Learner-Centered Perspective and Technology

McCombs & Whisler (1997) present the following working definition of learner centered:

> The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners (their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners). This dual focus then informs and drives educational decision making. The learner-centered perspective is a reflection of the twelve learner-centered psychological principles[1] in the programs, practices, policies, and people that support learning for all.

The predominant approaches to education consider the learner and learning primarily from the educator's point of view. It is the educator who decides what is necessary, *from the outside* and *for the learner.* Thus, the educators define *for* students the characteristics of standards, instruction, curriculum, assessment, institutional management, and environmental support. The assumption here is that educators need to do things *to* and *for* the learner, primarily by fashioning conditions *outside* the learner.

A set of alternative approaches look *with the learner* at what learning means and how to enhance it from *within.* The learner's unique characteristics (perspectives, talents, etc.) are primary in the creation and implementation of educational frameworks and standards. The assumption here is that educators need to understand the learner's reality and to support the learning needs and capabilities of the learner.

In a traditional institutional setting, educators may find that they are overwhelmed by the prospect of addressing each individual learner's characteristics. Work in Learner-Centered Technology (LCT) provides the means to exploit technology in support of the integration of a learner-centered approach into the institutional education setting. The objectives are to maximize high standards of learning, motivation, and achievement for all learners--including both students and their teachers--using pragmatic solutions.

References

McCombs, B. L., & Whisler, J. S. (1997). *The learner-centered classroom and school: Strategies for increasing student motivation and achievement.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education, American Psychological Association (1993, January). *Learner-centered psychological principles: Guidelines for school redesign and reform.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association/Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

Board of Educational Affairs, American Psychological Association (1997, November). *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Redesign and Reform.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (1998, August 31).

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[1]The principles mentioned refer to fundamental principles about learners and learning (see http://www.jodypaul.com/LCT/LCT.PsychPrinc.html) laid out in *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform,* which resulted from an American Psychological Association (APA) special Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education. This has since been revised and made available on the web (Board of Educational Affairs, 1997).