

New Teaching Methods

Success stories in new educational methods that show positive outcomes

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To meet societal needs and be successful veterinarians, it is essential that veterinary students develop an integrated set of competencies by the time they graduate. The structure of the veterinary curriculum should foster the development of these competencies in the veterinary student. Based on educational theories, especially social constructivism, a variety of models to deliver healthcare curricula have been developed, such as problem-based learning, team-based learning and workplace learning. In veterinary education more often a kind of 'hybrid' curriculum is developed, in which student-centered, activity-stimulating teaching methods are introduced. For example, small-group learning formats will foster active learning in theoretical courses. The (clinical) workplace is an ideal environment for active learning. Addressing relevance of what students' are asked to learn will foster motivation. Relevance can be realized by integration of real life topics taken from the day one competencies into the basic science disciplines. Specific attention will be given to teaching methods that address evidence-based medicine. Working together in small groups on specific tasks helps students develop communication and collaboration competencies and problem-solving skills. Workplace learning is particularly suitable for an integrative approach of all competencies. In order to maximize opportunities of workplace learning, frequent formative feedback must be provided on all competencies to ensure learning is inseparable from assessment. A well-proven system of a longitudinal learning and assessment program in the clinical workplace will be presented. As an example, the implementation and evaluation of a learning and assessment portfolio, in which all competencies are addressed and which the student owns, will be described. Specific attention to the competency 'personal development', in which personal resources such as reflective skills, pro-activity and self-efficacy are taught, practiced, and refined, will enhance the learning of the other competencies. In this system, individual mentoring and peer-feedback meetings are supportive for the personal development of the student. High quality and frequent feedback is a prerequisite to foster learning. A training program for veterinary educators is essential to ensure teachers develop appropriate feedback skills to enhance student learning and to practice active teaching formats and individual mentoring skills, all of which are necessary for the integrative development of all competencies in veterinary students.

Keywords: competencies – relevant context – workplace learning – active learning – feedback – personal development.