

LEARNING MATTERS at LINGNAN

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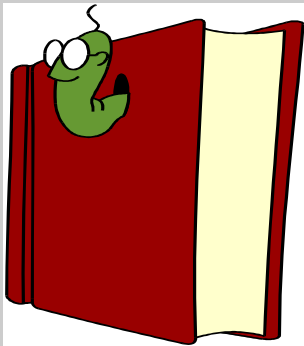
TEACHING & LEARNING CENTRE

05/99

12 April 1999

From the Editor:

*Some favourable feedback was received on **Learning Matters at Lingnan** since its first edition, which indicates that colleagues are concerned about student learning, and are appreciative of efforts to promote the dialogue on teaching and learning. To keep the dialogue going, I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the College. It would be something of a very welcome breakthrough if we have someone from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre providing copy for us to consider in the future.*

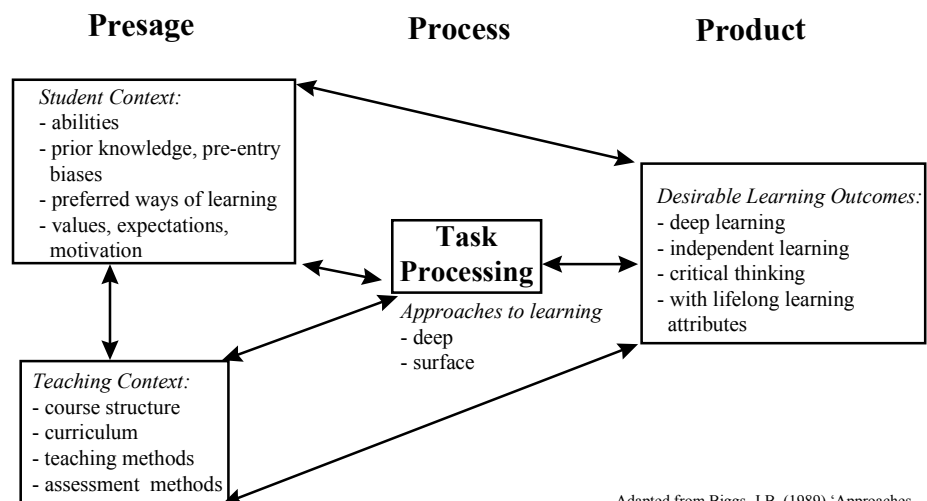


Promoting Deep Learning: A Conceptual Model

There is a need for education today to move away from an emphasis upon teaching towards a perspective which emphasizes learning. This orientation, often referred to as 'learner centredness' provides a conceptual framework for describing how a learner defines his or her world of learning and comes to terms with it by engaging in the process of learning he or she finds relevant to personal goals and interests.

This edition attempts to conceptualize teaching and learning from the perspective of the learner using John Biggs' 3-P model, to extend what is already known about effective teaching and learning, and to synthesize results in meaningful, directly applicable ways.

The 3-P Model of Learning (Biggs, 1989)



Adapted from Biggs, J.B. (1989) 'Approaches to the enhancement of tertiary teaching', *Higher Education Research and Development* 8, 7-25.

P.T.O.
The overall assumption that Biggs has about learning through this 3-P

Presage

model is that learning outcomes are a result of the interactions of the teaching and learning contexts with the student approaches to learning. Both student and teaching presage factors interact to produce an approach to learning, which produces its characteristic outcome.

Students bring into the learning system some predispositions that are learning-related, such as prior knowledge, abilities, values and expectations, ways of learning. These learning-related characteristics are referred to as the student presage factors that have a direct impact on the ways students choose to process academic tasks.

The teaching context is the environment set by the teacher and the institution, through the course structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching and assessment. Students perceive and interpret the teaching context and adopt a study approach that they think will help them to meet the demands of the teachers and the courses.

Process

Hence, an approach to learning is not simply a fixed attribute of the learner, but a function of both learner characteristics and the teaching factors. The student and teaching contexts when combined, will produce a particular approach to learning which is broadly conceptualized as either 'deep' or 'surface' (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). The approach that students use to process academic tasks is referred to as the 'Process' phase in Biggs' 3-P model of learning.

A 'deep' approach is indicated by an intention to understand the material to be learnt, using strategies such as reading widely, combining a variety of resources, discussion, reflection, relating parts to a whole, and applying knowledge in real world situations. An intention to reproduce the material to be learnt and avoid failure through regurgitating information and using rote learning techniques characterizes the 'surface' approach.

Product

The 'Product' phase of the 3-P model suggests that study approaches are related to qualitative differences in learning outcomes. The deep approach will produce high quality learning outcomes, while a surface approach will result in lower quality outcomes.

The 3P's (Presage, Process and Product) when combined explain what learning is about. It involves the interaction of the student and teaching contexts to produce a particular approach to learning, either deep or surface, which affects the quality of learning outcomes.

The message to us is: if we are to encourage the development of quality learning outcomes in our students, such as deep learning, understanding, independent learning, critical and creative thinking, problem solving and other lifelong learning attributes, we may need to create contexts that discourage surface, and encourage deep approaches to learning.

Maureen Tam
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References:

- Biggs, J.B. (1989) 'Approaches to the enhancement of tertiary teaching', *Higher Education Research and Development* 8, 7-25.
- Entwistle, N.J., and Ramsden, P. (1983) *Understanding Student Learning*. London: Croom Helm.