



Perspective/Opinion

Pedagogy in Medical Education: My Perspective as a Teacher Educator

By Jenny Brownson, PhD

Effective and engaging pedagogy for all learners has been my motto as a teacher educator for soon to be elementary school teachers. The chance to work with medical college instructors and employ this same motto was an opportunity I couldn't pass up...

As an elementary teacher educator, employing pedagogical techniques that bring elementary students to academic excellence is part of my job. Additionally, as an instructor of adult learners, I have the same task; I search for pedagogical techniques that guide them to academic excellence. So...what if the content was different? In the case at the Medical College of Wisconsin: take out elementary education curriculum and students, and insert medical college curriculum and instructors. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

Exploring Pedagogy with Adult Learners

After teaching elementary students in Milwaukee Public schools, I recognized early on that I needed to create a cognitive space for my students to dive into the content. Teaching adult learners at UW-Milwaukee proved to challenge my understanding of engagement and effective pedagogy. I noticed that many of my adult students did not so easily participate in theatre activities. Adult learners, while having more understanding of new ways of learning, had some difficulty in using theatre skills such as going into role or improvisation. But once they did participate, the joy of their learning was clearly displayed. I began to recognize I needed to allow and build trust, freedom and respect. This was essential in my learning community for my adult learners to be able to “dive in.”

An Opportunity with Kinetic3

Working with the Kinetic3 program at MCW, I've had the opportunity to work with instructors on their pedagogies. I teamed with Drs. Erica Chou and Kristina Kaljo, both of MCW, in this effort. We asked instructors to rethink how they deliver the content. As such, we explored the

following topics: student engagement, how students can reveal their learning, and how to make teaching a performance and the classroom a stage. The participants stepped up to the challenge!

Rethinking Adult Education through Culturally Relevant Teaching

After speaking with a few MCW instructors in one of my sessions, I recognized that the students in their classrooms potentially processed and revealed their learning differently. We discussed the role that culture plays in teaching and learning. In my work with elementary teachers, we use culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students that we serve (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2021). I see the potential of exploring CRP at MCW.

The Learning Community

As discussed with the Kinetic3 participants, in traditional classrooms the power rested with the teacher. The teacher made decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom management. In reconstructed classrooms the power is shared with the students. Together, the teacher and the students create, reflect and synthesize their learning. For me, the notion of shared power is taken from the work of Paulo Freire (1970). Freire states if people have the freedom to create words and actions, then there is a possibility for them to be humanized in their struggle. Being humanized means students could then step into their role as experts, as learners, and as teachers. Learning becomes an active endeavor where students ask questions and synthesize information in a more in-depth way. As instructors and students, we need to ask: is our community working for us, and are we thriving within it?

Even though our adult learners explore different content, the participants at MCW and my UWM students and I have a shared goal in teaching through engaging pedagogy. How we choose to bring them to academic excellence gives us a common goal.

For further reading:

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). *Culturally relevant pedagogy: Asking a different question*. Teachers College Press.

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