



KEEP LOOKING TO THE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Why did one wake early, set off soon after lunch, or go to school after a hard day's work? When I think of these questions, 35 years later, I have several answers. I went to school because I was obliged to by my parents. I went to school because all my friends went. I went to school to converse and play with my friends. I went to school to learn. However, one of the most important motives that I recall was that I went to school to attend the classes of excellent teachers.

Some years later, at university, there were various motives that led me to undertake a graduate course in veterinary medicine. Nonetheless, the desire to learn, conduct research, and to listen to and engage in scientific debate with renowned teachers continued to guide my progress. Living in the presence of my teachers and their postgraduates during five years, I was certain that I would become one of them. It was during this period that I became certain that I would be a physiologist, under circumstances similar to those described by Marian Peck (Peck, 2015). In addition to this period of my life, I always recalled those great teachers in my primary and secondary school days that stimulated my curiosity and taught me how to search for the information I needed to answer my questions, whatever they might be. I remember a teacher who always said, "There are no questions that are prohibited, but it is necessary to be careful with the answers", and he was always careful with us.

Today, after several years of continuous training, I teach physiology, conduct research in the area of reproductive physiology, and continue thinking about what makes me wake early, set off soon after lunch (when I actually manage to have lunch), and stay at the university after a day of intense hard work. The response is that I am passionate about my daily activities: teaching, research, sharing information, discussing, and continually learning.

The lack of a challenge is dispiriting to the best of us. Achieving things with great ease weakens the will. Academic challenges motivate me and maintain my curiosity and enthusiasm, both in the classroom and in the

research laboratory. For some time now, an academic career has placed increasing demands on the individual, especially in terms of the number of publications. This brings to mind a phrase attributed to Albert Einstein: "An academic career in which a person is forced to produce scientific texts in large quantities creates the risk of intellectual superficiality". The classroom is an excellent and stimulating laboratory. To arrive in the classroom prepared to teach and learn provides us with excellent opportunities to prepare good scientific articles.

When I remember my excellent teachers, I don't remember the equipment and materials present in the classroom, except perhaps the chalk and blackboard, accompanied by the voice of the teacher. Of course, at that time there was much less equipment available in the classroom. It was these classrooms that provided such fascinating information and pleasurable moments. There were good questions and good answers. The role of science was, and in my opinion still is, to probe the limits of the unknown. And what is the best way to help the student who wishes to advance towards the unknown? The classroom can be the place to initiate such a journey, and in order to achieve this, it should be a place that is pleasurable for both students and teachers (DiCarlo, 2009; Baid and Lambert, 2010).

Nowadays, we have many resources available to us in the classroom: projectors, computers, electronic blackboards, smartphones, applications, and the Internet. Information about the world can be instantaneously delivered to our classrooms. Given the experiences I lived through as a student, and my current experiences as a teacher, I constantly ask myself something that I frequently hear: why do students have no interest in learning? I hear this question at my own institution, from colleagues who minister courses different to my own, as well as from colleagues working at other institutions and in other countries (Baid and Lambert, 2010; Augustyniak et al., 2016). I believe that this question is not universally true. There are many students with the interest and drive to

study. In my own experience, most students are interested in learning.

Therefore, we should not become polarized in our thinking and discussion. It is not a question of right and wrong. It is not a question of having to choose a side to defend. Teachers and students need to collaborate by adopting mutually beneficial attitudes, convictions, and commitments that favor a successful working environment, always seeking the best ways to provide conditions that are relaxing and entertaining, and that promote high quality teaching and learning. The classroom has become a cosmopolitan place that can be exploited in many fascinating ways.

The achievement of success requires constant daily effort. The teacher needs to have a suitable level of understanding of the content with which he/she is working. The teacher needs to be well-prepared, necessitating adequate planning of the topics to be discussed with the students, whether in the classroom or in the laboratory. The teacher needs to understand the behavior of the students in order to achieve the best possible results with each individual during the period in which they are together. Nonetheless, this professional relationship is not entirely dependent on the teacher.

There is a widely known saying that says, "You cannot teach those who do not wish to learn". Hence, in order that the environment in the classroom should be beneficial to all, the student must play his/her part and be prepared to actively participate in the teaching-learning process. The desire to learn stimulates the desire to teach. This is not a simple issue that can be skimmed over here. It is a matter that is continually discussed by teachers and educators worldwide.

One technique that has been used to good effect is to make the student actively participate in the learning process (Dirks-Naylor, 2016; Fuller et al., 2016; Luc and Antonoff, 2016). It is valuable to encourage the students to contribute to well-elaborated discussions during the classes, to actively participate in practical laboratory sessions, and to integrate with class colleagues (Montrezor, 2014; Marcondes et al., 2015). These goals can be achieved when the teacher is successful in adequately planning the activities. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that the dynamics of the activities are clearly explained to the students. It is important that the students are aware of the topic and the way in which it will be addressed. This must especially be made clear when the proposed activity is used for evaluation purposes. The students need to know how and when the evaluation will be undertaken, as well as its contribution to the final marks (Homam and Armstrong, 2003; Bassett et al., 2015; Peck, 2015; Montrezor, 2016). The clear and objective provision of such information helps to alleviate doubts in the students, enabling them to participate more actively in the learning process.

There are various ways in which the teaching-learning process can be made more dynamic and interesting for the

students, employing methodologies such as games, computer simulations, and smartphone applications, among others (Armbruster et al., 2009; Marcondes et al., 2015; Dirks-Naylor, 2016; Fuller et al., 2016; Luc and Antonoff, 2016). This does not signify that theoretical classes should be abandoned, or that they are ineffective. The combination of classical theoretical lessons and active techniques is a valuable approach that should be encouraged whenever possible (Richardson, 2008). The hybrid style of teaching adopted by many institutions has demonstrably produced good results. Teaching techniques based on problem-solving or clinical cases can also be highly successful and have many followers worldwide.

There are advantages and disadvantages of any methodology used to improve the teaching-learning process. Whatever the nature of the evaluation protocol employed, whether used for determining the effectiveness of the methodology adopted and/or the learning of the student, there are also advantages and disadvantages. This is part of the scientific process and should be kept in mind so that problems can be addressed correctly and new solutions can be found. We should be alert to new techniques and be able to implement in our lessons those that are most beneficial to teachers, students, courses, and institutions.

DISCLOSURES

The author declares no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.

AUHTOR CONTRIBUTIONS

L.H.M. conception and design of text; L.H.M. drafted manuscript; L.H.M. edited and revised manuscript; L.H.M. approved final version of manuscript.

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