

## The Golden Shadow of Classroom as Organization



MOBTC 2018 at Coastal Carolina University

Reflective Reinvention: Harnessing our Heritage to Reshape Management

### Abstract (100 word maximum)

Classroom as organization (CAO) has not become widely adopted. Why is this? The leap from employing experiential activities to implementing CAO can be exacerbated by two shadows: the individual shadow related to being a competent teacher and the institutional shadow related to creativity and learning. This session will facilitate a discussion on each of these with the intended outcomes to: 1) explore the realities of implementing CAO, and 2) support participants to identify their learning edge in experiential teaching. The target audience for the session includes anyone interested in leveraging real-time organizational dynamics that occur in the classroom.

### Three Keywords

Classroom-as-organization, shadow, experiential learning

## Introduction.

Classroom as organization (CAO) is a pedagogical approach that aims to "create genuine organizational issues for students, to put them in the position of an organizational member" (Cohen, 1976, p. 14). Proponents of CAO speak passionately about it and suggest they would never go back to regular teaching. And yet, since its initial description by Cohen (1976), CAO has not come close to replacing the traditional lecture format of teaching, nor has it become widely adopted. Why is this? The leap from employing experiential activities to implementing CAO can be exacerbated by two shadows: the individual shadow related to being a competent teacher and the institutional shadow related to creativity and learning. This session will facilitate a discussion on each of these, invite participants to reflect on where they sit on a continuum, and discuss both the potential and challenges of moving their practice towards CAO. The intended outcomes are: 1) to explore the realities of implementing CAO, and 2) to support participants to identify their learning edge in experiential teaching. The target audience for the session includes anyone interested in leveraging real-time organizational dynamics that occur in the classroom.

## Theoretical Background

The literature on CAO begins with the work of three scholars who described their experiments in creating and harnessing organizational dynamics in the classroom (Cohen 1976, Cotton 1976, Clare 1976). As described by Cohen (1976) the objective of the CAO:

...is not to simulate an organization, but rather to create genuine organizational issues for students, to put them in the position of an organizational member who must deal with such problems as: how does work get allocated; how does one work with others who bring different expertise to tasks; how does one influence and motivate subordinates, peers and superiors; how does one cope with ambiguity in solving difficult tasks which do not have any obviously correct single answer;

how can disagreements among coworkers be resolved; and how will decisions be made (Cohen, 1976, p. 14).

A simple metaphor is helpful to understand the value of CAO: one does not learn how to play basketball by memorizing the rules and dissecting how others play, you need to play the game. Similarly, learning the nuances of management and organizational behavior requires stepping into the reality of organizational life. CAO enables a holistic, integrative and developmental experience.

Experiential learning varies according to the length and intensity of the experience (Sleeth & Brown 1984). Individual experiential activities employed to illustrate or reinforce course concepts would sit at one end of a continuum: short in duration and limited intensity. Organizing students into teams and employing team-based learning (Michaelson 2002) across the whole semester increases both the length and intensity of the experiential intervention). Classroom as organization (CAO) is a high intensity experiential learning activity that unfolds over the course of a whole semester.

The requisite complexity for an effective CAO design requires faculty to adopt a very different role, to engage with students as a coach rather than an instructor, and to relinquish control over content delivery. As described by Putzel (2007):

No one praises you for giving a brilliant lecture, you don't lecture. If you have something insightful to say, you think of which team should be saying it, tell them about it; they will say it and get all of the credit.  
[CAO] succeeds when students succeed (p. 142).

More importantly, the professor must be willing to “open the class to mistakes, to pathology, to woe. XB is a roller coaster for Senior Manager” (Putzel, 2007, p. 142). The need to adopt an unfamiliar role (i.e. to adopt a learning stance), to embrace the emotional landscape of learning, and to relinquish control are direct challenges to the competence compulsion (Bushe 2010), or the ego, of most academics. Oh, hello shadow!

According to Jung, "everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is" (Jung, 1938/2014a, p. 76). The shadow contains everything that has been rejected, and repressed by us because these traits do not fit with the persona that we have cultivated. It is everything we consciously are not. This shadow content then is the undesirable us, and is often somewhat underdeveloped, inferior and crude in expression as we try not to act from this part of us. For this reason, our initial understanding of the shadow is that it is negative in content, occupying space in our psyche as a mysterious and troublesome unwanted self. It is equally important to understand the positive potential contained in the shadow, the golden shadow, as "(n)ovel thoughts and innovative ideas that have never been conscious before can emerge from the subconscious" (Ketola, 2008, p. 200). A more nuanced view of the shadow enables growth, fuels creativity and facilitates becoming authentically whole (Jung, 2014b). It represents unused potential. Beyond the individual shadow a person's psyche is also informed by the cultural shadow and collective shadow. These represent personal shadow scaled to the group level or to humanity as a whole (Ketola, 2008). Both individual and group level shadow are relevant to understanding the challenge of adopting CAO.

**Institutional shadow: Innovation versus standardization.** The 'persona' of a typical business school embraces innovation in order to create high impact learning experiences that deliver relevant skills. Consequently, CAO would seem to be a highly desirable approach to management education. In reality, the institutional shadow of innovation is the bureaucratic standardization that many schools have embraced in the pursuit of accreditation.

**Individual shadow: Control versus chaos.** Professors, in fact all professionals, seek to be competent and confident in their role. The journey from

novice to master as an academic unwittingly points towards emulating a ‘sage on the stage’. We consciously attempt to maintain control in an attempt to deliver consistent results and feel competent at our vocation. Adopting CAO requires faculty to embrace a learning curve that is fraught with ambiguity and chaos, student complaints, criticism from colleagues and low student evaluations. The XB classroom shifts the role of the professor. By necessity, to manage the unfolding experience of XB and to facilitate the learning process the professor needs to embrace either an empowering leadership stance or a coach as leader stance.

### Session Description

This 60-minute session will begin with a brief framing of the conversation followed by an open discussion. A broad design plan is as follows:

Time	Objective	Content
0-2	Welcome & Introduction	Introduce speakers Outline format of the session
2-4	Icebreaker & acknowledging ‘what’s in the room’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up if you know generally what CAO is!</li> <li>• Stay standing if you are pretty much an expert in CAO!</li> <li>• Stand up if you have implemented/experimented with CAO in some way.</li> <li>• Stay standing if you learned something in the process. (Ask what they learned – stated in one sentence).</li> <li>• Stand up if you want to get better at and/or experiment with CAO.</li> </ul>
4-7	Create common mental model of what constitutes CAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present skeleton of CAO (1 slide max): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Variation in length and intensity of experiential learning. CAO is at far end of both</li> <li>○ Key components of CAO that different versions tend to vary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structure</li> <li>▪ Control over grading</li> <li>▪ Control over content delivery</li> <li>▪ Etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide HANDOUT of key resources on CAO.</li> </ul>
7-10	Check in	NEWBIES on CAO: Do you have any questions so far?

		OLD HATS on CAO: Anything you would add?
10-13	Create common mental model of shadow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present skeleton of shadow (1 slide max): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The parts of us we have disowned ‘I AM NOT....’</li> <li>Also contains potential (i.e. golden shadow)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
13-16	Check in	NEWBIES on shadow: Do you have any questions so far? OLD HATS on shadow: Anything you would add?
16-20	Apply shadow to CAO	Individual Shadows Institutional Shadows
20-50	Open discussion	What is your experience in implementing CAO? What shadows emerged for you personally? What did you do with that? Were you able to incorporate/transcend that shadow? If so, how?  How does the idea of institutional shadow resonate with your experience? What ideas do you have for incorporating/transcending this?
50-60	Close	Summary of discussion & next steps.

### Resource Needs

There are no additional resource requirements beyond the typically available classroom resources (i.e. PC computer/projector, whiteboard/markers)

### Conference Track

Non-themed conference track.

### Unique Contribution

This is a unique piece of work that has not been presented before at MOBTS or elsewhere. We are in the process of developing a paper on this topic but it is not currently under review elsewhere.

### MOBTS Experience

This is the first time submitting to MOBTS for the second author. This is the second time submitting to MOBTS for the first author.

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