

Best Practices

Best Practice – I

1. Title of the Practice

Active learning in undergraduate students

2. Objectives of the Practice

- To improve students' participation in active learning methods (especially in group discussions, presentations and demonstrations) and identify challenges that hamper students not to participate actively in class and off class learning sessions
- To enhance the learning experience of the students in the core subjects areas through vast book references and journal articles
- To improve subject wise knowledge and skills of students
- To improve the critical thinking and analyzing capabilities of the students

This practice was aimed at improving the rational thinking and understanding the subjects in detail as compared to the regular methods of learning which was practiced till date.

3. The Context

Student engagement has emerged as one of the principal cornerstones and objectives of teaching and learning in the higher education systems around the world. Increasing internationalization of curricula, student-centered learning and constructivist educational pedagogies is the need of the hour. The focus is more than ever on understanding and improving student engagement and, with it, the student experience and student outcomes. This method was introduced to help the students by providing them with information resources, to analyse and utilize the resources independently to extract required information and to make it available. The emphasis is on students and using different modes focussing on active learning, instructional strategies to maximize student learning in the classroom. Thus active learning is adopted as an alternative to traditional teaching methods.

When students were actively involved in the learning task, they learned more than when they were passive recipients of instruction. It involved the use of the mind, not just the memory. Thus, learning is enhanced when students repeat the information in their own words or when they give examples or make use of the information. The role of technologies, in particular in blended and online forms of teaching and learning, is critical for student engagement and active learning in today's higher education learning environments.

4. The Practice

At the end of each unit in every subject, the respective staff allotted the topics. Hence the particular unit were covered by all the students in their learning process. Students were guided to prepare short power point presentations of the given topics.

The total allotted hours of a particular unit was divided into two, where the first half was taken by the lecturer and the rest of the hours were utilized for the presentations by the students. Presentations were a revision of the taught topics with additional unique information relevant to the topics which were followed by detailed discussions and question answer sessions. Thus this enabled the students to understand the topics in detail by getting involved more constructively in the classrooms.

5. Evidence of Success

This method of teaching improved the competency of the students along with their knowledge and reasoning capabilities. The improved scores obtained for the written and oral exams reflect the efficiency of involving students in this active learning process.

75% of the students assured that group discussion gave them more chance to participate freely in the class than demonstrations and presentations. The study indicated that the major challenges that hinder learners not to participate actively in group discussions, presentations and demonstrations were shortage of time, poor academic background, shyness, and poor communication skills, requirements for presentations and demonstrations (formal attires, materials) and lack of preparation.

It was helpful that asking students to present material to their peers (with their peers involved in the assessment) would alert all the students to be best presenter or demonstrator of the day which in turn increase their subject-specific knowledge; and reinforce their immediate and the wider group's identity.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The challenge had been finding the right tools for increasing student engagement in class without placing added burdens on teachers or restricting their teaching content and style.

Usage of Library during college hours was restricted due to tight class schedules and clinical case load. Lack of knowledge in preparing power points hindered the process.

Best Practice – II

1. Title of the Practice

Clinical learning through Case Study Research.

2. Objectives of the Practice

- To enrich the clinical knowledge of student clinicians through case studies and clinical reports.
- To learn case specific speech and hearing characteristics for better understanding of various disorders.
- To learn effectively the symptom based management with updated rehabilitative methods.
- To correlate the case study reports with latest research data for specific disorders to improve the clinical skills of student clinicians.
- To develop evidence based research skills in undergraduate students.

3. The Context

Competency-based medical education is rapidly gaining international acceptance, moving from classic didactic lectures to self-directed learning opportunities with experiential learning aids in the development of critical cognitive and scholarly skills. Case study assignments help student clinicians develop a variety of key skills

The practice of identifying and developing a case study creates a learning opportunity for listening skills and appreciation for the patient's narrative as well as for developing critical learning and thinking skills that are directly applicable to the clinical practice. This critically important process simultaneously enhances both the medical and the humanistic importance of clinician-patient interaction. In addition, case-based learning is an active learner-centered approach for student clinicians. It serves as a curricular context, which can promote the retention of information and evidence-based thinking.

The preparation and presentation of case studies helped student clinicians acquire and apply clinical competencies in the areas of medical knowledge, practice-based learning, systems-based practice, professionalism, and communication. In this aspect, case studies provided a tool for developing clinical skills through problem-based learning methods.

Case studies were supported with latest information of current trends in the diagnosis and management of specific disorders. This further helped the students to update their knowledge with respect to all aspects of a given disorder. Thus the student clinicians were equipped with information which helped them in the differential diagnosis of a disorder along with selecting the most appropriate management option available for the same.

4. The Practice

The final year students were assigned with the clinical case study presentation under the supervision of a staff where they presented a clinical case which they have attended during their clinical postings. The cases were presented through power point mode including all the clinical details of the selected patient. The steps involved in the diagnosis and the management and rehabilitative methods opted for the patient also was included.

The case presentation was followed by a journal article presentation by intern student which had the latest information about various aspects of the disorder presented in the case study. The journal article presentation include the selection of sample population, sample size, research methodology used, statistical analysis performed etc. The presentations were followed by discussions between the faculty, presenters and the students on correlating the case findings and applying the research information on them in detail.

5. Evidence of Success

The effectiveness of the case study teaching method in promoting learning was observed by comparing the student performance on examination questions related to material covered by case presentations. It showed a vast difference between the performances, where the performance on case presentation related topics was higher as compared to the other.

An improvement in clinical viva voce has been observed and documented as compared to the previous exams which asserted the significant role of case study research on students' learning theoretically as well as practically.

The research exposure enabled the student clinicians to update their understanding of the various disorders as well as help them in learning the research methodologies applicable in various populations.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- Due to the lack of research exposure, students faced difficulties in selecting appropriate journal articles according to the disorder presented, which they overcame later with adequate support from faculty.
- As it was a novice experience, critical analysis of the research data was a hassle initially.