Teaching and Learning Strategies that Promote Self-Regulated Learning among Pre-Clinical Medical Students

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Background:

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is an important core attribute for students to instill lifelong learning. Although medical schools are adopting strategies and pedagogies to facilitate this process, the teaching-learning approaches are still heavily centred towards didactic methodologies. Attention needs to be placed on facilitating SRL development during teaching and learning process. Nonetheless, little has been published in this area in medical education in spite of importance being well-documented in literature review in education.

Hence, this project aims to investigate the teaching-learning activities which support the development of SRL at NUS Medicine, Singapore.

Summary of work

This research employs an exploratory qualitative approach in collecting data. Focus group discussions were conducted to seek students' views on the teaching-learning strategies in pre-clinical years and how they develop their learning approaches. Structured interviews were conducted to collect teachers' feedback on how the teaching-learning activities support the development of self-regulated learning in students.

Summary of results

There are several overlapping themes that emerged from the teachers' and students' data which relate to types of approaches and attitudes.

Both teachers and students believe that there is a need to move away from controlling teaching approach in promoting SRL. Some approaches that are useful in encouraging SRL are thinking approach, connecting approach, flipped teaching approach whereby students take over as the role of teaching using technology.

Teachers' and students' attitudes play an important part in promoting SRL in teaching and learning. For teachers, having a strong self-efficacy is crucial in supporting SRL but this is currently lacking. In addition, there is a strong perception that research still holds the prime as compared to teaching. Coping with multiple tasks such as clinical work and research, teaching has becoming secondary to the teachers. On the other hand, self-discipline and motivation influence students to be engaged in SRL as students are also heavily involved in other extra-curricular activities besides academic which could enriched their experience in their medical journey. Hence, actively promoting SRL by the teachers is insufficient as it takes two hands to clap.

Apart from pedagogies preferences, a supportive teaching environment is required by interacting with students in an autonomy-supportive way. As mentioned by the teachers, students must be given the opportunities to apply SRL by creating a well-structured environment. This finding coincides with one of the themes raised by the students, namely Motivating Factors. Students mentioned that they are more motivated to become a self-regulated learner if they are given the opportunity to do so or when they are engaged in activities that evoke their curiosity. Although students are independent in looking for resources, they still hope the teachers could provide a clear objective-driven task to guide them. Positive relationship and interaction with the lecturers that provide a conducive learning environment will enhance and motivate students to be engaged in SRL. In support of SRL, students perceived that open resources as helpful but they wish to have some guidance as well as clear objectives and instructions for them to prepare before the actual teaching and learning sessions are being conducted.

Discussion and conclusion

In conclusion, while teachers and students recognize the importance of implementing SRL in the teaching and learning environment, more effort needs to be done to prepare students to achieve this. We understand from the data that strategies alone is not sufficient in promoting SRL. Providing a supportive environment and guidance coupled with appropriate attitude from the teachers and students are equally essential.

Note

Keywords

self-regulated learning, pre-clinical, teaching & learning, qualitative