize interactive, hands-on activities that engage students in the learning process.

(see Meier, 2019)

Lecturer-Centred vs. Student-Centred Teaching and Learning



The approach a lecturer takes in the classroom significantly impacts student engagement and learning outcomes. Here we explore the continuum from lecturer-centred to student-centred teaching. Understanding these orientations can help educators enhance their teaching strategies to better support student learning and development.

Teacher-centred Teaching & Learning

Knowledge is possessed, selected and delivered by teacher to student

Student-centred Teaching & Learning

Knowledge is constructed by student and teacher

Imparting Information

Transmitting Structured Knowledge

Student-teacher Interaction

Facilitating Understanding

Intellectual Development

(see Kember, 1997, p. 264)

Lecturer-Centred Orientation:



- Imparting Information: In this style, teaching is about giving information to students. The lecturer talks, and the students listen and try to remember what they hear. The students do not actively participate much; they are mainly there to receive the information.
- Transmitting Structured Knowledge: This is similar to imparting information but adds the idea of organizing the information clearly. The lecturer still does most of the talking, but they make sure the information is well-structured to help students understand better.

Student-Lecturer Interaction:



- This middle style blends elements of both lecturer-centred and student-centred approaches. It emphasizes the importance of interaction between lecturers and students. Teaching involves more engagement and discussion, making it a two-way process.

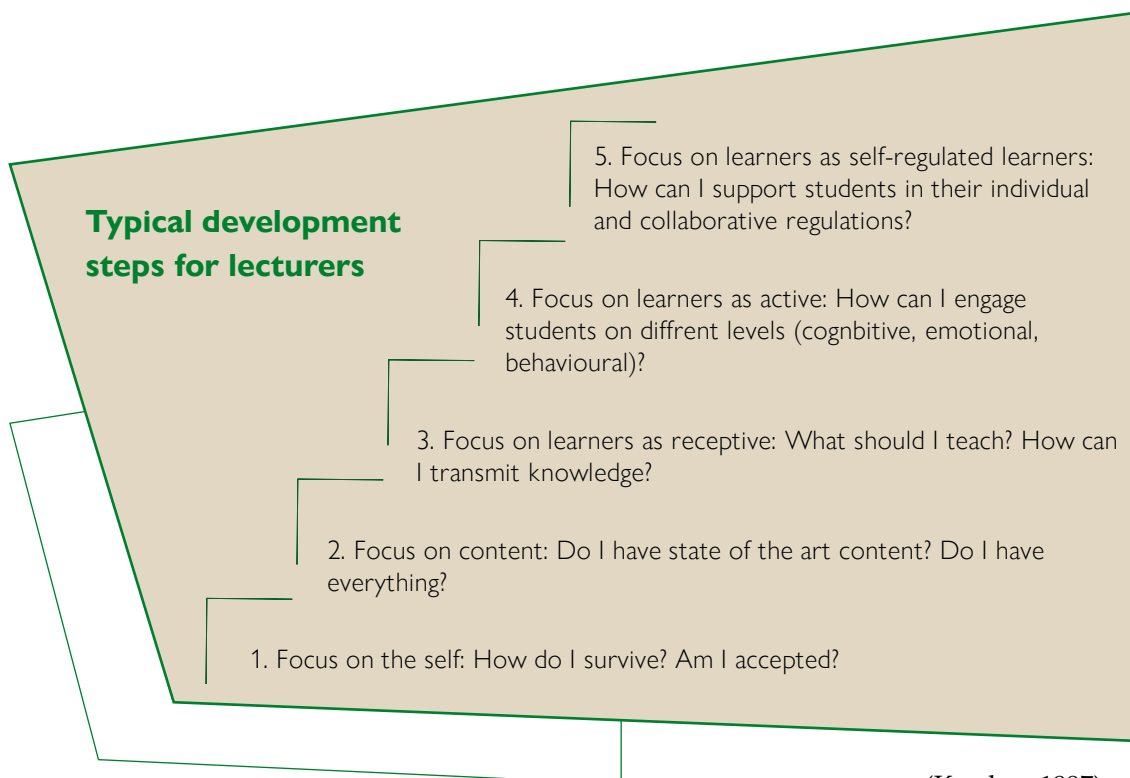
Student-Centred Orientation:



- Facilitating Understanding: Here, the focus shifts to the students. Teaching is about helping students understand and learn by themselves. The lecturer's role is to guide and support students as they actively engage with the material and build their own knowledge.
- Conceptual Change/Intellectual Development: This style goes even further, aiming to help students change the way they think and understand things

(Kember, 1997, p. 264)

Teaching styles exist on a continuum, allowing for shifts from lecturer-centred to student-centred approaches. This shift requires lecturers to adopt new beliefs and methods. Lecturer-centred methods often result in surface-level learning, while student-centred methods foster more meaningful learning. A meta-study by Agustini et al. (2021) shows that student-centred models yield better learning outcomes. Thus, lecturers should shift their focus from teaching to learning, prioritizing learning as a constructive, competence-oriented process (Barr & Tagg, 1995).



(Kember, 1997)

Transitioning to Student-Centred Learning

Here are some strategies for implementing student-centred teaching and learning:



Try to see your teaching through students' eyes.

- Become more attuned to students' interests and passions.
- Shift from your role from a leading role to a facilitator who offers resources.



Focus on the meaning of the learning:

- Build on Student's Experiences
- Connect the instructions to the real world.
- Link the instruction to student's interest.
- Look for real tasks.
- Let students see connections to other classes.



Active Learning:

- Incorporate activities that engage students directly in the learning process (e.g., discussions, problem-solving tasks, hands-on activities, methods such as Inquiry-Based Learning, Service Learning etc.)
- Integrate reflective activities where students think about what they have learned and how they have learned it. Ask them to write journal entries about their learning process.
- Collaborative Learning: Promote group work and peer-to-peer interactions.
- Arrange the room to facilitate peer interaction.



Formative Assessment:

- Use formative (non-graded) assessments to provide ongoing feedback and adjust teaching strategies to meet student needs.
- Give fast feedback.

(Jacobs et al., 2016)

Sources

Agustini, K., Wahyuni, D. S., Mertayasa, I. N. E., Wedhanti, N. K., & Sukrawarupa, W. (2021). Student-centered learning models and learning outcomes: Meta-analysis and effect sizes on the students' thesis. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1810(1), 012049. Barr, R. B. & Tagg, J. (1995). From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education. *Change*, 27(6), 13-26. Jacobs, G. M., Renandya, W. A., & Power, M. (2016). *Simple, Powerful Strategies for Student Centered Learning*. Springer International Publishing. Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. *Learning and instruction*, 7(3), 255–275. Meier, S. (2019). Didaktischer Hintergrund Lerntheorien. *Elearning-plus*. [Link](#)

Further Resources

Teaching Statements. (2024). Center for Teaching Vanderbilt University. [Link](#)