Principles of Teaching

Report of lecture given by Mr. Baldev Bhatia

(Continued from February Journal)

The Principle of Activity

A second principle for the teacher to remember is that learning is an active process. There has to be activity of some kind—physical or intellectual. With children much learning activity has to be physical. They learn by touching, tasting, smelling, moving and physically going through actions, as well as by seeing and hearing. With adolescent and adult students mental activity is more important. They have had sufficient experience to be able to understand and visualize mentally, without going through every step physically. They do not need a visual aid with every concept. They are well-able to learn from the abstract expression of ideas. The important thing with them is that the teacher should be able to encourage their questions and mental activity. Much may be accomplished by good questioning, or by discussion step-by-step. Assignments are also a means to this end.

The Principle of Connecting with Life

Another principle important to remember with adolescent and adult learners, is that they are anxious to learn how to deal with the practical problems important in their own everyday life, individual life or professional life. They are keenly interested in their future and philosophical ideas. They are intensely interested in learning about their own bodies, about diseases and what to do in illness, and of how to adjust to life’s problems. In teaching nursing we can utilize this liking for the practical life situations and problems. The subject matter of our teaching is especially suited to the needs of this age group.

The Principle of Clarity and Concreteness

With the child we need to use charts, maps, pictures, models and visual and other sensory aids at every step of teaching. We need to appeal to the eye constantly because the child has had limited experience of life. With the adult student we can appeal to the inner eye. Verbal illustrations are extremely useful. There is much clarity and concreteness got from the verbal illustrations or examples. But where there has been no experience, or where language is a block, we can make use of visual aids and actual experience to clarify the meaning of words and so make the abstract concept concrete. Once the concept is established we do not have to go on and on showing pictures of the same thing to make it concrete. The verbal illustration provides the quick mental flash of understanding. The Chinese proverb says “One picture is worth ten thousand words.” Similarly the verbal example or illustration is worth many thousand words. With adults it is possible to take this shortcut.

The Principle of Patience, Sympathy and Kindness

The post-adolescent and young adult student has a special need for patience so that we may understand her difficulties. She needs sympathy and kindness at the hands of her teachers. Sentiment and emotionality are not enough. There is a great need for a sense of security, a sense...
of being together and not alone. We need
to avoid nagging, scolding, sarcasm and
ridicule. These will only raise resistance
and result in negative reactions and
habits. It is important to try to under-
stand the difficulty of the student.
This does not imply lenience, but it means
sympathy, justice and fairness. She
needs to feel that you understand her and
are with her in feeling her difficulty, even
when you are very firm. Always correct
her in private, and especially not in front
of patients, relatives, doctors or others.

The Principle of Responsibility for what is
Taught

As teachers, not only do we need to
keep up standards of student work, but
we have the responsibility for giving
accurate and correct information our-
selves. We need to feel responsibility for
what we write and say. If we make
mistakes we need to admit them. If we
don’t know or are not sure, we need to
say so. We can say we will look it up or
will help find the correct or exact or more
detailed explanation.

The Principle of Cooperation and
Suggestion in Learning

The teacher and learner need to co-
operate in order to aid learning. All the
socialized methods of teaching have come
into being because of this principle. If
the teacher is to succeed, it is by the
power of suggestion not command.
There is no teaching without learning.
The socialized methods use suggestion to
motivate and seek to bring about joint
working on a problem. Because some are
working, others are more apt to work
too. What cannot be accomplished
separately by teacher or learner is shown to be possible by joint effort or
team work.

The Principle of Democratic Teaching

The principle of democracy in
teaching refers to intellectual democracy—
respecting the student as an individual
and for her intellectual powers. Each
student needs attention and respect. The
atmosphere for learning should be one of
give-and-take, co-operation, sharing and
respect for the individual as an
individual. It is hard for us to under-
stand this gentleness sometimes. We
may take it as weakness. We are
shocked by the behaviour of students
to their teachers. I remember such
instances of seeming disrespect in
the presence of a teacher. Boys were
allowed to put their feet up—sit relaxed—
and talk as if in a family, in the
presence of the teacher. At first I could not under-
stand this, taking it to be terrible dis-
respect, and also a weakness on the part
of the teacher. Then I began to see
that among these boys there were none
of the serious problems—strikes and more
serious types of moral difficulty. They
had no need to seek attention or satis-
faction in unacceptable conduct. I began
to see also a very real two-way respect
between the boys and their teacher, not
the humble docility that we are used to.

If our students are to live in a dem-
ocracy, and our country has chosen this
path, they need to become intellectually
responsible, able to think and decide for
themselves, but with respect for other
people’s thoughts and decisions.

The Principle of Diagnostic and Remedial
Teaching

All the while we are teaching, we need
to be alert to find out student abilities
and needs, not just those of one or one
group, but all the varying talents and
needs of each learner. Our teaching
must then strive to meet the needs of
those very different abilities and difficul-
ties. We need to consider the special
needs, not only of weak students, or of
average students or of exceptional
students, but of all. Here much can be
done through assignments, individual work
and use of socialized methods. Each
student should be encouraged to find out
her own strong and weak points, and to
view with her own past efforts. She
needs to learn to evaluate her own work.
We need to discover the strong points in
each of our students, not just spend all
our time on the weaknesses or difficulties
though help is needed there also.
The Principle of Intellectual Liberation

Finally, one of the most important teaching principles to remember is that we should strive to help the student to liberate her own energies. We want to develop initiative, the habit of independent thinking, self-reliance, and the ability to do sustained independent work. Good teaching always liberates the mind. Let us try, as teachers, to give this greatest of all freedoms to our students, and help them to fulfil their greatest potentialities.

To sum up, we need to study our students and the needs of their age-group in order to catch their interest and make them want to learn. We want our students' minds to be active. We want to link their learning with real life situations. We want them to acquire crystal-clear, concrete pictures in the mind of what they learn. In order to give the sense of security and support needed in adolescence and post-adolescence, we need to be patient, sympathetic and kindly, avoiding ridicule and sarcasm or correction in front of patients or outsiders which only stirs resistance. As teachers, we need to be intellectually conscientious about what we teach so that the learner gets correct information only. Because there is no teaching without learning we must suggest and work with the student to help him be active. Because we live in a democracy, we must respect our students as individuals, and respect their minds. If we can help to liberate the mental and intellectual energies of our students we are performing the greatest of our functions as teachers.

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Nursing Education News

Delhi

From Miss A. Cherian, President, Delhi State Branch.—

"Our Sister Tutor or Nursing Education Section at the College of Nursing started very informally when Sister Tutors from different hospitals met at a tea party in 1953. It was decided right then to meet once a month on a Saturday afternoon, to have, no fees and no written notices. A chairman and minute secretary were elected. Each member showed great determination to work for nursing education and professional growth."

"Since then we have met regularly, and have had meetings by invitation at every hospital and Nursing School from which the members of our group come, including Patiala in a neighbouring state. We now number 21 members, and our average attendance is 14-18 members. We have invited Matrons and Ward Sisters to special meetings where everybody needed to work together on a project. We set no time limit to our meetings and sometimes the meeting has lasted four hours! But everytime we meet with great interest and leave with the feeling of achievement."

"One of our biggest achievements has been the production of a Physics and Chemistry Manual, a third edition of which we are preparing at the moment. With Matrons and Ward Sisters, we have lately been working on suggested outlines for Ward Teaching in Medical Nursing, Surgical Nursing and Paediatric nursing. Members are already talking about the next project. Our new chairman is Miss Das, Sister Tutor, Irwin Hospital, and our secretary is Miss Bose, Sister Tutor, Lady Hardinge Hospital."

"Well, we are an active group and we hope more nursing education groups will form all over India and enjoy working together for Nursing Education just as we do!"

Punjab

From Mr. H.B. Joshi, Branch Secretary, State Branch.—

"The Nursing Education Group in this