

EDITORIAL

CURRICULUM: FIRST BRICK IN THE WALL

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Curriculum development is a vital responsibility of any teaching faculty. It comprises a variety of activities including the establishing of a planned curriculum, pedagogy (method and practice of teaching, academic or theoretical) instruction and delivery methods for guiding the students.¹ For this to be effective one needs to proceed in a very systematic manner.

The first step involved assessing the students' prior knowledge and skills to avoid wrong assumptions about what they know and about the subject matter being studied.² Sometimes students are more knowledgeable than we think and conversely sometimes they hold profound misconceptions about the subject. The only way to ascertain what students bring to a topic is to collect information from them revealing their current levels of knowledge and understanding. This information can in turn prevent many curricula planning errors. It is not wise to assume that students know how to learn when they come to college. Students must be made aware of appropriate learning strategies and of the current methods in use, especially if their approach delays the learning process.

We have to acknowledge that learning, motivation and engagement are affected by attitudes and emotions.³ A confident student is a confident learner. If they don't believe that they can learn some kinds of content, it will affect their motivation and performance in class. It is our responsibility as teachers to discover and address attitudes that hinder learning because if we ignore the role of attitudes and emotions in course planning it will adversely affect learning outcomes. One should strive to design academic plans that match students' personal and academic goals to increase motivation and involvement.⁴ Students need to know what they are being taught is relevant to their future goals and plans. Needless to say for this to work teachers can help only if they have discovered what these goals are. Knowing what students care about and they are headed makes it possible to design courses that connect with students and more effectively engage them in learning. We should also recognize that students are diverse in their beliefs, cultures and backgrounds and have various expectations from their instructors and variable attitudes toward learning activities.⁵

They should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by examining their views about education and considering how those views influence their learning experiences. Again, knowing what students believe and expect makes it easier to plan meaningful learning curricula.⁶

It is best to develop a rapport with your students and to treat students as apprentices who need assistance in learning the language, ways of thinking and inquiry methods of academic fields. Students don't come to a course/learning fields knowing how much knowledge, how it is organized or how advanced it is. That must be taught explicitly, and students must be given the opportunity to make connections between course content and their own experiences and prior understandings. Emphasis must be given to promote development of complex views of knowledge and recognize that students are at different stages of development. Students must be challenged to apply, integrate, evaluate, and construct knowledge by engaging them in collaborative, complex problem-solving activities. Students should not just be knowledge consumers. They should also be knowledge producers

We all need to learn about learning and discuss with our compatriots and seniors how knowledge about student learning can be put to use in courses and program development. The abilities of students should be viewed as able to change and they are not fixed. Different abilities can be tapped in different courses.

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