Effective Physical Therapy Education Through Increased Student Engagement

Rajiv A. Dalal
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As technology grows, there are many applications into the educational arena. Educators are tasked with incorporating technology in teaching. This is best done through a systematic means to create effective change. The Digital Learning Initiative (DLI) was created with this in mind. This is a case study in the transformation of teaching methods through the DLI. The redesign was centered around the principles of assessment and course mapping. The course was reworked to allow for more feedback and interaction with the instructor. Digital apps were utilized to supplement content. Class sessions changed from traditional lecture into a flipped environment using active learning techniques. After the redesign, students improved in graded performance, as well as in engagement with the instructor and classmates. The instructor also reported increased engagement with students and more in-depth content coverage. Redesign is a dynamic process with some trial and error; however, with a solid framework based on assessment, there is potential for meaningful short and long-term course change.

INTRODUCTION

Effective education is the root of success. There are a limitless number of opportunities to grow through education. For a student, education can unlock the door for life changing experiences. For an instructor, education can be the platform for advancement. For a physical therapist, education can lead to specialization. For a patient, education can mark the road to recovery. Regardless of a person's place in life or role in society, education whether it be formal or informal is the avenue of change. The key is for it to be effective.

This is a case study on improving as an educator by being more engaged with those that I teach. I have a strong interest for my students to gain the knowledge and skills to become physical therapists. I also have a strong interest in continuing to be a lifelong learner, in both the field of physical therapy, and as an instructor. In pursuit of that objective, I will highlight what led me to the digital learning initiative (DLI) and how the program has helped me in rethinking and reprioritizing my courses.

BACKGROUND

The word "educate" comes from the Latin "educare", which means to lead out (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 2014). The essential role of an educator can hence be thought of as 1) the one that leads and 2) the one that brings out the potential within the learner. Both of these roles likely require a combination of inherent and developed skills on the part of the educator. Development of those skills will likely depend on perception of how education should be approached. Adler (1984) supports the notion that the teacher is like a coach, while Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1991) contrasted the role of a teacher as a "guide on the side" versus a "sage on the stage". An educator must decide which approach they will take in order to lead their learners. Furthermore, they must be able to adjust their methods according to the needs of the situation (Bean, 2011).

Each educator's own experiences as a learner may also guide them (Marks, 2015). Educational experiences can be both effective and ineffective at meeting a desired outcome. There are those experiences in which the interest in the

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