How Understanding Your Students Can Impact the Learning Outcomes

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Abstract

Efficient communication with students can have great impact on the whole performance of the learning process. It is very important to consider the personal diversity among the students in order to reach to indvidually in learning and to be able to have good communication with them. When the instructors build good communication with their students, they can encourage positive interactive learning environment.

Students at college have their own busy life. If the instructor ignores their real life outside the class, many of them will be unable to continue and success. Many professional instructors in STEM field focus on the material they are teaching without considering the human part of their students, which creates a gap between the instructor with the material on one side and the student on the other side.

This poster, suggest strategies that were implemented and were proven to give good results. Results considered are the qualitative analysis of the students feedback, and the impact of the good communication on students’ attendance.

Why do we need to understand our students

The instructor who is highly proficient of the given material could be motivated by enthusiasm to start giving the lesson before even introducing (him/her)self to the students. It is very healthy to be enthusiastic about the class subject but ignoring what the audience combination are will make the learning processes go not so smooth. Students can develop a higher interest for the contents taught when a good communication is built [1]. It is shown that good student-instructor communications are can train and develop information skills in addition to communication skills, that provide efficient learning outcome [2].

Encourages students to ask questions

Encourages students to participate without fear of misalignment

Encourages students to talk about the hardships they maybe facing

Helps to facilitate the learning much more other benefits

Good communication

Techniques for better students understanding

The first day of the class is the first step to build a good communication. The instructor can break the ice wall and create warm environment that help the students enjoy being together in the class.

One very efficient strategy introduced during the STEM instructional program is asking the students “Write 5 things about yourself that I can’t know by just looking at you?” The question was proposed during the opening statement of Teaching and Learning Cultural Humility- WMU 2019. The main purpose was how to get free from the stereotype when you are be able to connect the person with the real personal features and not your previous assumptions. This question reveals so much more than breaking the stereotype. It is a key to build good communication with the students. It is also very helpful in memorizing the students’ names by linking it to their answers. The instructor can in turn share 5 things about him/her with the students for building better communication.

The second question that the instructor may ask in the first day of the class is what the pre-existing knowledge that the student has about this class subject. This helps in classifying the students according to their pre-existing knowledge levels, and thus, be able to consider the explanation level that each student may need.

In addition, it is highly recommended that the instructor should spend time during the first day listing to them speaking out their names. This helps in memorizing the name by linking to how it was pronounced by their own voices and helps in knowing the accurate pronunciation of their names that they love to be called by. If a name seems difficult, the instructor can ask for the meaning and spend few more seconds to link the name with the student. Later, when the instructor calls them by names without reading it, they feel they are respected and acknowledged.

The first day is very important to make students feels the positive learning environment that motivates them for good attendance and be prepared to accept the material from the instructor. Moreover, the instructor can review those answer later when a student face a problem and when trying to motivate a student to participate and ask questions freely.

Important key points to look for in your students “5 things about yourself” answers

Depending on how much your student was willing to write about him/herself, you can look at things that may impact the attendance, learning style, communication, and much more. One answer my help in understanding more than one aspect of the student personality.
As in illustration of how you can expect the attendance and whether to consider grading ratio for the attendance, those are some students answers examples:
A) “I drive one hour to come to this class.”
B) “I work at ----.”
C) “Work full time”
D) “I love making video games.”
E) “I have 2 Huskies.”

Second key point that helps you in deciding the teaching style and examples that you may use to connect the knowledge you give to the student real life is what are their hobbies and what they love to spend time on. For example:
A) “I love playing videogames.”
B) “I have 2 Huskies.”
C) “Play basketball at state level.”
D) “I play piano and guitar.”
E) “I have a Python snake.”

The third key point, that can be the most important one, is how to reach better communication and conversation. This is by looking at the information that may indicate how the students are socially connected to others. For example:
A) “I live at home.”
B) “I have four siblings.”
C) “I have a daughter who will turn two next Monday.”
D) “Married with two children.”

Other important key points are answers that indicate the student education status such as:
A) “I am coming back from a year break from school.”
B) “I have been making video games since I was 8 years old.”

Inclusive teaching can be guided by some answer. Some students may inform you of their health issues that may have impact on their way to learn. For example “I partially deaf due to tinnitus.” Others may reveal the cultural background of the student. For example “I am from Malayasia.” The instructor can learn how to greet them in their language, and this will give them sense of belonging to the class and will encourage their participation.

Other questions that directly ask for the student pre-existing knowledge is very helpful to adjust the level of the class and how much is expected from induvidual learners.

Thus, the instructor will have so much information that can refer to frequently when considering good communication.

Results

Results are presented by looking at the end of class survey. The rate of students responding to the electorate class survey was 522.2. From the students’ feedback two questions related to the influence of good student-instructor communication are shown below, where the participants ratio shows
1. 86.66 percent agree that they learned more when the instructor with mean rate of 4.8 out of 5.
2. 86.66 percent agree that the atmosphere of the class conducive to learning, with mean rate of 4.67 out of 5.

The figure bellow shows the thematic analysis of the students’ feedback comments to the instructor. It summarizes the most frequent words in the students’ comments and what do they support in good learning aspect.

Conclusion

This poster presents our experience of building better communications with the class. If the instructor thinks that being professional in term of the material will cause good learning outcome, then from our experience we would say this is for sure very important but not enough. In addition, having big class is not an excuse of being unable to try the best to understand your students. Spending time to build good communication will save time in explaining the material and will boost the student’s success.

References