Use of Technology, Learning Environment, and CPD in Favor of Student Support

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Abstract: Knowledge could not evolve without being transferred, and that is why there had been a need for continuous development of means of such transference through making use of recent development and inventions that could sustain the quality of the process, hence the expression of “Education Technology” appeared.

Keywords: CPD, Education, Learning Environment, Active Learning, Student Support, Teaching practices.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of knowledge and skills transfer to the receiver through different methods. One important method that plays a substantial role in this is the use of technology. Technology boomed during the last decades of the 20th century and tremendously changed almost every aspect of life on earth, to include the education industry and its traditional means that lasted for a great period of time, that were replaced by more effective and innovative methods that facilitated information acquisition by students. All educational institutions, whether governmental or private, became in fierce competition to provide the student with efficient means of learning.

We cannot overlook the substantial impact of the learning environment on such transference of knowledge. The concept of the learning environment is not limited only on the place in which students receive the different disciplines of knowledge, but all the educational, social and psychological variables and conditions which together constitute it. Place is the first element of such environment, while the teaching style and educational systems are the other part of this. This does not cover all the issue, engagement of the student with his/ her teacher or tutor and the way he/ she apprehends lessons from different perspectives is considered a substantial part of the concept of learning environment.

CPD is an important part of teacher education. It helps the instructors to preserve their professional expertise and capabilities updated. The new generations have a different method to studying than the preceding generations. CPD helps the instructors to study new strategies in instructing students of this generation. It helps the teachers to grow professionally, at the same time, improve their study room skills. Teachers who have been in the career for many years are generally reluctant to change their instructing styles. CPD will let them continue to be in touch with the modern day tendencies in the schooling sector and help them to change their way of teaching. Here are some reasons why CPD is so necessary for instructors.

Continuing professional development is vital due to the fact it ensures you continue to be ready in your profession. It is an ongoing technique and continues for the duration of a professional’s career.

The ultimate effect of well-planned persevering with professional development is that it safeguards the public, the employer, the professional and the professional’s career. Well-crafted and delivered continuing professional development is important because it delivers benefits to the individual, their profession and the public.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, LITERATURE REVIEW & DISCUSSION

According to (Sally Brown, 2004-2005), assessment is probably the most important thing we can do to help our students learn. I use formative and summative assessments, formal and informal, in all of the courses I teach.

When incorporated into classroom practice, the formative assessment process provides information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are still happening. Among the different types of formative assessment, I use questions and periodic quizzes to get an insight about the comprehensiveness and depth of students’ understanding and to monitor their learning; presentations with peer feedback help them demonstrate knowledge on the subject matter; debriefing is a useful instrument in creating a dialogue with my students and help me shed the light on their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, I use some other tools, such as peer and self- assessment to get students involved in the criteria and goal setting of the learning process. Challenging questions, group discussions, and problem solving case studies help me monitor the progress they achieve and provide more interaction with them. I found out that formative assessment help my students achieve higher marks in the learning activities subject to summative assessment.

As for summative assessment, and according to the university policy, I set grading criteria for the mid and final exams, along with the different classwork activities subject to grading, such as essay reading, in and off class assignments, problem solving, and others, so that each student would be aware of how his/her work will be evaluated. When students are aware ahead of the grading...
criteria, it gives them the sense of fairness and transparency, and decreases their grievances. As per university policies, all of our exams and marking criteria are evaluated from internal and external examiners. Such process helps me improve my summative assessment process in general, and are very useful for my students’ progress.

If assessment is to be integral to learning, feedback must be at the heart of the process. It plays a vital role in putting my students on the right track. I give them feedback whenever an assignment is conducted, individually or in groups, in or off class. Face-to-face approach is usually conducted in my office when students are timid or the feedback is harsh. Such feedback helps students apprehend what are the core elements required in the subject concerned. Whenever they get a similar task or assignment, I could feel the touch of the feedback given before on their performance.

I like to use peer-feedback instrument to give them more confidence in their judgement, and enhance their input contribution in developing one another. An example for is their assessment of group presentations using forms I developed for this purpose, and then I give them my feedback, as sometimes they get complimentary with one another.

In addition, I use the “Student Feedback Sheet” to write my comments about each student’s answer, whether for the mid-semester exam or the different assignments. Students use such sheets at my notes on their answers and to write down their feedback concerning their assessment. I monitor the students’ progress based on such feedback and use their input in the following tasks or assignments.

Moreover, I try to conduct a learner centered strategy. Directly after the mid-semester exam, I ask my students to give their feedback about the learning activities I used during the first half and provide me with their recommendations concerning other activities, or change their assessment methods, as long as they are not contradictory to the university regulations. Using the debate groups and face-to-face approach are examples of their recommendations.

Research on the classroom environment has shown that the physical arrangement can affect the behavior of both students and teachers (Savage, 1999). I use a mixture of the blackboard, projector, computer software, stories, assignments, group activities...etc. I am used to organizing the learning environment as much as possible to try the best useful arrangement for my students. Based on the subject and learning activity used, I arrange the classroom in U shape, cycles, or regular to suite my students. I like them to feel like I am one of them, when they conduct presentations, I used to take a seat among them, so that the presenter does not feel any pressure. Such strategy improved their interaction with me and encouraged them, especially the female students who might feel timid by nature, to speak freely.

To add more relief, and to decrease the pressure of the academic environment, in addition to having international master students coming from Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, it happens sometimes that I conduct face-to-face and group support sessions in social environments, such as a café, which helps them meeting their needs, and taking into consideration their tight schedules, specially that all of them are employed. This allowed me to get more space of time with them to cover the required issues.

I am used to urge my students to use the University library and accompany them from time to time to encourage them to use different resources, and I even conduct at least one open book problem solving assignment (Formative) every semester. Such strategy yields how students use different opinions and perspectives to come up with solutions of their own that are reflected in on and off class assignments.

Teachers need to be aware of the specific learning needs of individual students in their classes (NCSE V4- 2013). I try my best during classes not to make students with special needs feel different. I give them the help and support they need to stand equal with their peers. I conduct individual “face-to-face” sessions in my office, I use fonts that are much larger than usual for the questions they are able to read easily, I examine them separately, allowing more time than the usual exam time. Using such strategies gets their performance enhanced to a great extent, and above all, they do not feel different from the other students.

In one of my post graduate courses “HR Training and Development”, and for the course group project, I request my students to conduct a real “Training Course” from A to Z in real schools, training centers, social organizations and the like, and I am planning to make the conduct management related training courses for the university employees, hence, we get the benefits for both ends. Such endeavor really enhanced their practical skills and sharpened their knowledge of the subject concerned, and it was reflected on the final exam performance.

Online materials provide a means of communication between students, teachers and outside contributors (Cook, 1999). I am trying my best to be a resident more than a visitor to the online environment with my students (David White, 2011) To make sure that help and support are available for my students around the clock, I use different VLE methods, such as the University MOODLE which I use in uploading materials, assignments, quizzes, resources, especially during informal hours to communicate with them, along with the mobile Wat’s APP application and e-mail to be available for them any time, especially for those who live out of Bahrain. Using such tools made me available for them as much as possible.

If my knowledge falls below a certain level, it would be a significant impediment to students’ learning (Coe, R., et al. 2014). I have to have a deep knowledge of the subjects I teach; otherwise, I will not be able to perform my role as I should. To do so, I try my best to maintain and develop my capabilities to support my students and enrich their learning experience.

I believe that research loses a lot of its core benefits if it is not communicated to students and put into action in real life. I try as much as I can to use whatever I learn from research
in enriching my students’ knowledge, and leveling up their information, in addition to enriching their learning experience and set an example for them. For example, I used one of my research related to anxiety of students presentation skills (Al Samman, 2016) to help and support my timid and female students to achieve better. This strategy showed successful, especially with master students, during different discussions and reports they deliver. I may brief my teaching pedagogy in “bridging theory with practice”. That is why I always urge my students, undergraduate or postgraduate, to try as much to choose real life problems in their research, and have their own contribution in solving them.

Furthermore, I make extensive use of peer observation strategy, attending some lectures of my colleagues, soliciting their advice and help, conducting many corridor and cafeteria discussions concerning teaching and program materials, reading and using their research, and sharing with them teaching and real life experiences. This strategy helped me in so many ways to develop the way I teach, the information I have, and directions I follow. Having said that, I solicit development activities, even outside the higher education context, such as the Bahraini Society for Training and Development, Advisory Boards, Bahrain Ministry of Works and the like, in endeavors to develop myself. This application process I am filling out is a great source of help and support to me in self-development. It helped me a lot to organize my thoughts and define my directions.

Moreover, I attend a lot of CPD activities to enhance my teaching pedagogies, such as Bloom Taxonomy, MOODLE Course Building - Course Building for Teachers, Three Golden Rules for successful Scientific Research, MOODLE Course Building - Advanced Teaching Tools & Features, Academic Advising, Learning teaching & strategy-Microsoft, Mastering Creativity : Principles, processes and practice, UK Quality Code & its influence on programme design, Art & Science of doing research, New Trends in IS/Cloud Computing/Big Data, E-Library Linked with Arado Portal & Gale DB, Mapping NQF. Such workshops, and many more, played a vital role in enhancing my teaching abilities and made me more useful to my students and colleagues as well.

In addition, other departmental activities, such as the departmental meetings, advisory boards, program committee meetings and the like shed the light on weak areas and provide courses of actions to adjust and enhance our teaching methods through discussions and suggestions among members. I gained substantial benefits from such activities concerning teaching issues, program designs, learning strategies, and higher education requirements.

Along with developing myself, I am eager as well to contribute to the development of my colleagues, whether in the academic departments or the admin ones, with the modest experience and knowledge I have in the arenas of HRM and business management through conducting training and development workshops on the university level to level up the performance level on each department.

REFERENCES


