

Paradigms of college learning and teaching*

	<u>Old paradigm</u>	<u>New paradigm</u>
Knowledge	Transferred from faculty to students	Jointly constructed by students and faculty
Ways of knowing	Logico-scientific	Narrative
Epistemology	Reductionist; facts and memorization	Constructivist; inquiry and invention

Context	Individualistic, competitive	Cooperative learning in and outside class-room and cooperative teams among faculty
Climate	Conformity, cultural uniformity	Diversity and personal esteem, cultural diversity and commonality
Relationships	Impersonal relationship among students and between students and faculty	Personal transaction among students and between students and faculty
Power	Faculty holds and exercises power, authority, and control	Students are empowered; power is shared among students and between students and faculty

Students	Passive vessel to be filled by faculty's knowledge	Active constructor, discoverer, and transformer of knowledge
Mode of learning	Memorizing	Relating
Student role, goals	Students strive to complete requirements and achieve certification within a discipline	Students strive to focus on continual lifelong learning within a broader system

Faculty purpose	Classify and sort students	Develop students' talents and competencies
Teaching assumption	Any expert can teach	Teaching is complex and requires considerable training
Assessment	Norm-referenced; typically multiple-choice items; students rate instruction at end of course	Criterion-referenced; typically performances and portfolios; continual assessment of instruction
Technology use	Drill and practice; textbook substitute; chalk and talk substitute	Problem solving, communication, collaboration, information access, expression



* Source: Campbell, Wm. E. & Smith, Karl A. (eds.), 1997. *New Paradigms for College Teaching*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, pp. 275-276. Adapted from Johnson, David W., Johnson, Roger T., & Smith, Karl A., 1991. *Active Learning: Cooperation in the college classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company. Adapted further by Linc. Fisch and used with permission of Karl A. Smith. [rrrr/fe2000]

The Old Paradigm of Teaching

The old paradigm of college teaching is based upon John Locke's assumption that the untrained mind is a blank sheet of paper waiting for the instructor to write on it. Student minds are viewed as empty vessels into which instructors pour their wisdom. Because of these and other assumptions, faculty think of teaching in terms of these principal activities:

1. Transferring knowledge from faculty to students. The faculty's job is to give it. The student's job is to get it. Faculty transmit information that students are expected to memorize and then recall.
2. Filling passive empty vessels with knowledge. Students are passive recipients of knowledge. The faculty own the knowledge that students memorize and recall.
3. Classifying students by deciding who gets which grade and sorting students into categories by deciding who does and who does not meet the requirements to be graduated, go on to graduate school, and get a good job.
4. Conducting education within a context of impersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students. Based on the Taylor model of industrial organizations, students and faculty are perceived to be interchangeable and replaceable parts in the "education machine."
5. Maintaining a competitive organizational structure in which students work to outperform their classmates and faculty work to outperform their colleagues.
6. Assuming that anyone with expertise in their field can teach without training to do so. This is sometimes known as the content premise-- if you have a PhD in the field, you can teach.

The old paradigm is to transfer the faculty's knowledge to a passive student so that faculty can classify and sort students in a norm-referenced, competitive way. The assumption was that if you have content expertise, you can teach.

Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith. *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interactive, 1991.

Cited at <http://home.capecod.net/~tpanitz/>

The New Paradigm of Teaching

College teaching is changing. We are dropping the old paradigm of teaching and adopting a new paradigm based on theory and research that has clear applications to instruction. Faculty ought to think of teaching in terms of several principal activities.

1. Knowledge is constructed, discovered, transformed and extended by students. Faculty create the conditions within which students can construct meaning from material studies by processing it through existing cognitive structures and then retaining it in long-term memory where it remains open to further processing and possible reconstruction.
2. Students actively construct their own knowledge. Learning is conceived of as something a learner does, not something that is done to the learner. Students do not passively accept knowledge from the instructor or curriculum. Students activate their existing cognitive structures or construct new ones to subsume the new input.
3. Faculty effort is aimed at developing students' competencies and talents. In the new paradigm, the emphasis is on the development of student competencies and talents which are considered dynamic and always susceptible to change.
4. Education is a personal transaction among students and between the faculty and students as they work together. All education is a social process that cannot occur except through interpersonal interaction (real or implied). Learning is a personal but social process that results when individuals cooperate to construct shared understandings and knowledge. Faculty must be able to build positive relationships with students and to create the conditions within which students build caring and committed relationships with each other. The college then becomes a learning community of committed scholars in the truest sense.
5. All of the above can only take place within a cooperative context. Ideally, administrators would in turn create a cooperative, team-based organizational structure within which faculty work together to ensure each other's success.
6. Teaching is assumed to be a complex application of theory and research that requires considerable instructor training and continuous refinement of skills and procedures. Becoming a good teacher requires at least one lifetime of continuous effort to improve.