



Professor Dale J. Harrington, MA (Social Science), Professor of Management, Sociology, and Critical Thinking with over three decades of experience, twice honored as Outstanding Business Professor of the year, Outstanding Undergraduate College of Business and Management Professor of the year.

Dale's professional experience started in the California Criminal and Civil Courts system where he was promoted up Assistant Chief Probation Officer and Acting Chief Probation Officer. He continued as the Executive Director of two housing corporations, was twice elected as President of the Board and served on the Board of the California Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. He also was a founder and served on the Board of the Affordable Housing Affiliation, and as a Board Member on the City of Benicia Housing Authority.

Dale currently serves on Water Conservation Committee, the Management Committee, the Audit and Finance Committee, focusing on conservation of resources and recycling items that can be converted to other uses.

Throughout his professional career and beyond, Dale has continuously worked to respect and honor people's opinions, even if they are different from his. He firmly believes that the democratic process is of primary importance and everyone has the right to express their opinion and have their opinion considered.

The article by a leading professor, senior corporate executive, practitioner and inspirational leader focuses on a major problem of adult education – professor and student responsibilities. The author considers essential factors influencing the distribution of responsibilities – communicational, methodological and ethical. The article brings a new insight into the problem and will be invaluable for adult education scholars and practitioners.

Стаття провідного професора, вищого керівника корпорацій, фахівця та талановитого лідера зосереджується на серйозній проблемі освіти дорослих – відповідальності викладача і студента. Розглянуто суттєві чинники, що впливають на розподіл обов'язків – комунікаційні, методологічні та етичні. Стаття пропонує новий погляд на проблему і буде неоціненною для науковців і практиків у галузі освіти дорослих.

PROFESSOR AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES –HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

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Motto of the University of Phoenix

*We change the lives of our students, their families and future generations
through higher education*

Are professor and student responsibilities different? My answer, based on 31 years of experience in higher education, is “Yes” and “No”. In some situations, there is clearly only one answer; most questions, however, can be answered with, “it depends”. Circumstances vary.

The goal of this paper is to present various reasons an interactive/integrated learning environment enhances student learning. Leading up to that discussion I am suggesting some purposeful actions between professors and students that help lay the groundwork for interactive/integrated learning. First, I will state that the class sessions I valued most when a university student were those with an interactive/integrated learning environment. I am convinced these experiences influenced my desire to become a faculty member at the University of Phoenix and share in the university’s unique teaching/learning model.

Let me begin by stating the professor sets the emotional and academic tone in the classroom. That tone can be as a “dictator” where everything I say is the law and is correct. Some call this “Sage on the Stage.” As Robert Hutchins (1899-1977) said, “It must be remembered that the purpose of education is not to fill the minds of students with facts... it is to teach them to think” (n.d.). The professor who teaches their students to think becomes the “Guide on the side”. What this individual realizes is they do not know everything about every subject; they have positive high expectations in their learning environment that requires maximum input from all participants, thus they acquire answers together. As professor, it is my responsibility to share my cumulative experiences and wisdom with my students, create situations which require thinking, inquiry, and wisdom, support them as they seek their own truths. The professor who understands this can relate to W.B. Yates (1865 – 1939) who said, “Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire” (n.d.).

In order to maintain an environment that supports learning, professors and students both have responsibilities to communicate clearly, behave respectfully (student to student, student to professor, and professor to student), and stay focused on the subject of the class. Professors who model responsibility, respect and organization can expect their students to follow their example. If we, as professors, do not live up to these behaviors, what right do we have to expect our students to act responsibly? We are the leaders and all leaders know their role is important in showing the way.

COMMUNICATION

Although communication is a shared responsibility, the professor's role is broad. Not only are we responsible for clearly presenting our information and listening attentively to information and ideas from the students, we need to observe interactions between students. Observing body language and responding accordingly allows us to "read" our students. For instance, if I state something and I see the expression on a student's face that makes me wonder if they understand, I might need, at that moment, to ask if there are any questions, or I might ask my students to share with a partner what they have just learned. This allows students to summarize what they have just learned, and the student whose expression changed will hear the information a different way. My job then is to ask for feedback to make sure what they are sharing is on track. This creates an environment that allows the sensitive student to receive clarification without being singled out and embarrassed, which may prevent future interactions.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Some responsibilities rest specifically with the professor. One of these is to stay focused on continuing education. If our information is to be meaningful and current, we need to be lifelong learners and continue to gather information and learn from any circumstance that relates to our subject matter. I am talking about events occurring throughout the world. We also need to be a student in the classroom. We can learn from our students.

ARRIVING TO CLASS PREPARED

Although arriving to class prepared is a responsibility of both professor and student, the professor's role has added dimensions. The student usually considers their responsibility is to read the assigned materials. Not only does the professor need to be prepared with knowledge from the text and related readings, but we need to bring to class additional materials that supplement the content provided through the curriculum selected by the university. This can be other books, journals, articles, and research papers.

STAYING FOCUSED

Staying focused on the subject at hand is a shared responsibility but it is the professor who needs to make sure this is followed. Just as the chairperson of a committee is responsible that the agenda is followed, the professor is responsible to make sure discussions do not detract from the focus and goals of the content for that class session. Obviously if an item is brought forth that is not directly related to the subject, the professor can decide that it is important enough to explore further at that time. On the other hand, the professor can take note and incorporate the subject into a future class session. If this is the decision at the time, the professor should acknowledge the value of the subject and state that it will be the subject for discussion at a later time. Either action by the professor demonstrated that the professor is in control of the session.

MODELING RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

Although it is reasonable to expect that everyone will behave respectfully with each other, this does not always occur. I have seen reports where professors criticized a student for asking a question or made comments implying a student's question was unintelligible. Such professorial behavior belittles the student and sets a tone that is sure to quash future questions.

If a student's question is unrelated to the subject being discussed, the professor has an obligation to keep the flow of discussions from veering away from the topic. This can be accomplished by explaining the need to remain on topic and suggesting that, during a break or after class, the professor will speak with the student about their interests.

It is my experience that if we treat people with respect and dignity, that behavior is returned. It is no different from what happens in any organization. Employees treated with respect by their superiors tend to treat customers with respect.

ATTITUDE AND ABILITY

At least three kinds of students come to our university. One has a positive attitude with little academic ability, one has a negative attitude with good academic ability, and one has both the positive attitude and the ability to succeed in the rigors of academia. Attitude and ability are important partners; desire alone does not guarantee success

Mac Anderson, author of *You Can't Send a Duck to Eagle School*, relates a discussion he had with a "top executive from a company known for their legendary retail service". When speaking with the executive, Mr. Anderson said, "With the service your people give... you must have a training manual 2 inches thick.' The executive looked up and said, 'Mac, we don't have a training manual. What we do is find the best people we can find and we empower them to do whatever it takes to satisfy the customer.' Then he said something I will never forget. He said, 'We learned a long time ago that *you can't send a duck to eagle school.*' 'Excuse me,' I said. He repeated... '*You can't send a duck to eagle school.*' He said, 'You can't teach someone to smile, you can't teach someone to want to serve, you can't teach personality'" (p.8). The same basic principle applies to students who are not prepared, emotionally or academically for the rigors of our universities.

Obviously, a professor does not select which persons the university will enroll. Some students will possess all of the basic attributes needed to learn and succeed and others will not. It is important that, as professors, we remember we cannot teach someone to smile and we cannot teach someone to want to learn. We can provide rich experiences and an environment conducive to success where learning is achieved if the student's attitude and ability are in alignment with the demands of the discipline.

INTERACTIVE/INTEGRATED LEARNING

There are many ways to teach. I define a *facilitator of learning* as one who serves as a catalyst to learning; one who introduces concepts then orchestrates conversation, inquiry, and understanding of important information. The facilitating professor differs from the straight lecturer in that she or he enhances interactive/integrated learning. My experiences and those of people with whom I have had discussions through the years reveal that learning is more

meaningful and useful if the learner can transfer the concepts to personal experiences or at least real-life situations with which they can relate.

When students think critically and discuss at the application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Benjamin Bloom, 1913-1999), their interactive discussions (students to professor as well as student to student) reveals new understanding. I have taught approximately 1,200 class sessions for the University of Phoenix. Each session creates its own life as I draw on my rich experiences, knowledge of the subject and research and students share their personal/professional experiences. I have become an active listener and keen observer whether students share with the whole class or in small groups. As students work in small groups, I am conscious of their participative accountability as well as their need for autonomy. I give them space during their small group discussions, but am always available and always attentive to what is going on in the classroom. Students, who understand they are accountable for participation and know the professor is accessible, become active participants in the learning environment.

As an active listener, I model respect for my students and encourage them to participate actively in the learning process. In his book, *You Can't Send a Duck to Eagle School*, Mac Anderson identifies a study that reveals the importance of listening. Mr. Anderson states, "Gallop polled over 1 million employees who thought they had a great boss and asked them the question, Why? You got it! The number one reason was the boss was willing to listen to what they had to say" (p.12). Experience has taught me this is true with students as well as employees!

So, let's teach our students to "fly"! We can accomplish this by communicating clearly what we want our students to understand, staying focused on our topic, modeling organization and respect and by transferring responsibility to our students. When they are secure in their ability to apply the important principles of our content, they have the tools to "fly" out into the world and apply the invaluable skills and content they learn from their peers and us, their professors!

I will end this article with a quote from Henry Adams: "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops" (n.d.)

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