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# Student-centred approach in higher education: bridging research with policy and practice

Dr. Manja Klemenčič  
Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
Harvard University

# Outline

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**I Why student-centred approach?**

**II What is student-centred approach in higher education?**

**III How to implement student-centred approach in higher education?**

# I Why student-centred approach?

Modern societies emphasize on **empowered human agency**, forms of socialisation that promote active participation. **Agentic individuals** central to social stability and progress [human capital theories]. Political democracy, open market economies, cultural freedom are all built on choices of empowered individuals (cf. Schofer and Meyer). The purpose of education is raising – formation of agentic individuals.

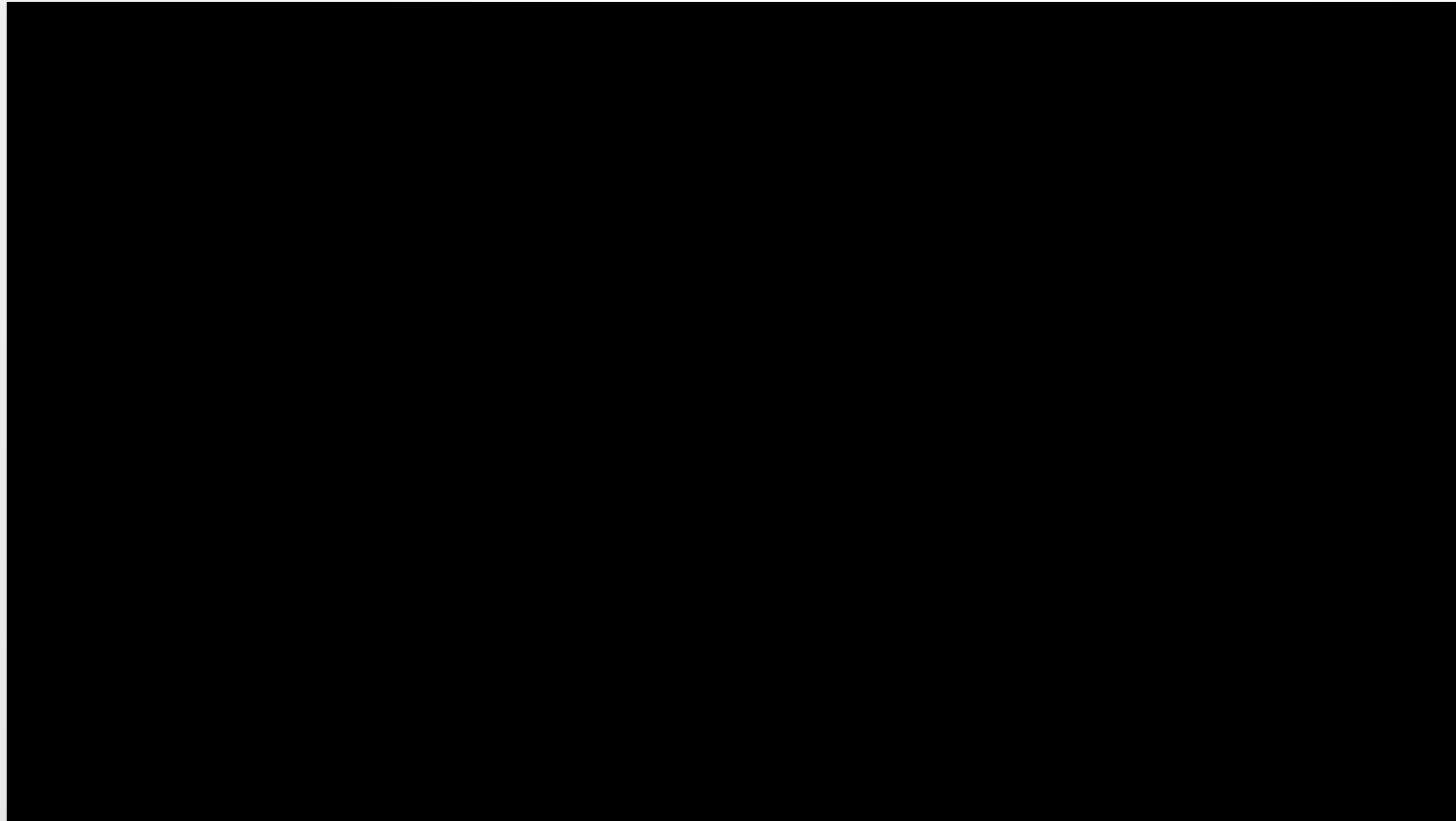
## Global trends:

- massification - pressures on quality;
- technological advances – new opportunities in education
- accountability – public benefits/value for money
- changing demands of knowledge society/economy- nature of employment
- “students” are changing...more diverse, different learning styles, different circumstances

## Does it work?

Student engagement literature (Kuh et al.): students who are engaged in educationally-purposeful activities perform better academically, more employable and happier.

## A vision of students today (US) [by Michael Wesch]



## II What is student-centred approach in higher education?

Are students people to whom things are done, or people who are learning to do things and doing things for themselves? Are they subjects or masters of their own learning and formation?

**Student-centred approach recognises students' core responsibility for their own learning, makes them active participants in the learning process and helps them develop meta knowledge about and self-regulation in their learning pursuits. [own definition]**

Grounded in **constructivist** [as opposed to positivist] **learning theory** which conceives learning as an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge that takes place in interdependent interactions between students and teachers rather than students seen as merely acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is generated and meanings to knowledge constructed from interactions between personal experiences and interactions within learning environments/learning communities.

# IIa Central tenants of student-centred approach – STUDENTS' perspective

**More students' responsibility:** student takes responsibility for own learning as opposed to assuming teachers' responsibility and control over students' learning

**More students' autonomy:** when a student's behavior is experienced as willingly enacted; when student fully endorses the actions in which engaged and/or values expressed by them (cf. Deci and Ryan 1985)

**Stronger students' efficacy:** students' judgment of and belief in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives (cf. Bandura 2001)

**Cultivating students' self-regulation** (Zimmerman 2010): the process by which a student controls (makes conscious decisions about) own learning trajectory in higher education and it comprises:

- *forethought* (task analysis - goal setting/strategic planning, and self-motivation beliefs – goal orientation/self-efficacy/interest);
- *performance* (self-control – time management/help seeking, and self-observation – metacognitive self-monitoring/self-recording) and
- *self-reflection*: self-judgement/self-evaluation/self-satisfaction)

# Iib Central tenants of student-centred approach – TEACHERS' perspective

**Teachers' responsibility:** Teachers remain co-responsible for students' learning, but not solely responsible and not fully in control as to what and how students learn and how they are assessed. There is shared responsibility.

**Teacher-student relationships:** There is **interdependence** (indeed partnership) between teachers and students in pursuit of learning, which is based on mutual respect and shared interests. There are ongoing conversations/consultations/collective negotiations on content, method and assessment of learning.

## **Expectations on teachers:**

- to design active (vs passive) learning activities
- to design formative assessment – to aid learning rather than simply to check acquisition
- to put emphasis on deep understanding, problem-solving, creativity
- to a reflexive approach to teaching (thinking what you do, why you do it, does it work – self-observation, self-evaluation, self-improvement)
- to work with students in partnership



# IIc Central tenants of student-centred approach – ADMINISTRATORS' perspective

## **Administrators' responsibility:**

- nurturing institutional culture that emphasizes quality of teaching and learning
- incentivizes, rewards and supports development and innovation in teaching and learning
- designs support systems and spaces for quality teaching and learning – physical spaces, libraries, on-line environments, student support services,
- involves students as partners in decision-making
- thinks about institutional profiles, mission, strategic partnerships in terms of teaching and learning
- employs, strengthens and highlights the existing institutional capacities to strengthen quality of teaching and learning





# III How to implement student-centred approach in higher education?

## **Programme planning and evaluations:**

- on-going monitoring and periodical review of programmes: more emphasis on learning activities (pedagogical methods) and mode of delivery
- student learning outcomes linked with formative assessment
- individual course evaluations
- students' workload, progression, completion, employability
- learning environment and support services
- students involved

## **Institutional planning and evaluations:**

- student engagement surveys
- student complaints procedures
- strengthen capacity of student unions and partnership with student unions in QA, student services, curriculum planning
- planning of libraries, learning spaces, access to digital resources.



# III How to implement student-centred approach in higher education?

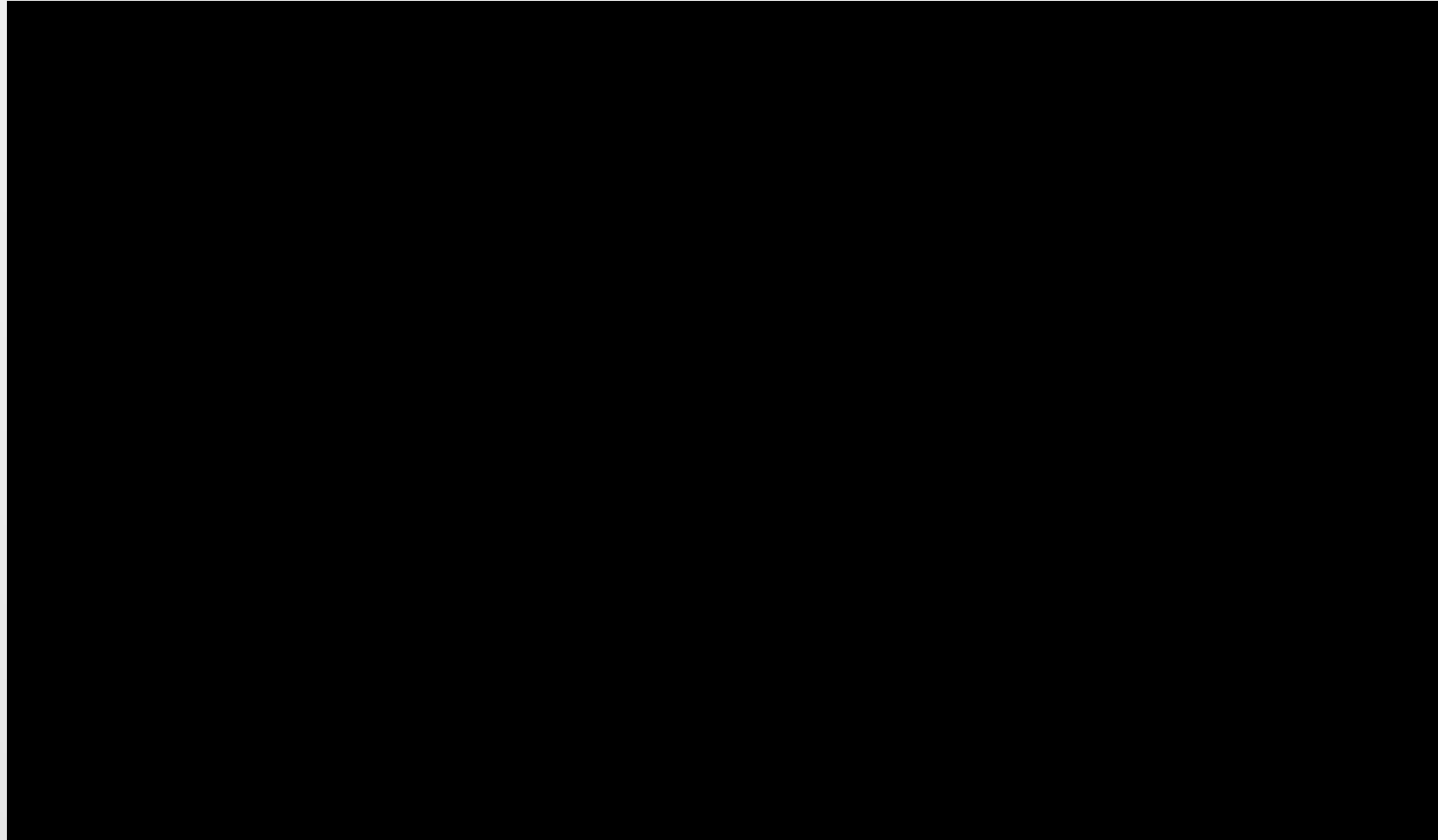
## **Teaching staff:**

- training/certificates in teaching?
- teaching portfolios as part of hiring and promotion
- PhD students trained for teaching – volunteering as teaching assistants
- **professional development for teachers:**
  - intra-disciplinary workshops on: teaching in large classes; assessment tools that support learning, flipped classroom
  - mini-grants for teachers that wish to improve or innovate teaching material or entire program make-over

## **Strengthening learning resources and support services for students:**

- advising/counselling in learning skills, self-regulated learning, career counselling, tutors, advisors
- partnership between student unions and administrators in offering these services; training opportunities for administrators in support services and student tutors
- libraries, physical and digital learning spaces,

Flipped classroom [by [www.MediaCore.com](http://www.MediaCore.com)]





THANK YOU. [manjaklemencic@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:manjaklemencic@fas.harvard.edu)