



A Pilot Study of 1st and 2nd Year Medical Students Evaluating Their Approach Towards Student Centered Learning Activities in a Medical University

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Abstract

Student-centered learning (SCL) is aimed at guiding the students to learn on their own, thereby creating unlimited learning opportunities and methods. Students gain knowledge as well as analytical ability and communication skills from SCL activities like problem based learning, assigned independent reading, portfolio, group discussion etc. SCL, if carried out perfectly, enhances the intrinsic motivation of students, inducing active learning that promotes critical thinking and problem solving. It is documented that even shy and weak students perform well in SCL. A survey was conducted among 1st and 2nd year medical students in the International Medical University, Malaysia linking their motivation, approach and performance in student centered learning. Although 78% of the students considered SCL as an important component of their curriculum, 48% experienced practical difficulties in understanding the given concept without teacher guidance and therefore could not prepare for the SCL efficiently. Only 28% of the students managed to completely read all the suggested reading materials and therefore were able to have stimulated discussions with their peers and were motivated by the SCL activity. Students who are unable to perform well on their own have a negative approach towards SCL and think it is not useful enough. Our study suggests that students' perception of SCL and the hardships faced by them decide their approach towards SCL, as has been reported earlier [1]. Most of the students (68%) declare that they get most of the information on the given topic from scientifically unreliable websites and generally refrain from reading text books or suggested references. For SCL to be very effective, the students need to be exposed to strategies that will strengthen their performance and self-confidence. Reading has to be inculcated interactively into the curriculum to motivate the students and improve their learning quality. Students' self-motivation decides the success of student-centered learning activities.