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How do you go from ‘Good’ to ‘Outstanding’?

Rima Aboudan
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Many college educators receive a rating of ‘good’ on their teaching delivery. Following teaching evaluations, usually, raters highlight some clear areas for improvement in their rating reports. The challenge for the educator is to characterize what needs to be done and work on the pedagogy advice to gain an ‘outstanding’ rating in the final verdict of the college rating – satisfy those criteria they say, and outstanding you will be. But how? That is the question.

Today’s effective teaching is no longer a case of entering the classroom and delivering information about a given subject or a taught course. Teaching has become all about the ‘digital natives’ – the college students of today’s generation who are terminally numb with under-stimulation and utterly fascinated with technology of the digital age. Those are the multi-tasking adults who are obsessed with digital equipment and their operations. Those are, nonetheless, the same adults who have to come to our classrooms and listen to some old theories of this and counter theories of that. How can we effectively teach and grab the attention of those students who have the multiple intelligent minds, yet spend almost 6.5 to 11 hours per day multitasking? This is not any easy task, nor is it a straightforward activity as just following improvement advice by raters.

While this is one side of the coin in developing times, we also need to remember that many instructors, and their generation of the past, perceive the world of the ‘digital’ as their dreaded fear of the unknown. Immigrating through to developing times from traditional ways of teaching would be a challenge to most of the ‘past’ generation and even scary to others. So, what are we to do?

Instructionally, lecture-driven text-based teaching no longer works with student generations of new eras. So, first we as educationalists ought to make a decision not to compete with the new world of the students. Second, we need to realize our world is not superior to theirs nor theirs inferior to ours, but the two worlds are just different; and if the mountain won’t come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain.

To meet up with the digital student generation at the level of their life style, and as instructors, we have to inject inductive discovery into students’ leveraging multimedia-obsessed minds. To satisfy their craving for intuitive visuality, and gratify their emotional openness, we, as educators, have to keep students’ attention busy, shifting rapidly from one task to another in a rapidly twitching speed of decision-making and stimulating interactivity. How?

Keep standards of quality as the stimulator of your teaching. Let activities driven by students’ interests, abilities, and passions cross your classroom doors. Draw on instructional sources the students can interact with and bridge the connection to the content sought. TALK TO THEM. Pull together a pool of teaching techniques to foster the multiple intelligences of your student genres. ASK and TEACH. And, of course, do not abstain from involving the students every step of the way. This way you can pull students’ worlds into the classroom. Ultimately, we aim to connect with those students’ worlds and extend ours and theirs to a richer knowledge base.
Find, process, and critique, but do not impede – techniques to bring to your classroom

When in Rome, do as Romans do. If they love them, use them:

(1) Videos as visual demonstrations of concepts, theories, or processes

(2) Games of parody and real, for the added excitement in learning and reviewing

(3) Humor for that special revival of content from the dead

(4) And don’t abstain from improvising – a little risk-taking goes a long way in critical thinking and team building

A learning environment with anything less will not anchor a crossing to the challenging conceptuality of the new world of the digital students

Conclusion

Unless a man undertakes more than he possibly can do, he will never do all that he can.

We think according to nature. We speak according to rules. We act according to custom. But always remember when dealing with students, you are not only dealing with people, but also with creatures of logic and emotion.

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