

# BEST TEACHING PRACTICES

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of organizations developing best practices as guidelines for improved effectiveness originated as part of quality improvement initiatives in the business sector.

While the idea has been extended to the management of educational institutions, it could also easily be applied to the institution's teaching mission. In this paper we present the practices that constitute excellence in college teaching. These elements represent the broad range of most effective actions teachers take, and requisite conditions teachers establish, to facilitate learning. We have tried to make this listing brief, to serve more as a reference to the scope of excellent teaching techniques than a source of enlightenment.

Best practice refers to the effective ways to present new information, to present a common experience, formulate questions that foster engagement and confidence, support learners actions with effective well-timed positives, represent openness, learning, and trust, assign formal cooperative task, promote the awareness of how one learns to learn, regulate the physical and mental climate.

Teaching is both art and science. We advance this list of dimensions of excellence as a starting point for discussions about the performances we as teachers strive for and may help each other obtain.

An excellent college teacher is a continuing, life-long professional challenge, the dimensions of which often go unrecognized. In general mind, doctors and lawyers are professionals; teachers are not. We believe we could change our semi-professional status if we could agree upon the list of best practice. It would help us achieve three goals:-

1. College teachers could find consensus on an even-evolving definition of that constitutes best practices in this amorphous and complex endeavor,
2. Senior faculty could assume a responsibility to develop additions & modifications to best practice and actively transmit those practices to new faculty,
3. We all could ensure that our colleagues and institutions apply the set of best practices for the ultimate welfare of the learners.

The best practice we have gathered here focus on those aspects of classroom teaching competence that are visible to oneself and to others and become useful for formative evaluation.

## PRINCIPLES OF BEST TEACHING PRACTICE

### 1. Best practice encourages intervention between students and faculty.

Frequent student faculty contact in and out of class in a most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. It also enhances students intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans. Interaction between student

and teacher can also be effected through internet; assignments can be given and responses/ reviews can be exchanged through mail, chat etc.

## **2. Best practice uses active learning techniques**

Learning is not a speculator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. Students can be involved effectively by using project method, case study, problem solving method, which lets them do brain storming and makes learning permanent.

## **3. Best practice emphasizes time on task.**

Time plus energy equals learning. Learning to use one's time well is critical for student and professional alike. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. Students can learn time management which is very vital for their future by giving time frame assignments, timed quiz etc.

## **4. Best practice encourages interaction and collaboration between students.**

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a sole race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's ideas and responding to others improve thinking and deepens understanding. Giving them Group projects where they act as team; by arranging group discussion also team factor increases can do this.

## **5. Best practice gives prompt feedback.**

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses your learning. In getting started, students need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. In class, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive feedback on their performance. The teacher can test the previous learning; by asking questions before the lecture and after lecture; this can help the students to assess their understanding and focus their energies.

## **6. Best practice respects diversity – talents, experiences, and ways of learning.**

Many roads lead to learning. Different students bring different talents and styles to college. Brilliant students in a seminar might be all thumbs in a lab or studio, students rich in hands – on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come on easily. Teacher can ask thoughtful questions based on analysis, synthesis, critical appraisal, which is different from rote learning. These help students to sharpen their skills.

## **7. Best practice communicates high expectations.**

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone – for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The teacher should encourage the students by citing examples of past students by citing examples of past students having become successful. These should be display and popularity of high achievers of ex-students or present ones for the rest to get motivated.

## **8. Best practice through present technology**

The level of understanding of students varies. The teacher should be able to communicate effectively. Besides speech, if by usage of technology like power point presentation, the lecture is made to be perceived visually as well increases likelihood of better understanding of all the students.

## **We Have Organized Best Practice Under Eleven Headings:-**

### **1. LECTURE PRACTICE**

Lecture method is the most popular method of teaching. In lecture method teacher makes oral presentation of facts, concepts, terms, principles and trends. The duration of lecture should not exceed 20 minutes, simple language, meaningful examples, good vocabulary, fluency are essential features of a good lecture.

- a) Lecture / Rhetorical Questioning.
  - Talk in 7 to 10 minutes segments,
  - Pause in between,
  - Ask pre-planned rhetorical questions,
  - Learners record their answers in their notes.
- b) Guided Lecture
  - Students listen to 15-20 minutes of lecture without taking notes. At the end, they spend five minutes according all they can recall.
  - Learners then involve in small discussion groups reconstructing the lecture conceptually with supporting data.
- c) Halting Time
  - Present complex material or directions and then stop so learners have time to think and carry out directions.
  - Visually check whether the class has understood or not. If they do, continue.
- d) Learners take interest in the lecture specifically related to content already known and liked by them.
- e) Organize the information in proper sequence.
- f) Effectiveness in lecturing is evaluated from the quantum of information thus relayed.
- g) When a regular immediate mastery test is included in the last few minutes of the period, learners retain almost twice as much material, both factual and conceptual.
- h) Stories, metaphor, and myth catch people deeply, no longer are listeners functioning as tape recorders. Stories allow the listeners to seek an experience of being alive in them and find clues to answers within themselves.

### **2. GROUP DISCUSSION TRIGGERS**

Awareness of complexity and enhanced understanding results when learners discuss the meaning of events with each other.

The discussion method is used when the teacher and students co-operatively consider certain topics, problems, or issues where individual opinions are expressed.

Clark and starr write that "A discussion is more than a bull session".

- a) Short Readings
- b) First Person Experience
  - Works written in a personal voice, autobiographies, biographies, oral histories, diaries and memoirs when used as counterpoints, bridges the gap between their own lives and the content under study.
- c) Individual Task With Review
  - Students complete a worksheet or other task and compare the results with their neighbors before the whole class discusses the answers.
- d) Case Studies

A case studies is a factual account of human experience centered in a problem or issue faced by a person, group or organization. It can raise a variety of complex issues and stimulate discussions of alternative view point.

- e) Role Play

Learners explore human relations problems by enacting problem situations and then discussing the enactments. Together learners can explore feelings, attitudes, values and problem solving strategies.

### 3. THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

What does it mean to think? Some people would like to be able to “think better” – or more often want other people’s thinking to improve. But everyone is capable of thinking.

Discoverable Tutorial Questions

- Description:- What did you see? What happened? What is the difference between.....?
- Common Purpose:- What is the purpose or function of.....?
- Procedures:- How was this done? What will have to be done?
- Possibilities:- What else could.....? How could we.....?
- Predictions:- What will happen next?
- Justification:- How can you tell? What evidence led you to.....?
- Rationale for Reality:- Why? What is the reason?
- Generalization:- What is the same about ..... and .....? What could you generalize from these events?

### 4. REFLECTIVE RESPONSES TO LEARNER CONTRIBUTIONS

To facilitate self-discovery and self-appropriated learning, effective teachers respond without changing the topic and share their own information or perspective with mutual respect and without domination. These three reflective responses, when used in sequence, constitute a “responding convention”, a standard way to develop habits of talking that release the potentialities of the learner and promote mutual significance by both the teacher and the learner.

### 5. REWARDING LEARNER PARTICIPATION

All teaching moves learners into areas of risk and incompetence. The best rewards are not contrived, foster personal reflection and independence, and actually work, that is, learners maintain new abilities or do better. Effective teachers support emerging initiative, cooperation and perseverance with well-timed positives in these forms.

#### a) Avoid Praise

Praise, the expression of judgment, is less successful in rewarding learners performance than the techniques. It tends to foster approval seeking rather than independence. Examples: “Good Questions”. “That’s nice work”.

#### b) Description

Describe objectively those aspects of learners performance needing support, avoiding a personal evaluation: “That’s a topic we need to discuss”.

#### c) Narration

Detail the action a learner takes immediately as it occurs. Narrations usually begin with “you...” Example: “You’re raising an issue that needs discussion”.

#### d) Self Talk

Talk about your own thoughts or prior personal experience. Example: “I have wondered that, too”.

#### e) Non Verbal Or Vocal Sound

- Smile
- Wink
- Thumbs Up
- Gestures of excitement and success. “Wow!”.

### 6. ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learning is a constructing process. All people shows that they learn by doing.

#### a) Construction Spiral

When we ask a question, beginning at a reflex level, in a three-step learning cycle-

- i Individual writing for 3-5 minutes,
- ii Small group sharing in trios or pairs, and
- iii Whole class, non-evaluative compilation used to construct understandings and concepts.

b) Round

Each person in turn expresses their point of view on a given topic, or passes, while others listen used to elicit a range of viewpoints and build a sense of safe participation.

c) Writing In Class

Focus questions, in-class journals, lecture or reading summaries and in-class essays can improve the learning of the subject matter and, with clear objectives and feedback, improve writing skills too.

d) Simulations And Games

By creating circumstances that are momentarily real, learners can practice coping with stressful, unfamiliar or complex situations. Simulations and games, with specific guiding principles, rules and structured relationships, can last several hours or even days.

e) Examinations

Scheduling an exam stimulates learners to study. Completion, true false, and multiple choice force memorization of facts and statements. Essay examinations force re-reading and attaining an overall general concept of the material.

## 7. COOPERATIVE GROUP ASSIGNMENT

One form of active learning deserves special attention because it overtly places the learners as workers, demand that each process beliefs and constructs expressions with co-workers, and forces the achievements of a group goal.

Cooperative learning groups embrace five key elements:-

- Positive interdependence,
- Individual accountability,
- Group processing,
- Social skills and,
- Face-to-face interaction.

Typically 3-5 learners placed in heterogeneous groups.

a) Team Member Teaching

Knowledge outcomes: Like a jigsaw puzzle, each member of the team is assigned a portion of the whole.

b) Team Effectiveness Design

Cooperative skills and knowledge outcomes: Whatever material is to be learned is presented to teams in the form of manuscript or text followed by a multiple choice test requiring conclusion or inferences, not locating information in the readings.

c) Student Teams-Achievement Divisions

Knowledge outcomes: learners study the material in heterogeneous groups, but instead of taking a test, learners play academic games to show their individual mastery of the subject matter.

d) Performance Judging Design

Skills outcomes: here learners first study how to develop and apply appropriate criteria for judging performance on a skill, such as writing an essay, giving a speech, or constructing a tool chest.

## 8. MODELING

As a paragon of personal development, a teacher faces inter personal challenges in every action he or she takes to engage, facilitate, catalyze and give life to the opportunity to learn.

## 9. DOUBLE LOOP FEEDBACK

Double loop feedback is a method of providing correctives in a way that maintains the learner's continued engagement in the process of acquiring competence and self-confidence. It sequences the statements teacher's make by starting with least inferential and examining both the learner's performance and the evaluator's assumption at each stage. In double loop learning an open-ended cycle is created.

## **10. CLIMATE SETTING**

A large portion of teaching effectiveness involves setting the stage; it comes with the territory. Solve comfort issues first and the learning path is smoother. Research shows that successful teachers spends 10% of classroom time optimizing the arrangement of the physical setting as well as the psychological setting- a climate of collaborative, supportiveness, openness, pleasure and humanness.

## **11. FOSTERING LEARNER RESPONSIBILITY**

Engagement is the first task for every course of study. Effective teachers offer ways for the learners to take an active role, for at least a portion of the course, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate strategies, and evaluating the outcomes, both internal and external.

People's participation is a decision they make, as openly and independently as possible, in the opportunity a course provides. Leader's can optimize learner's readiness and willingness by offering an invitation to step into the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning.

- Conveying commonalities that the group shares,
- Describing the possibilities that could be attained in an ideal future,
- Fostering a discussion about those aspects of that ideal that are present in the current situation,
- Inviting the explicit commitment of every person to take action, both for themselves and towards the betterment of each other.

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