

An Application of Constructivism Learning Theory to Large Group Teaching in Occupational Therapy Education

Conscious application of constructivism learning theory in large group teaching may be especially useful in the development of clinical reasoning and higher order thinking required in healthcare professional education. This paper details the application of constructivism learning theory to the design and delivery of 3 large group (n=77) lectures for Masters Level Occupational Therapy students at the University of Toronto. Interactive teaching methods and educational technologies were incorporated into the lectures to align with constructivism learning theory. Student evaluations were conducted after each lecture using a standard departmental evaluation form for guest lecturers. Specific responses were solicited on topic relevance, organization, clarity, effectiveness of the lecturer, encouragement to participate and overall learning experience. The students' rating of their overall learning experience steadily improved over the three lectures. Approximately 40% of the students responding to the evaluation rated their overall learning experience from the first lecture as excellent. This improved to approximately 46 % for the second lecture and approximately 66% for the final lecture.

Interactive teaching techniques promoted deeper learning and served as a foundation for new mental constructs that student clinicians will build upon as they enter clinical fieldwork and eventually begin professional practice. The educational technologies utilized in the lectures aligned with the characteristics and needs of these millennial students. Moreover, these tools facilitated meaningful interaction with the content, promoted critical thinking and mimicked clinical decision making in practice. With appropriate planning, constructivism principles of independence, active learning and collaboration within a social context can be readily integrated into large group lectures.

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