Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods

Volume 3 | Issue 2 Article 25

11-1-2004

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Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods
November, 2004, Vol. 3, No. 2, 578-580

1538 – 9472/03/$95.00

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In this article, I conceptualize teaching as the profession of facilitating and stimulating learning. As "teachers", we help students acquire learning skills that they may expand on later in their life. I review fifteen principles that facilitate effective learning.

Introduction

I don't recall when I met Cliff Blair, and I doubt he would remember, either. It had to be in the context of an Annual Meeting of the Florida Educational Research Association. I was based in Tallahassee; he was based in Tampa. So, our paths did not cross, except for professional meetings. Hence, I cannot say that I knew him; I can only say that I knew who he was.

We carried similar responsibilities, the instruction of graduate students in the ins and outs of statistical analysis, design of experiments and the measurement of achievement. – boring topics to those who were not involved in the field. Some of us changed text books, revised notes, etc., in an attempt to keep the learners involved.

In the mid-1970s, Dr. George Aker became my boss. I think he was called the Director of some unit at FSU. I may have been Program Leader at that time. George was a leader in Adult Education, recognized on campus, in Florida and around the world. In one publication, he was called "a rare kind of leader, who is both loved *and* respected." It was during our association that I came to accept his beliefs, that if one is going to make a contribution to the learning of others, one must be a facilitator, or stimulator of learning, not a teacher. I bought into his philosophy, because it agreed with my own. I don't know if Cliff ever met George, or read his papers, but I like to believe that Cliff was a supporter of that kind of philosophy.

George believed, as do I, that what we are about is growth and development in our lives. We are all individuals, have different likes and dislikes. We differ in potential for growth and differ in learning abilities. We have different attitudes, different prejudices, and different cultural preferences. Most of these are the result of prior learning, prior experiences, and environments. We are what we have learned.

Much of what we have learned, particularly in our early years, has little to do with what we need to learn in later years. In Algebra, we learned to solve quadratic equations and, yes, I "taught" that class, too. Why do you learn that skill? Well, it is important for a small group of individuals, but not for the masses.

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Perhaps, along the way, we learn to solve problems. Perhaps there is something called transfer. The question is will my helping you learn one skill help you learn other skills?

As a learning facilitator, one must learn to recognize these differences in students, and make plans to have the learner bring those differences into play in the regular class meetings. They must feel free to express their differences in front of the facilitator and the other learners.

Although the members of a given class may have different backgrounds, they typically come to the class with a similar need to learn, or need to know. I never fooled myself as to why the students were in my class. I knew they had been *sent* there! I told them I was there for the money – sometimes producing a chuckle from the students. I told them that I had heard tales that some students had been sent to my class – or it could have been Cliff's class – on the assumption that if they could not pass the class, then their faculty advisors would be saved from the task of flunking them.

I made a promise to students like that, that if they would *let* me, I would help them prove their advisors wrong. In essence, I was telling them that my role was that of helping them learn, not trying to "teach" them something. Most students accepted my invitation. There were a few who did not.

I was exposed to behavioral objectives, such as *The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* and similar writings of the times. I examined them with the intent of seeing where they might fit into my philosophy of facilitating learning. I was not, perhaps, as successful as I might have been.

I did construct course objectives, and distributed them on the first day of class. One course for which I had responsibility was entitled "Analysis of Variance and the Design of Experiments." I had 2 objectives for that class. One was that at the end of the term, the students would be able to analyze the data from an experiment.

The second was that, given the description of a problem, question(s) to be answered, the student would be able to design an experiment to answer the questions(s). (Some of the readers may remember those objectives.) I did try to remain current in new developments, invoking computer analysis in place of desk computer analyses, as soon as it became practicable.

Meeting the objectives called for the student to learn skills beyond knowledge and comprehension in the Taxonomy classification scheme of things. For most students, the learning of the analysis skills was easily facilitated – crunching numbers comes easily for many folks. However, thinking through the techniques for designing an experiment required higher level thinking. Facilitating those skills was harder to do.

At one point, I had the class assembled in a room, for the dreaded Final Exam. I would have dispensed with it, but it was a University requirement. At the end of the period, one young lady came to the front of the room, after most everyone else had left. She literally threw her text book down on the table and said, "Show me, where in the book is the answer to this question." I think it was Charlie Brown who said, "In the book of life, the answers are not all in the back."

And, near the end of my tenure at FSU, during one of the last classes of the term, when I was talking about how one might apply some of the lessons that I had hoped had been learned, a young man (a doctoral student) asked, "Is this going to be on the final exam?" Alas, he did not do well on the final exam.

Dr. Aker proposed a list of givens for effective facilitators of learning. I thank him for the list, and recommend it for your consideration.

1. Try to see things as seen by the student.
2. Use reward, seldom use punishment, and never ridicule.
3. Have a deep sense of your responsibility, enjoy your work, *and* like people.
4. Feel secure in your own abilities, yet believe that you can do better.
5. Respect the dignity and worth of each individual.
6. Have a keen sense of fairness and objectivity in relating to others.
7. Accept, or try out new things and ideas.
8. Have a high level of patience.

9. Recognize the uniqueness and strengths of each individual.

10. Be sensitive to the needs, fears, problems and goals of the learners.

11. Reflect on the experiences of the learners, and try to analyze them in terms of their successes and failures.

12. Be humble in regard to your role and avoid the use of any assumed power.

13. Do not pretend to have all the answers – enjoy learning along with others.

14. Continue to expand your range of interest.

15. Be committed to you own life-long learning.

In summary, I have often been asked, “Are you a teacher?” I respond to that in the negative. In my best days, I might have been able to help you learn, but I could not teach you much of anything. Oh, I could “teach” you how to perform some skill, but with respect to statistics, educational measurement and related topics, the best that I, or Cliff, could do, was help you learn.

Appendix

Howard Stoker was introduced to educational measurement in 1949-50, when he enrolled in a test construction course, led by Dr. Robert Ebel, at the University of Iowa. In 1955, he enrolled at Purdue University, in a doctoral program in Educational Measurement, under the direction of Dr. H. H. Remmers.

In 1957, he joined the faculty at Florida State University, in the newly-formed Department of Educational Research and Testing, joining Dr. Hazen Curtis and Dr. Russ Kropp. That Department grew, in a few years, to include Drs. Jacob Beard, Robert Gagné, Gary Foster, and F. J. King, among others.

In 1984, he took early retirement from FSU, and joined the faculty of the University of Tennessee. He worked in Memphis, TN, with Dr. Raoul Arreola for four years, and then moved to Knoxville, and joined the Center for Assessment in the College of Education. He retired from University of Tennessee in 1994.

In 1996, together with Annie W. Ward and Millie Murray-Ward, they published *Educational Measurement: Origins, Theories and Explications* (University Press of America). He continues to be active in the profession.