



How to Ensure Effective and Efficient Learning in a Classroom: Preferences and Suggestions From Professional College Students

KEYWORDS

learning experiences, Rote memory, Theory-Practice correlation, interactive classroom

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ABSTRACT *Objective: The present qualitative study was done to explore the preferences of college students regarding the learning experiences provided to them in classrooms. It explores their level of satisfaction about the learning experiences provided and also their suggestions for effective learning. Material and Method: The study was done at Venkateswara College of Education, Puducherry. Semi-structured interview with open ended questions regarding student satisfaction with reference to the learning experiences provided to them and also their suggestions to ensure efficient learning were asked. Responses were obtained from thirty nine students of three different professional colleges, namely medical, nursing and B.Ed. Content analysis was done manually by the first author and reviewed by the second and third. Results and Conclusions:53.8% were satisfied and 28.2% were dissatisfied and 17.94% were neutral regarding the learning experiences provided to them in the classrooms. The majority of them wanted interactive classroom, theory- practice correlation, and were against rote learning methods. This information can be used for planning curricular experiences by all the stakeholders in education.*

INTRODUCTION

Kothari Education Commission (1964) said that the destiny of a country is shaped in its' classroom. Hence, much time and effort should be directed at planning classroom experiences so as to make any learning more effective and efficient. What is an effective learning? Roger Schank's (2002) criteria for assessing the effectiveness of a course includes: 1. Failure 2. Reasoning, 3. Emotionality, 4. Exploration, 5. Doing, 6. Observation and 7. Motivation (FREEDOM). For Ninacsmith, the components of effective learning are 1. Goals/motivation, 2. Environment, 3. Prior knowledge, 4. Readiness, 5. Aptitude and 6. Quality of Teaching. The ultimate goal of any teaching should make the learners take the responsibility of their own learning and become self-regulated. According to Pintrich and Zusho, Self regulated learning is an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate and control their cognition, motivation and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment. The authors of this paper firmly believe that if the classroom experiences are well planned and carefully executed, it would result in effective and efficient learning which will eventually lead to self regulated learning.

Objective:

The present qualitative study was done to explore the preferences and suggestions of college students as to how to ensure effective learning in a classroom.

Material and Method:

The present study was carried out in Venkateswara College of Education, Madagadipet, Puducherry, during February and March 2015. Purposive sampling design was used and the size of the sample was thirty nine. Thirteen students from each professional college, namely Medical, Nursing and College of Education were selected based on the willingness of the students to participate in the study and also their consistently good academic performance. Informed, written consents were obtained from the student participants before the study.

Tool:

The tool used was Semi-structured one-to-one, a face-to-face interview with open ended questions. The time and place of the interview were determined beforehand by the first author based on the convenience of the student participants. The following questions were asked:

1. Are you fully satisfied with the learning experiences provided to you currently?
2. What can you suggest to ensure effective and efficient learning in a classroom?

The participants were encouraged to respond to these questions orally and freely. In order to maintain complete anonymity and to avoid bias, the student participants were allotted numbers. Each of the responses was audio recorded and eventually transcribed by the first author. Some of the participants gave responses in Tamil and they were translated and transcribed in English. This was followed by manual content analysis by the first author and the unit of analysis was student's responses. Commonalities and differences in the statements were looked for and they were categorized for analysis and interpretation. It was reviewed by the second and third authors and in case of any disagreement on the categories or interpretation the team resolved it by consensus.

Result and Discussion:

To the first question, 53.8% gave positive responses expressing their satisfaction in the learning experiences provided to them, 28.2% gave negative responses showing their dissatisfaction and 17.94% gave neutral reply. The key theme for their satisfaction was interactive classroom and the key reason for the dissatisfaction was lack of theory-practice correlation.

Table 1. Response Types of Different Professional Students

PROFES- SIONAL COURSE	R E S P O N S E S		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Medical	4	5	4
Nursing	8	4	1
Education	9	2	2
TOTAL	21	11	7

For the second question 19 themes emerged. These themes were ultimately grouped under three categories based on the level at which the students expected changes to take place. They are

1. At Teachers’ level 2. At Students’ level 3. At System level. Some of the themes fitted well under two categories. They were “Interactive classroom” “Theory- practice correlation” and “Motivation”. Students from all the three professional courses wanted an interactive classroom to make it livelier. No one wanted it to be a one way or monologue. Obviously, one can learn best only in a relaxed, joyful and stress free atmosphere.

Some expressions of student participants:

Interactive Classroom-

1. “When a new topic is started few questions are thrown which will be unraveled during the course of the lecture so that the students will interact more”. (10)
2. “Before introducing the topic, throw some questions to the students, encourage brainstorming” (16).

Theory-practice correlation-

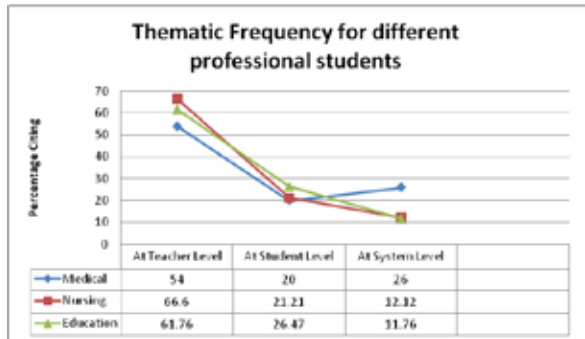
1. “Direct experiences are to be provided” (3)
2. “Give life related examples and connect it to topics” (11)
3. “More live examples to enrich the learning process” (14)
4. “Learning by doing is better”(17)
5. “Use of maps, models, concrete examples from our daily life, demonstration method, project method, heuristic method & field trips, less emphasis on lecture method.”(27)

(The numbers in the parenthesis indicate the code numbers allotted for the participants to maintain anonymity)

Table 2: Themes and Categories

At Teacher level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Visual Aids • More Pictures & Diagrams • Review of Lesson • More Tests • More Friendly • Interactive classroom • Freedom of Choice • More use of BlackBoard • Summarizing • Teach More Strategies • Theory-Practice Correlation • Motivation
At Students level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars • Small Group Discussion • Interactive Classroom • Motivation
At System level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of choice • Theory-Practice Correlation • No memory based testing

Chart: 1. Thematic Frequency for different professional students



The graph indicates, that the themes held the same relative importance for Nursing and Education students, while Medical students’ expectations at the system level are more than at the students’ level. At Teachers’ level, Nursing students have cited more. At students’ level, Education students have cited more and at system level Medical students expected more. All the three professional students have suggested maximum changes at the teacher’s level. Hence it can be said that the teachers play a pivotal role in making the learning process more effective and efficient.

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