



Principles and Descriptors of “Quality Learning”

A Sampling of Principles and Descriptors of “Quality Learning”

1. Chickering’s Seven Principles for Good Practice
2. How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching
3. Selected Resources

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

Although these principles were developed for undergraduate students, they have since been applied to graduate education at several universities. Quality learning typically has the following characteristics.

1. Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

2. Good Practice Encourages Cooperation among Students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Good Practice Encourages Active Learning

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.



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6. Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Expect more and you will get it. High Expectations are important for everyone - for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well-motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of themselves and make extra efforts.

7. Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learning ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in new ways that do not come so easily.

How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching

Quality learning is fostered by well-designed courses and assessments and by effective classroom facilitation that takes into account the following principles.

Overview:

1. “Learning is a *process*, not a product. However, because this process takes place in the mind, we can only infer that it has occurred from students’ products or performances.”
2. “Learning involves *change* in knowledge, beliefs, behaviors or attitudes. This change unfolds over time; it is not fleeting but rather has a lasting impact on how students think and act.”
3. “Learning is not something done *to* students, but rather something students themselves do. It is the direct result of how students interpret and respond to their *experiences*—conscious and unconscious, past and present” (p. 3).

Principles:

1. “Students’ prior knowledge can help or hinder learning.”
2. “How students organize knowledge influences how they learn and apply what they know.”
3. “Student’s motivation determines, directs, and sustains what they do to learn.”
4. “To develop mastery, students must acquire component skills, practice integrating them, and know when to apply what they have learned.”



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5. “Goal-directed practice coupled with targeted feedback enhances the quality of students’ learning.”
6. “Students’ current level of development interacts with the social, emotional, and intellectual climate of the course to impact learning.”
7. “To become self-directed learners, students must learn to monitor and adjust their approaches to learning” (p. 4).

Sources and Selected Readings

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