

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ADULT LEARNERS

(Speech at the Celebrating Pedagogy Conversation Panel-X, October 1, 2007)

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I have learned that each teaching strategy will have different effects on the attainment of learning outcomes in each student, based on the attributes and use of the strategy, in addition to learning and cognitive styles and learning preferences.

Knowles' Principles

I have found Knowles' key principles of adult learning very helpful:

- Assume responsibility for one's own learning and recognition of meaning or usefulness of information to be learned.
- Students in the health professions are very career oriented and need to see practical value in their educational endeavors.

Adult Learners

As consumers, adult students need to believe that they are receiving the maximum benefit from their learning experiences. They are taking charge of their own learning is empowering. Students who gain a sense of self-responsibility can feel empowered in other areas of their lives such as professional practice.

Faculty Responsibility

I believe faculty has the responsibility to cultivate empowerment and to effect learning outcomes.

Classroom environment

The classroom environment should be fresh and challenging each time the class meets. I believe that Faculty should endeavor to provide variety in the manner in which I teach, rather than the same, predictable method of "telling, rather than teaching."

Effective Learning

As providers of information, instructors need to remember that learning is best brought about by a combination of motivation and stimulation. Effective learning goes beyond the role of the faculty as performer and provider of knowledge. The effective instructor should be the facilitator of learning in the students.

Motivation

In professional education, motivation is gained when the relationship to the well-being of the client is pointed out. The value of faculty experience is evident when the nurse teacher shares his or her own professional experiences and uses these anecdotes as examples of client outcomes.

Teaching strategies

Students are more likely to remember information with which they can agree or relate, and forget that with which they disagree. Disagreement or disharmony should be explored in an objective fashion. Viewpoints can then be strengthened or altered. Questioning and discussion should be based on the diversity that exists among the students. An openness to and acceptance of others (emerging from feminist theory) along with Perry's stage of multiplicity, benefits male students who are incorporated into a female-dominated profession.

Conversely, female students who are accustomed to a male-dominated world may have difficulty expressing openness about their own learning experiences. An instructor who is able to establish a sense of trust and confidence with the students can promote the expression of different perspectives likely to be found in a group.

I believe that faculty should show that various viewpoints are welcome, legitimate, and worthy of discussion. Teachers can cultivate further development in the individual learners by demonstrating how to critique a theory, develop a rationale, or work through the steps of problem solving. The strategies will facilitate growth in students who are in an early cognitive stage such as dualism, or will challenge more advanced students to a commitment of realism.

Teaching strategies: Ausbel

Delivery of information should be based on instructional theory in addition to content expertise. Using Ausubel's principles of advanced organizer, the teacher can develop inductive discovery by which students can build on previously acquired, simplistic knowledge to develop new or broader concepts.

Teaching strategies: Kolb

Information from Kolb's four dimensions serves as an excellent example:

- Students who are convergers readily become bored with straight lecture, especially with topics that are abstract in nature. These students work better by themselves so they are less likely to participate well in a group.
- Learners with the diverger style learn from case studies and will actively participate in discussion, but they may have difficulty detaching personal values from the issue. These students are often visionary group leaders.
- Individuals with the assimilator style manipulate ideas well, so they will participate well in discussion, or write comprehensive papers; however, these students may be less practical and have difficulty with some of the realism of nursing practice.
- Accommodators usually enjoy case studies, new or unusual teaching strategies, skill lab, and tinkering with new equipment. These learners tend to be more responsive to a challenging complex situation.

Teaching strategies: Guided Reflection & Journaling

Guided reflection, especially reflection on action, helps students bring closure to an experience, as well as conduct self-evaluation and gain from the experience. Journal writing is one of the most effective means by which students can capture their thoughts and responses and preserve these ideas in writing for subsequent consideration. This strategy is particularly useful as a means by which students can identify and modify impulsive-reflective tendencies. Journal writing has the best results with divergers and

assimilators, and some students may benefit from open discussion about the experiences entered into their journals.

Feedback from faculty is crucial and should be as thoughtful as the entries provided by the students. Faculty reading journals should guide the student in growth and insight and patterns of reflection.

Teaching strategies: Blend

One of the biggest challenges for me is in developing a blend of strategies to bring about effective learning in all students. Part of the challenge is the fit between my styles and learning preferences and that of each of the learners. I have to keep in mind and be aware of my approaches to learning and how these approaches enhance or hinder the learning of others.

Teaching strategies: Research

A study by Ostmo *et al.* in 1984 indicated that baccalaureate nursing students prefer traditional, teacher directed teaching strategies and are less interested in innovative alternative strategies. Does this persist?

The foci on critical thinking, decision making and active learning have changed the nature of nursing education to such an extent that innovative strategies are selected as the best approach to meet the learning outcomes.

Moffett and Hill discovered as having a positive influence on learning outcomes was preparation for class. Student preparation may be linked to motivation and interest in the subject

Summary

Effective learning is more than merely the results of good teaching. It is enhanced by a learning environment that includes active interactions among faculty, students, and student peers. Effective learning is achieved through the use of creative strategies designed not to entertain but to inform and stimulate.

The best ways we can bring about effective learning are by recognizing students as individuals, with unique, personal ways of knowing and learning, by creating learning situations that recognize diversity, and by providing empowering experiences in which students are challenged to think!

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