College Professors’ Teaching Conceptualizations and Motivation When Using Learner-Centered Teaching Methods

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Purpose of Study
This study examines the relationship between professors’ teaching conceptualizations and motivation, and their use of Learner-Centered Teaching methods in colleges of environmental agricultural, applied, and life sciences.

Methodology
329 faculty from 19 land grant universities and state colleges participated in a national online survey.

Survey Results
- College teachers’ conceptualizations of teaching and motivation informed their teaching behaviors and practices.
- Measurements of teaching conceptualization indicate that the professors tended to view their teaching as processes of development, apprenticeship, and nurturing.
- The professors were interested in and motivated to use learner-centered teaching methods.
- The professors were somewhat efficacious using learner-centered teaching methods.

Motivation: Foster Students’ Critical Thinking
Active Learning
\[ R^2 = .43 \]

Motivation: Develop Career Skills
Inquiry Learning
\[ R^2 = .17 \]

Motivation: Empower Students to Change Society and Community
Service Learning
\[ R^2 = .28 \]

Motivation:
Foster Students’ Critical Thinking
Active Learning
Motivation:
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Inquiry Learning
Motivation:
Empower Students to Change Society and Community
Service Learning
Implications and Conclusions

- The alignment of teaching conceptualizations with learner-centered teaching methods supports that professors use teaching methods that help them reach intended outcomes.
- The teaching methods faculty use influence student learning experiences.
- The way professors think and feel about teaching influences what they do in their courses.
- Motivation of professors played an important role in their use of learner-centered teaching methods.

Recommendations for Faculty Development

- Create programs to understand professors’ conceptualizations of teaching as well as their motivational beliefs.
- Focus on helping professors understand the assumptions behind using various teaching methods and the benefits of learning-centered teaching methods.
- Graduate students and professors should be provided assistance to help them develop confidence in their abilities to teach using learner-centered teaching methods.

Use of Active Learning

Use of Inquiry Learning

Use of Service Learning

Table 1. Teaching Methods used for Active Learning (N = 329)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>30 9.2%</td>
<td>63 19.3%</td>
<td>128 39.1%</td>
<td>85 26.0%</td>
<td>21 6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Projects</td>
<td>33 10.2%</td>
<td>52 16.0%</td>
<td>130 40.0%</td>
<td>74 22.8%</td>
<td>36 11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
<td>23 7.0%</td>
<td>40 12.2%</td>
<td>118 35.9%</td>
<td>99 30.1%</td>
<td>49 14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Teaching Methods used for Inquiry Learning (N = 329)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Based Learning</td>
<td>3 0.9%</td>
<td>28 8.6%</td>
<td>122 37.5%</td>
<td>141 43.4%</td>
<td>31 9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>27 8.3%</td>
<td>57 17.5%</td>
<td>125 38.3%</td>
<td>99 30.4%</td>
<td>18 5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>47 14.4%</td>
<td>81 24.8%</td>
<td>114 34.9%</td>
<td>75 22.7%</td>
<td>10 3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>