



Enhancing learning-centeredness in marketing principles curriculum



Tania von der Heide^{a,*}, Ali Quazi^b

^a Southern Cross University, Australia

^b University of Canberra, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 19 September 2013

Keywords:

Collaborative writing
Heutagogy
Learning-centred teaching
Lifelong learning
Marketing education
Teaching philosophy

ABSTRACT

Contemporary learning-centred (LC) teaching and learning approaches are vital to help learners develop lifelong skills for employability in the digital age. This paper relates the knowledge and experiences gained from a study to enhance LC in a first-year core marketing curriculum undertaken in a blended learning environment by large, diverse groups of business students in an Australian tertiary educational institution. The study involved (1) measuring the degree of presence of LC in the 2011 curriculum, (2) identifying and exploring ways to enhance LC in the 2011 curriculum and (3) implementing selected new LC approaches to the 2012 curriculum and recording the outcomes of the new approach. A key LC technique introduced in line with the above process included an online collaborative writing using group blogs and wikis in a major, multi-part marketing plan assessment item. The findings of the research provide guidelines for enhancement of learning-centredness to reflective practice-oriented marketing/management educators committed to continuous improvement of their LC oriented curriculum for fostering students' lifelong learning.

© 2013 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Teaching in higher education is increasingly challenging. Uncertainty, complexity and fast-paced change characterise the environment in which educators and students are continuously interacting for enhancement of learning. As university educators we are, therefore, urged to help students with sustainable and lifelong learning (Boud, 2000), which is understood as the ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons (Field, 2006). In facilitating lifelong learning, educators are to immerse students in a teaching environment that requires them to use learning activities leading to intended learning outcomes (Biggs and Tang, 2007). In this context the curriculum is seen as an 'educational vehicle' that helps drive students' learning journey towards transforming them into individuals with the potential of flourishing "in a world of simultaneous unpredictable and contending challenges" (Barnett and Coate, 2007, p. 55).

Learning-centredness is an approach to address these calls for action in higher education teaching and learning around the world. A learning-centred (LC) approach emphasises the process of learning rather than the transmission of content typical of the teaching-centred (TC) approach (Benson, 2012). While the TC approach treats students as dependent learners, a LC approach views students as confident and sovereign learners who take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Subtly different from a

student-centred (SC) approach, which tends to have a consumer focus, the LC approach empowers the student and takes the teacher out of the critical role in the learning process (Blumberg, 2004). Learning-centredness emphasises the balance between instructor leadership, student development and student initiative (O'Brien et al., 2008).

A variety of LC designs can be used to shift the role of instructors from mere providers of information to facilitators of student learning. Facilitated learning mechanisms include situated learning, problem-based learning, case-based learning, project-based learning and role-playing (Oliver and Herrington, 2001). These designs provide a number of significant benefits for learners, including the opportunity to experience the knowledge construction process, reflect on and regulate one's own behaviour, assume responsibility for one's own learning, embed learning in realistic contexts and experience multiple perspectives (Blumberg, 2012; Oliver and Herrington, 2001). Thus, learning-centredness provides the foundation for a discipline's 'signature pedagogy', i.e. the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated in the profession, with a focus on 'thinking, performing and acting with integrity' (Shulman, 2005). Apart from improving learning and results, a LC approach helps achieve higher rates of student retention, and graduates are better prepared where the students experience a LC rather than TC approach (Blumberg, 2012).

Despite its broad appeal, introducing a LC curriculum in the first year at undergraduate level is far from straightforward, especially when the curriculum is viewed as a holistic construct inclusive of content. Challenges appear at different levels in the implementation of the curriculum, and these need to be under-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: tania.vonderheidt@scu.edu.au (T. von der Heide), ali.quazi@canberra.edu.au (A. Quazi).

stood and anticipated for successfully carrying out the implementation process (Blumberg, 2009; Weimar, 2002). At the *institutional* level, an academic unit, such as a faculty or a school, may have policies and requirements that may be inconsistent with a LC approach, such as highly-weighted formal exams and tests and/or comparatively short teaching periods. *Educators* practicing a TC approach may be reluctant to relinquish control of curriculum, as they either do not believe in learning-centredness or are not particularly reflective and versatile in their teaching ideas. These teachers are inherently oriented to an orthodox paradigm of traditional pedagogy. Teachers may also be unaware of the LC approach or unsure as to how to make it happen in their courses. From the *student* perspective (especially at the undergraduate level), the LC approach to teaching may be uncomfortable, because students may be accustomed to the passive learning induced by a traditional TC-based pedagogy. These students are quite likely to resist a LC approach, because it implies additional work and may exacerbate a lack in self-confidence in students, who are not intellectually mature enough to accept and practice an innovative learning technique (Weimar, 2002).

In this paper we explain why it is important for university educators to adopt a LC approach and how to achieve learning-centredness in a course. We illustrate how the LC approach to teaching can be measured, evaluated and enhanced in a first-year core marketing curriculum undertaken by large, diverse groups of business students in an Australian tertiary educational institution. We start by outlining the context for the study and then locating LC teaching in the theories of pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy. In subsequent sections we cover the conceptual framework for LC teaching, the research method, findings and conclusions.

2. The context

The study of marketing principles is crucial for all business students and is undertaken as a core or mandatory unit in the first-year within the Bachelor of Business program or equivalent programs across almost all regional and mainstream Australian universities. Because of its growing academic and practical importance, the Marketing Principles curriculum at Southern Cross University in Australia has witnessed continuous review and renewal. The renewal process involved peer-review by marketing academics, practitioners and teaching and learning scholars and researchers. As a result the curriculum is currently vertically and horizontally aligned and contemporary in terms of its dual focus on creative problem solving and sustainability in marketing. This was acknowledged in a Vice Chancellor award for outstanding contribution to student learning (Southern Cross University 2011). However the extent to which learning-centredness has been achieved in this subject and whether there are opportunities for further improvement in the curriculum have not yet been investigated. Gaining clarity on this issue is important, so that a LC approach is developed and enhanced in a way that is most appropriate to the particular flexible and blended delivery context. The course is characterised by large groups of mostly first-year university students, who are diverse in terms of location (domestic/offshore), mode (internal/external; face to face/online) and enrolment status (full-time/part-time). Flexible and blended delivery offers e-learning through the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) with its suite of tools (e.g. online quizzes, discussion board, Collaborate virtual classroom, video-linked lecture recordings through Mediasite and Web 2.0 social software wikis and blogs) as well as traditional classroom interactions.

3. Learning centredness and philosophies of teaching

Three basic guiding philosophies or ‘-gogies’ (Greek, meaning ‘leader of’) relating to educating humans are generally distin-

guished in the teaching and learning literature: Pedagogy (teaching children), andragogy (teaching adults), heutagogy (teaching self-directed adults). Some (Courtenay and Stevenson, 1983; Ferro, 1997) have criticized the need for an array of terms in adult education, such as andragogy and other ‘gogies’¹. Ferro (1997), who unravels the semantic roots of each ‘gogy’, notes that the term ‘pedagogy’ no longer seems to relate only to ‘teaching children’. Indeed pedagogy is usually defined in general terms, e.g. “the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept” (Oxford Dictionary online, 2013) or “the study of the methods and activities of teaching” (Cambridge Dictionary online, 2013). However, as is shown in this section, a case can be made for distinguishing certain teaching philosophies and exploring the role of learning-centredness within these main philosophies.

Pedagogy “means literally the art and science of teaching children” (Knowles, 1987, p. 168). Knowles founded pedagogy on several assumptions about learners: (1) the dependent personality of the learner (not knowing own learning needs), (2) subject-centered learning (curricula organized around subjects), (3) extrinsic motivation as the driving force for learning (the use of rewards and punishments to encourage learning) and (4) prior experience of the learner was irrelevant (blank slate concept or *tabula rasa*). Hence, the pedagogical model is a TC learning concept. It is concerned with the transmission of information and skills (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000), and the teacher setting the learning goals, directing the learning process and evaluating results (Marshak et al., 1983). The contemporary meaning of pedagogy is in the “today’s taken for granted paradigm of teacher authority and control” (Ashton and Newman, 2006, p. 828).

In 1968 Knowles proposed “a new label and a new technology” of adult learning to distinguish it from preadult schooling (p. 351). The European concept of **andragogy**, defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn”, was contrasted with pedagogy (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). The five assumptions underlying andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centred and interested in immediate applications of knowledge and (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. While as many as five different conceptualisations of andragogy can be identified (Savicevic, 1991), the common element is a “philosophy of lifelong education in which education and learning of adults is of primary importance” (Savicevic, 1991, p. 116).

The shortcomings of andragogy have been discussed widely in the literature (e.g. Davenport, 1987; Ferro et al., 1997; Henschke, 2010; Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000; Merriam, 2001). Addressing the first criticism that andragogy is not a theory, in 1989 Knowles refers to andragogy as “a model of assumptions about learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent theory” (p. 112). In response to the second criticism that the five assumptions were not necessarily true of all adults (and may even apply to children in some situations), Knowles (1984) acknowledged that both pedagogical and andragogical approaches are appropriate with children and adults, depending on the situation: An adult who knows little or nothing about a topic will be more dependent on the teacher for direction, while children who are naturally curious and self-directing in their learning outside of school could also be more self-directed in school. Thus, Knowles (1980) concurred that andragogy versus pedagogy may be repre-

¹ For instance, ‘humanogogy’ (a theory of learning that takes into account the differences between people of various ages as well as their similarities) and ‘synergogy’ (systematic approach to learning in which the members of small teams learn from one another through structured interactions).

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات