

Reflection on Effective Communication for Learning & Teaching at Higher Learning Institutions

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Abstract: Communication is a process where senders interactively convey a message to the receivers on a daily basis. The purpose is to inform, persuade and entertain the audience who are the listeners. To inform is to share information by describing certain aspect of a function or thing, to persuade is to influence or reinforce the audience's attitude, belief and behaviour while to entertain is to create an interesting theme with humour where the audience is in a relax mode to enjoy the message. The facilitators in a higher institution assign and convey meaningful or powerful and effective message in a form of verbal or written communication to create mutual understanding to the audiences. Hence, effective communicators are necessarily effective educators or facilitators. An effective communicator would take note of factors that contribute towards effective communication and develop an appropriate communication strategies for learning and teaching. Learners are well engaged, have the ability to think more critically, analytically and capable to evaluate and decipher information of the curriculum.

The reflection on the three key concepts is presented as a guide for facilitators to be an effective communicator and on how this would influence the way the communicator as an educator. The learners are at the centre of the lesson planning and on a daily communication process. The objective is to deliver effective communication & presentation as the communicator reflect on his own learning, the learners' learning, the environment and their non-verbal facial expression each day. The three key concepts are adopted for effective communication in learning and teaching.

JEL Classifications: I23, I24, I25

Key Concepts: (1)The Communication Process Model; (2) Audience as a critical factor of *(C.A.P.S.) when planning for effective communication; (3) Affective as an effective Presentation Aids from A.B.C. model (Affective, Behavioral & Cognitive)

Keywords: Affective, Behavioral, Cognitive, 21st Century Learners, Teaching Philosophy

1. Introduction

In contextualising the learning and teaching experience with scenarios, this article is presented and written as a first person.

In my Communication Process Model, I envisage how I transfer the meaning of my idea to my audience. As a communicator (sender), I bring to the interaction a ¹field of experience or frame of

¹ Common field of experience in a communication process model as shown in Appendix 1.

reference such as the sum of my experiences, background, culture and language.²Noise is the barrier to communication, which exists around the entire process. This can be minimized through feedback, group engagement,³Q&A session, brainstorming. Butler & Winnie (1995) have shown that cognitive processes involved in self-regulated cognitive engagement in which how feedback affects cognitive engagement with tasks and the relation among forms of engagement and achievement.

2. The Communication Process Model

In reference to Appendix 1, communication travels from me, where I translate / encode message to receiver who decodes it along the channel (medium). Feedback from receiver to me would move along a common field of experience which is also explained in Appendix 2, where my communication and receiver's overlap. In order for communication (or feedback) to take place at both ends, active⁴ listening habits (in Appendix 3), awareness of context spoken with acute sense of the surroundings, noise (four types of noise in Appendix 2) and effectively clarifying doubtful areas while maintaining good eye contact with audience. I organize my thought and focus mentally as I believe an impacting and meaningful speech is imperative for 21st century learners.

To invoke learners with high enthusiasm with maximum learning, I consider “**Audience analysis** as one of the critical factor of⁵ (C.A.P.S.) - when planning for effective communication. It is because a well-prepared speech targeted for the wrong audience would have the same impact as a badly prepared speech for the right audience L. Laskowski (1996). Effective teachers have excellent content knowledge and hold high expectations of their students as J. Biggs (1982, 1987, 1999) in many of his higher education research and development articles include Pratt, D. D and Associates (1998), and Collins, J. B. (2000), (2001) particularly important is their Five Perspectives on Teaching in Adult and Higher Education.

The Five Perspectives would include **Transmission** which plays an important role where “Effective teaching requires a substantial commitment to the content or subject matter”, **Apprenticeship** where it plays an important role where “Effective teaching is a process of enculturating students into a set of social norms and ways of working.”. **Developmental** plays an important role where “Effective teaching must be planned and conducted ‘from the learner’s point of view’ ” of which good teachers must understand their learners’ thoughts and reason about the content”. **Nurturing** is where “Effective teaching assumes that long-term, hard, persistent effort to achieve comes from the heart, as well as the head.” and lastly **Social Reform** is “Effective teaching seeks to change society in substantive ways” where good teachers instill values and ideologies that are embedded in texts and common practices in their discipline accordingly. The conceptual framework of Schonwetter, et al (2002) includes the six dimensions of the teaching philosophies: the purpose of teaching and learning; the role of the teacher; the role of the student; the methods used; evaluation and assessment of teaching and learning are relevant to my audience. Chism (1998) developed a philosophy of teaching statement in his conceptualization of learning and teaching,

² In the process of hearing, I encounter 4 types of noise in communication, which is detrimental to critical & urgent communication as detailed in Appendix 2.

³ Q&A – Question & Answer session

⁴ To avoid misunderstanding in communication, there are some listening habit /feature which the author highlights in Appendix 3.

⁵ C.A.P.S. refers to a learning technique: Context, Audience, Purpose and Structure when planning for effective communication.

goals for students, implementation of the philosophy and professional growth of teachers are ideal learning philosophical training ground. Hence, my own teaching philosophy is re-aligned as shown in Appendix 5.

Hence, in preparing a well-designed questionnaires for the specific A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E, an **analysis** (knowing the number of persons, and who they are), **understanding** them in mastery of the subject, their **demographic** profile, **interest** (why and how they were there, facial expression/ learning attitude). The **environment** (their visibility & hearing), **needs** (audience needs, my needs), **customized** (specific need in addressing them) and **expectation** (audience expectation) would effectively put me in the right perspective where I develop the confidence. This essentially would reduce any stage fright or speech anxiety for not knowing sufficiently of my audience background and the environment. Balistreri (2002) in his article with special feature: "Giving an Effective Presentation" highlights powerful and meaningful features in adult learning behavior. The presentation should "adhere to the principles of adult learning behavior where people learn best when they are motivated to learn and anticipate that they will benefit from the experience, the aims of a presentation are clear, relevant and in context and that information meets the audience's needs and actively involved in the learning process with visual and auditory aids and that the experience is enjoyable."

This model is based on Wilbur Schramm's (1954) Model of Communication. Schramm was considered the "father of communication studies," His model was a derivation of the Shannon-Weaver transmission model of communication. The Shannon-Weaver model has six elements of communication: source, encoder, message, channel, decoder and receiver.

Source: <http://www.uri.edu/personal/carson/kulveted/wlsmode.html>. [Assessed: 14 August, 2013]. The model is studied and aligned with the audience in mind where the learning theories such as "Context, Purpose, Audience and CAPS" are extrapolated in which the internal and external environments of the learning audience are taken into consideration.

3. Audience as a Critical Factor of C.A.P.S.

In order for communication to take place, one necessary condition is that there is an overlap between the two fields of experience; otherwise, neither party can understand the other party. For example, if my learners (receivers) speak and understand only in Mandarin (Chinese), but if I, the communicator or sender speak in English with non-verbal communication material written in English, then communication cannot take place as there is no transfer /translate of the actual meaning, because there is no overlap between the two parties with respect to language. In the above CAPS model, "A" for "Audience is chosen to further reflect how communication influences me as an educator. In presenting information to audiences, I am aware of "Purpose" from CAPS where the goals of my presentation or communication is to provide an informative presentation to my audience, and to reinforce my audience mindset like beliefs, change attitudes, values or behaviors through my persuasive presentation. It would certainly be very engaging to sustain my audience's interest by providing an entertaining presentation, which makes my communication more interesting.

Affective as an Effective Presentation Aids from A.B.C. Model

The acronym, A.B.C. model is the approach used in the communication using presentation aids. It stands for **Affective**, **Behavioural** and **Cognitive**. This underlying principles is revolving about the learners' learning experience in the process. It is observed on how the learners feel where affective is concerned and the role the learners play and involve through behavioural pattern. This is

further guided through a process of thinking where the content of learning is about where cognitive plays a part in the mind of the learners.

I would also consider to utilize the use of color combination to enhance my audience's learning experience with both visual & auditory aids, as there are visual and auditory learners. I consider the diversity of learners and hence, understanding diverse culture and meaning of color across various diversity. Research paper shows that there is an increase rate of about 80% when color is used in presentation aids where learners are willing to read, increase motivation, enhance learning in audience understanding and retention when color is used instead of black & white. Burmark L. (2011).

With the information obtained, I customize my communication, curriculum or lesson plans, as an effective assessment in meeting my audience special needs such as education, a computer literacy test, or a research project that requires prior learning experience. In conceptualizing and aligning the idea of the ⁶ 9P's from Lenny Laskowski (1996). Hence, I give the right speech to the right audience and my communication becomes more effective and impacting to the audience, which would raise motivation and interest to a higher level. Psychologically this is stimulating as it enriches learners' learning interest. In preparing my presentation aids to learners, I consider "Affective" as an effective A.B.C. model for Affective, Behavioral & Cognitive.

Many learners are emotional beings with feeling. They come from diverse background with complexity of needs & psychological construct, where psychol refers to "affects" and associates with emotions or affection. Hence, affective describes the emotional meaning of an utterance. This emotional or affective variable would influence the learners' state of mind as a result from their emotions. It can also significantly enhance the willpower, motivate, inhibit or prevent learners from learning. I am convinced that learning is best when learners see it relevant and applicable.

It is all about how learners feel for themselves as "affective" in the learning environment where I am taking charge. In my teaching content, I see the need of vocalic - with a balance tone, pitch and voice coordination to convey a meaning to suit the audience, appropriate gesture & posture in congruent & aligning my presentation with rehearsals, and gauge audience sentiment and responses while adhering to the principles of adult learning on the use of clear, in context, concise & relevant material where information matches the learners' need. This minimizes distraction. I accept constructive feedback as good response from learners whose needs may not be met.

I also see active reviewing of my presentation aids that gives me a true picture of my own as signal & indicator if effective presentation was achieved. I desire the most appropriate color combination to enhance my audience's learning experience with both visual & auditory aids, as there are visual, auditory & kinesthetic learners. I consider the diversity of learners and hence, understanding diverse culture and meaning of ⁷ color across various diversity. Burmark L. (2011) research suggests an 80% increasing in rate when color is used instead of black & white presentation aids where learners are willing to read, increase motivation, enhance learning in audience understanding and retention.

Active learners learn better and become more engaging and motivated to learn when they see the benefit from the learning experience, which becomes more enjoyable. My consistent review (in Appendix 4) allows students see a big picture, which conceptually helps to establish a correlational link with my communication & presentation of the learning outcomes so as to learn new things, to understand, to discover, to make relevant application & interpretation and be transformed in making new discoveries.

⁶ "Prior Proper Preparation, Prevents Poor Performance of the Person Putting on the Presentation."

⁷ Some examples of the implication of color across diversity are found in Appendix 4.

4. Conclusion

Effective communication reinforces a clearly communicated information and language of our own which means that we are able to express our intended meaning through a verbal and non-verbal progress of information in ways that are appropriate in our cultures and different situations. N. Venkatesh & K.C. Wong (June 2012) presented that Instructional design models are designed for use in a classroom setting are intended to be used as general road maps to provide guidance to teachers where teacher's primary role is to teach, while students received some form of instructions. This means we are able to express our opinions as well as desires to the receivers, which is our audiences. Goodyear & Allchin (1998) in their statements of teaching philosophy have presented that teaching is a scholarly activity and teaching portfolios may serve many audiences and purposes where there is overlapping contexts where statements of teaching philosophy might function: for professors, for administrators and for students. Jarvis, P., Holford, J. & Griffin, C. 2003 highlighted that learning is among the most basic of human activities. The study of learning, and research into learning a central part of educational studies with contents include lifelong learning; the social background to learning; cognitivist theory; types of learning; learning using ICT; philosophical reflections on learning

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Author Profile

Dr. Kit Chee Wong is currently the Adjunct Visiting Professor of UGMS Business School Zurich, Switzerland. He worked as an external faculty of University of Wales (UWIC) UK and Queen Margaret University UK programs. He is an approved external doctoral faculty of University of Southern Queensland Australia operating in Singapore. Currently he is teaching the undergraduate and postgraduate programs from Anglia Ruskin University UK. He worked as an external consultant to several banks and corporations before joining the teaching profession as a faculty.

He has a keen interest in lecturing and was responsible for inaugural batch of graduates (Hons.) from Anglia Ruskin University. He was one of the pioneer lecturers of the undergraduate programmes back in 2002/03 from the University of Wollongong in Singapore. He has been involved in external university examinations. Dr. Wong has also contributed to the training of external programs for CIE: Cambridge International Examination, University of Cambridge, UK. Dr. Wong was nominated one of the top-teaching mentors based on a student survey, locally and overseas 2002 and also awarded the Best Lecturer Award in 2006 and 2007.

As the former corporate director and head of the teaching faculty, he worked hard to make the department one of the more popular courses for students to embark for their higher education. Apart from undergraduate and post-graduate teaching, Dr. Wong has helped to organize workshops in Singapore, Malaysia and China. He has been invited to speak as a guest lecturer at international meetings held in China, Austria and Switzerland. Dr. Wong is also involved in research with special interests in Financial Equity, Services Marketing, Strategic Management, Business Strategy, and Curriculum Development and Instructional Design..

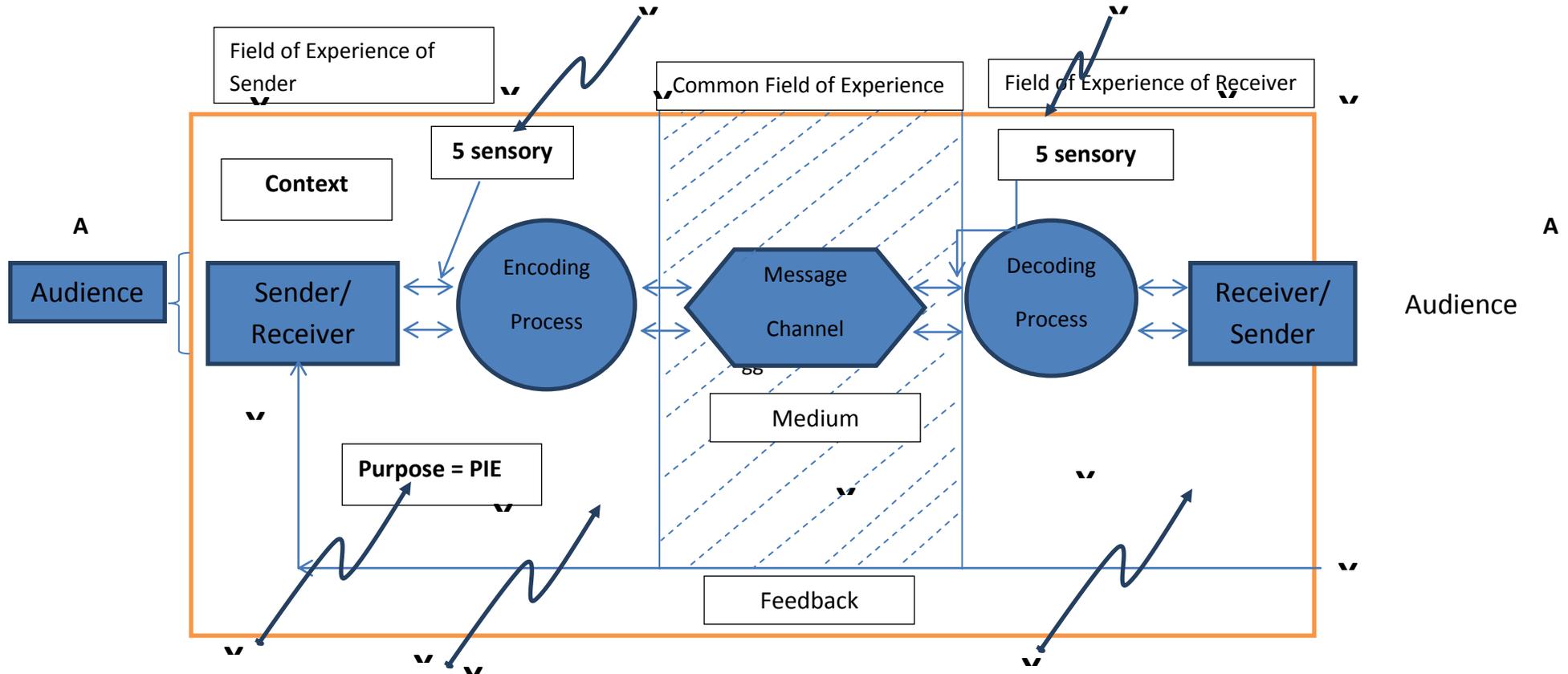
His publications include first author papers that appear in many international management journals are among some of them. Dr. Wong is a Fellow of the Confederation of Tourism & Hospitality (CTH), UK. He also serves as an Associate Member of Singapore Human Resource Institute (SHRI). He holds a Bachelor with major in Commerce (Australia), Master of Business with major in Strategic Marketing (Australia) and an ⁸ Accredited Doctoral of Business Administration (Switzerland). He holds a ⁹Specialized Diploma in Applied Learning and Teaching (SDALT) from the Republic Polytechnic in Singapore. A new teaching qualification in Private Education as recognized by ¹⁰CPE in Singapore. He is the pioneer batch of the SDALT program in Republic Polytechnic Singapore.

⁸ Accredited in the U.S. by the following CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation) recognized authority. (Accessed:24 Nov 2009)

⁹ SDALT is taught in Republic Polytechnic. It is recognized by CPE and would serve as a potential industry requirement to ensure quality of teaching and delivery based on pedagogical training.

¹⁰ CPE - Council of Private Education, statutory board of MOE (Ministry Of Education), Singapore.

APPENDIX 1: The Communication Process Model (Improved model as gathered from new development)



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Source: Wilbur Schramm's (1954) Model of Communication

Note:

- ∨ = Noise (Internal / External: Physical, Physiological, Psychological & Semantic)
- Context = Physical, Psychological, Sociological, Cultural
- Purpose = Persuasive, Informative, Entertaining, Presentation (PIE)
- A = Audience (one of the 4 key considerations – (CAPS) when planning for effective communication
- CAPS = (Context, Audience, Purpose and Structure).

Physical noise is interference that is externally where it impedes the physical transmission of the signal or message. Examples are the noise of a sport car passing by, illegible handwriting, blurred image or words, wrong words or grammatical errors.

Physiological noise would be those created by the sender or receiver where there is a visual impairment, hearing problems or loss of memory.

Psychological noise would be mental barrier or interference to a communicator or the listener who has biases judgement against oneself or someone which is essentially preconceived prejudices.

Semantic noise is a communication barrier where the communicator and the audience have a varied and different thinking in deriving of a meaning. Examples would be different language used, the use of technical terminology or jargon in a complex term whose meaning may be interpreted wrongly.

The purpose of communication and goals of P.I.E is to inform to educate, teach to improve, define and illustrate to clarify a topic of discussion with informative purpose, to persuade to seek changes, reinforce or influence a cause or mindset so as to reaffirm a changed audience's attitude, belief and behaviour and entertain listeners with humour in a relax environment, sustaining the audience's interest with entertainment. Humour is a great motivating force psychologically speaking and is charged with high energy level that moves people into action and directs behaviour towards specific goals when listeners are more attentive. The laughter comes out of their connecting up of new content with prior knowledge. Hence, the communicator effectively arouse and maintain interest in a message.

Source: RP SDALT (2012) Course material.

APPENDIX 2: Author's Enhanced Reflection

Please refer to the above diagram of the Communication Process Model as drawn. It is expounded by integrating with some add-on information from the environments. The present of different types of noise is present where Context: (Physical, Psychological, Sociological and Cultural), PIE: (Persuasive, Informative, Entertaining) and Presentation with others by integrating CAPS concept: (Context, Audience, Purpose and Structure). It is expanded and aligned with the Calabash (2005) communication model.

The field of experience or frame of reference (e.g. the sum of one's experiences, learning attitude, interest, etc) including one's culture, background, and language. Both the sender and receiver in a communication process have a field of experience. The extent to which the two fields of experience overlap reflects the common **field of experience** as shown in the diagram above. This model is based on Wilbur Schramm's (1954) Model of Communication originally.

Four types of noise in communication

There is Physical noise, which impedes and impairs the physical transmission of the signal or message. i.e: The passing of lorry motor cycle. Physiological noise, the barrier from and within the communicator /sender or receiver. The visual impairments or hearing loss or lost of memory of a person. Psychological noise is the mental interference of the communicator or listener or receiver like preconceived ideas, biases and prejudices. Semantic noise interferes when the communicator and listener have different meaning systems like the use of jargon, complex words or ambiguous message.

APPENDIX 3: Listening Habit / Feature

In communication, learners do provide feedback at times through non-verbal communication. I would urge my learners to listen to the communicator's words carefully but focuses on what is communicated through an internal process of listening such as autobiographical listening, inquisitive listening, surface listening, & interruptive listening depending on situation and needs. It is possible that we do have sharp focus on words but lack awareness of context during an editorial listening and solution listening.

It is necessary to have full attention to words and acute sense of the surroundings when learners have a quiet mindset, focusing on the communicator, listen to understand and not be to judgmental, and speak to clarify and reflects appropriately.

APPENDIX 4: Using Appropriate Colour for Presentation Aids and Active Reviewing

It is necessary to understand active reviewing of my presentation aids that would give me a true picture of my own as an indicator if my presentation was effective. A dramatic improvement in audience comprehension and retention when black and white visuals are replaced with colour. Burmark L. (2011).

Colour visuals increase willingness to read by up to 80%;

Colour boosts motivation and participation by up to 80%;

Colour enhances learning and improves retention by more than 75%; and

Using colour in advertising outsells black and white by 88%.

For instance, Muslim considers green to be sincere, prosperity & of good nature, while Chinese men translate green color hat as disloyal, betrayal or that a cheating wife involves in infidelity or adultery behavior. Red represents good-luck or prosperity in a Chinese community but signifies warning in another scenario i.e. a powerful electric generator has a danger red warning sticker.

APPENDIX 5: My Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is based on my personal approach to teaching and the rationale behind what guides my learning practice and how it influences my beliefs, teaching and learning process as an educator and teacher.

I am teaching the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Marketing, leadership, and strategic business management for adult learners at the higher educational institutions. Learners are at the centre of my lesson planning process. My objective is to create an environment that encourages participation as I reflect on my beliefs on teaching and learning, I find the followings relevant:

- To invoke learners with high enthusiasm for increasing one's knowledge;
- To promote interactive learning;
- To support for lifelong learning.

To accomplish this, I apply strategies based on the teaching principles - Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI), the Conceptions of Learning, and other Learning Theories, Constructivism, and Reflective Learning & Practice. I present exams not merely as evaluations, but as an opportunity for learners to understand and synthesize the course work. My review outlines for the exams help students see a big picture, which conceptually helps to establish a correlational link with the subject's learning outcomes so as to learn new things, to understand, to discover, to make relevant application & interpretation and be transformed.

I believe learning is evolving where I learn as much from my learners as the learners learn from me. I am convinced that learning is best when learners see it relevant and applicable. I am passionate in teaching and learning, and I will foster a learning community through enthusiasm. My approach to student learning reflects on several objectives.

Firstly, I am the subject mastery of the content and I expect likewise that learners learn to be mastery of the content by demonstrating on exams and familiarity with the concepts.

Secondly, I organize projects to promote critical thinking. I assign written assignments through the semester to enable learners learn, un-learn and re-learn new things over time. Thus, enabling learners to change the old way learners think and find new way to challenge more complex and sophisticated issues with appropriate problem solving skills. This means learners learn to develop with the cognitive ability to conceptual idea & knowledge in the progress of development.

Thirdly, I encourage active and participatory learning. I bring learners into direct engagement with real business scenarios outside classroom in an educational field trip like ¹¹Qian Hu Corporation Limited to learn how business processors and value chains can be strategically congruent and realigned with ‘hands on’ on-the-job training. This will build up the cognitive and competencies knowledge supervised by an instructor like an apprenticeship training & learning.

Fourthly, I constantly teach to reflect upon the critical learning outcome at greater leisure that emphasizes the skills of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, evaluating, and problem solving in any adverse environments. As such, my teaching will be positively reinforcing, impacting, and ultimately connecting my passion in a lifelong learning culture where learners are nurtured.

Lastly, I aim to perpetuate the knowledge learned and inspire learning, confident, and courage. I teach learners the various business models and concepts and ask them to articulate and explore those concepts and reactions in application. I envisage a balance in my classroom between lecturing to learners and mentoring them to be independent and making discoveries.

My learners are taught to engage with one another in class, with me, and with my colleagues in the belief that good teaching depends upon intellectual exchange, effective and meaningful engagement, community development and social adaptive response.

I assist learners meet expectations by providing many review sessions on their presentations, draft copies and revisions. I involve in coaching & facilitating, envisioning, providing central services and collaborative learning.

While good teaching is necessary from good learning, I believe that the practices one uses for teaching can be different. My version of this teaching & learning philosophy can be found in an article I co-authored with ¹²N. Venkatesh. I am aware the learning community consists of individuals with different learning styles, background, and varied biases. These diverse perspectives and cultures can enrich and enhance learning and sharing via communication, collaboration and reflection.

I enrich a student’s ability to think, discuss, and analyze with a new awareness by utilizing topical essay writing, exams, research projects that are sometimes open-ended without “right or wrong” answer. I am more interested in developing a student’s ability to think coherently, convincingly, and confidently than any particular content.

¹¹ Students learning outside classroom during a field trip was documented with photographs taken in 2009 and 2010 in two different institutions. The original report of teaching & learning at the field & itinerary are attached as: Qian Hu edu report and Itinerary.

¹² N. Venkatesh & Kit Chee Wong (June 2012), IRACST – International Journal of Research in Management & Technology (IJRMT), ISSN: 2249-9563. Vol. 2, No. 3, June 2012.