

---

*International Forum*  
*Vol. 19, No. 2*  
*October 2016*  
*pp. 136-138*

**BOOK REVIEW**  
*Mak Chung Yin*

***Make Learning Personal: The What, Who, WOW, Where and Why***, by Barbara Bray & Kathleen McClaskey. Published by Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2015 (251 pages).

Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey are educational technologists. Both constructed twenty-first-century classrooms and a sustainable learner-centered environment by creating online communities for teachers and learners for more than twenty years. Since 2012, their passion about transforming teaching and learning drove them to talk and write about personalized learning almost every day. They categorize stages that help teacher adapt gradually to their role of transforming the teacher-centered classroom to a learner-driven environment. The book is about the paradigm shift to the 21<sup>st</sup> century personalized learning approach.

The authors used 5 Ws to build up the backbone of the whole book: (a) What is personalized learning? (b) Who are your learners? (b) Wow! Teacher and learner roles are changing; (c) Where is personalized learning happening? (d) Why personalize learning? The first principal argument is the distinction between learners and students. Learners would take their responsibilities of learning, but a teacher or educational organization might take the responsibilities of students' learning. Zmuda, Curtis, and Ullman (2015) address the same idea that technology is the only vehicle in helping pedagogical shift to student-centered learning when the teacher's role changes from lecturer to coach.

The second critical argument in this book is the set of definitions for personalization, differentiation, and individualization. For individualization, the teacher provides instruction to an individual learner. For differentiation, the teacher provides instruction to groups of learners. For the personalization, however, the learners drive their learning. The authors emphasize the Wow factor that involves "ecology of learning" (p.75) into a personalized learning environment. Subsequently, learners take the initiative of learning. Moreover, Garfield and Roland (2015) promote creating thinking classroom for the 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and also emphasize both the importance of student engagement and self-regulation in learners, and indispensable technology application.

The third argument is that rapid development of technology has provided a strong tool for storing and retrieving global database resources that establish a sound foundation for personalized learning. The authors of this book have extensive experience blending technology in personalized learning development for more personalized learning designs. Trilling and Fadel (2009) believe that the trend of self-learning mode by highlighting daily learning with the technology support helps achieve lifelong learning. Bray and McClaskey (2015) have clearly espoused and implemented this big idea. The practicality of this big idea is at the core of this book under review.

To support their philosophy of learning, the authors quoted from several learning theorists, grounded in research, reinforced by a rich scope of examples from the United States and elsewhere, a great model of the journey of change centered on the learner. The clear, important, and useful presentation in this book is a guide for the reader to move from today's teacher-centered learning toward greater students' motivational learning.

The authors emphasized that everyone is a learner, and that learning can be personalized. The authors recognized, however, that it is hard to let students take control of their learning. Students may be self-motivated and self-monitored but not self-directed. Once teachers pose a question to guide students' learning direction, students may start learning with the help of various tools and mass of data from technology. Similarly, God gave Adam and Eve clear direction of how to live without sins after providing abundant learning media in nature to them.

Finally, the two authors are totally convincing about the philosophy behind personalized learning, which will be the trend of the future education due to the rapid development of the technology. The authors of this book are not only theorists but also practical pioneers of writing and teaching personalized learning. They have carefully analyzed and distinguished the relationship among the definitions of individualism, differentiation, and personalization to uplift the role of real learner-centered learning. Moreover, the structure of the book helps the authors clearly present personalized learning in an organized and easy way that makes this book easy to read. This book is critically essential for those who prefer to build up the learners' role. The book can be used as a practical handbook for educators who desire to empower their learners.

**References**

- Garfield, G. N., & Roland, C. (2015). *Creating thinking classrooms: Leading educational change for a 21<sup>st</sup> century world*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association.
- Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21<sup>st</sup> century skills: Learning for life in our times*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Zmuda, A., Curtis, G., & Ullman, D. (2015). *Learning personalized: The evolution of contemporary classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

*Mak Chung Yin, PhD Student  
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies  
Silang, Cavite, Philippines  
makcy@aiaas.edu*