



Traditional vs. Learner-Centered Education: The Value of the Dialogical Model in Philosophy Education

While it is possible to integrate philosophy into the regular classroom setting, traditional classroom methods, like the traditional model, aren't the most effective. Instead, shifting to a learner-centered, dialogical model can aid in understanding and learning. It is important to understand the difference between the two.

1. Traditional Education

- Focuses on preparing students for the future.
- Might follow a “banking model” where the teacher “deposits” information into the students’ minds.
- In this model, the role of student is to be a passive recipient of knowledge.
- In this model, the role of teacher is to act as an authoritative distributor of knowledge.

Pros:

- Effective in transferring information from the teacher to students.
- Helps the teacher maintain direct control of the classroom.

Cons:

- Some students may find this learning style to be more restrictive.

2. Dialogical, Learner-Centered Education

- Learning takes place through dialogue and is treated as an ongoing process.
- In this model, the student is an active partner in the learning process.
- In this model, the role of the teacher is to be a facilitator of dialogue and discussion. They must be comfortable with ambiguity.

Pros:

- Students learn more and perform better.
- Helps the teacher create a space for students to feel comfortable to share their beliefs and ideas in a more fulfilling way.

Cons:

- More difficult to control the arc of the conversation.

Implementing a Learner-Centered, Dialogical Model:

Dialogue is not the same thing as conversation. In a classroom conversation, students typically state options or feelings to the teacher, and there is often very little back and forth between students. In a dialogue, on the other hand, opinions or feelings act as a *starting point*. The dialogue develops as students and teachers seek a deeper understanding together.

Teachers can help set a good example by demonstrating the importance of questioning and critical reflection. Many students are taught that coming up with the right answer is the most important thing, and teachers need to demonstrate the value of questioning and thinking as well. Teachers can also facilitate conversation by building relationships of respect and care, which are essential for establishing a space conducive to dialogue. This has to happen early and can be facilitated through having conversations about care and respect.

Other helpful tips:

1. It is valuable to work as a group to come up with guidelines for discussion.
2. Discussions begin well with carefully selected prompts or mediums of art or music. These can be more effective than direct questions.
3. The teacher as facilitator can pull out questions to move the conversation along and can also help students develop their ideas.

Lone, Jana Mohr, and Michael D. Burroughs. 2016. "Learner-Centered Education and the Dialogical Model."
In *Philosophy in Education: Questioning and Dialogue in Schools*, 31-40. Lanham: Rowman &
Littlefield.

