Purpose and Beliefs

The purpose of teaching is to give students important, applicable information and guide them through content so they know when and how to apply it withinin their lives. My goal is that students become knowledgeable, independent learners and thinkers. Upon entering the real-world they will need to make informed decisions based on facts and the context of the situation. Inevitably, there will come a time when they will be presented with a situation in which they should question the decision that was made. The very fact they can question shows a deep connection with the material. However, before they verbalize this question, they should be able to find information to validate their way of thinking, or the another person's, proving themselves to be self-regulated learners. These are the markings of an independent learner and thinker.

I also believe the purpose of teaching is to give students other skills to succeed in the real-world aside from specific class content. Teamwork is a valuable real-world skill. Within teamwork lie other skills including listening, negotiating, encouraging and collaborating.

I fully believe in a learning-centered approach to education. Learning should focus on what the students can and should learn. My job as an educator is to decide how best to facilitate and guide this learning (Fink, 2005). With this method, there is a better chance for positive and significant learning to occur.

My preference for teaching follows an apprenticeship model as measured by the Teaching Perspective Inventory, and is closely followed by transformative and developmental styles of instruction. I must model what I expect of the students and pull class knowledge into real-life scenarios (Pratt, 1998). In addition, I believe in creating open learning environments focused on the learner. My hope is to create experiences that bring students to discover knowledge and ask questions of their own which in turn stimulates more learning (Bain, ch. 2, 2004). My goal is to not merely cover or go through content but to have students uncover it (Weimer, ch. 3, 2002). If they discover information and make connections for themselves, learning is occurring at a deeper, more memorable level.

The Learners

The type of students within the program I am hopeful of teaching within are very hands-on learners. As I have observed thus far, they are highly concerned with performance and mastery of skills. They present with both converging and accommodating learning styles as described by Kolb's theory on experiential learning. Both types are hands-on and

take practical approaches to problem-solving. Accommodating learners look for new challenges and like to carry out plans. They thrive in action and initiative roles and often prefer to work in teams. Converging learners like to find practical uses for theories. They like to take these theories and experiment and work with practical applications.

These students are fueled by various motivations. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors lie within each student though each presents with varying degrees of each (McKeachie, ch. 11, 2010). As an instructor, I must recognize these in my students and acknowledge their various motivations. Extrinsically motivated students may be motivated by grades or meeting other given objectives. Individuals who present with more intrinsic motivation may be hampered by extrinsic rewards. Keeping various motivations in mind will help guide learning activities and assessments.

Methods

To accommodate these respective learning styles, information must be presented and then various activities should be built around that information. These activities should often involve problem-solving both individually and in groups.

While these students learn in similar fashions, information still needs to be presented in a variety of ways. As an educator, I must respect the diverse talents and different ways of learning of the students (Chickering, 2007; McKeachie, ch. 17, 2010). Lecture, real-life examples, discussions, learning activities both in groups and individually will be utilized in class.

Active learning activities have shown to be more effective than passive learning. Students can remember more when they can make meaningful connections. My goal is to create diverse learning experiences to reach as many students as possible and encourage disciplinary thinking (Bain, ch. 5, 2004). These activities link disciplinary awareness with the practicing of their skills (Hooks, 1994).

Lectures will present information in a logical sequence and allow for student interaction and reflection throughout, maintaining active rather than passive learning. Lectures will also inform students how to think about the readings and give them a guide to learning about the content (McKeachie, ch. 6, 2010). Discussions and activities will guide student learning and problem-solving abilities. In addition, group work will help build their teamwork skills.

According to Ambrose (ch. 4, 2010), students must acquire information, have time to practice and perfect their skills and then knowing when to appropriately apply them leads to what is considered mastery of the skill or content. Students need time to practice their skills and then should subsequently be allowed to work on their decision-making

skills, under appropriate guidance of course. Kolb's theory on experiential learning rings true with these students; they learn well when they are physically involved in something, beyond merely thinking about a situation. They are taking their own concrete experiences, reflecting on them in conjunction with synthesizing new information and practicing their newly-learned skills, leading to another concrete experience. The best experiential learning outcomes occur when information is presented in context of real-life situations (McKeachie, ch. 15, 2010). Even an approximation of real-life context (classroom vs. athletic setting) helps engrain information which leads to deeper learning. Learning activities will reflect real-life scenarios and through this, students will have an opportunity to make meaningful connections between the classroom and real-life. They can then take these skills and use them within the athletic setting and continue to improve upon them.

Learning to transfer classroom knowledge and skills to a new context requires time, patience and practice. They must be allowed adequate time to practice and receive prompt positive, non-judgmental feedback (Bain, ch. 2, 2004). The sooner feedback is received the sooner they can reflect on their performance and make the necessary improvements. By allowing them time to practice their improved skills, it gives them an opportunity to be independent. This independence fosters some nervousness and anxiety. Letting them function successfully in that state simulates real-life scenarios and also allows them to then move into a new comfort zone after they have realized their capabilities (Weimer, ch. 8, 2002).

Assessment of Learning

Within the realm of athletic training and healthcare, knowledge means taking evidence-based information and the context of the situation into consideration and making the best decision possible. In making this decision, they must keep the patient's best interest in mind. These students need to take information and apply it to real situations with real patients. They must also be able to ask the question of "why". Why was decision *x* made knowing it would lead to outcome *y* which is not in the best interest of the patient? They need to be able to assess their own decision-making skills and ask the same question of "why".

Learning will, in part, be assessed by presenting the student with a real-life scenario and observing how they handle it. Are they able to draw on information and apply it appropriately to make a sound medical decision regarding a patient and the given situation?

Assessment of learning should be conducted prior to assigning a grade to learning. Students should be given an opportunity to struggle with their thoughts or skills and then given appropriate feedback (Bain, ch. 3, 2004). After receiving feedback, they should then again be given a chance to impart their knowledge or perform skills before receiving a grade.

Within the program, high expectations are set for these students. These expectations need to be communicated to them in addition to giving them the academic support needed to achieve them. Within my course(s) I will provide early success opportunities to help build confidence. To them, the end goal of mastery of skills may seem daunting, but if they see the goal as achievable, they will work harder to achieve it (Ambrose, ch. 3, 2010). These early success opportunities make the end goal seem more realistic and therefore, more achievable.

Practicing their skills and knowing how to utilize their knowledge and having received feedback helps them to realize the standards of assessment they are held to. Here, learning is enhanced as they are able to monitor their own performance and learning capabilities (Bain, ch. 2, 2004). Being able to self-assess is highly valuable and beneficial to them as they enter the professional world.

Summary

I take the learning-centered approach to facilitate and guide their learning. My goal is to focus on the student and create knowledgeable, independent learners and thinkers who can function well in their professional environment. The skills I hope for them to acquire are transferable to how they function as a professional and within society, creating well-rounded individuals capable of making informed decisions.

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