

Teaching of psychology



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" You have an organ in your head. Part of that organ is called the cerebral Cortex. This nifty gadget transforms matter into consciousness. With it we can do what no other organism on this Planet has ever been able to do. We can change ourselves. Think of the Possibilities."

- Michael P. Black

Nothing could more aptly describe the power of the human brain. In the psychological jargon, we call it human mind or psyche. It is and would always be the most remarkable thing to have happened to humans. If the possibilities it can explore are innumerable, then the intertwining that can arise are also immense. To understand the mind and its complications is not simple. But there have been attempts and many successful ones. In fact, the interpretation of the psyche has developed as a formal academic discipline - 'Psychology'. Psychology is an extensive field and its ambit is an amalgam of research and teaching. Teaching of psychology becomes very significant in the contemporary individualistic and collective notions of this multi-cultural global society.

Teaching is a very responsible activity. The teacher's words can make or mar perspectives. Therefore it requires a thorough expertise on the subject matter as well as the ability to put across the subject effectively. In the area of psychology, the teacher generally has to balance between his/her role of a psychologist and a teacher. The 'how of learning' becomes very important in the teaching of psychology. This is because it has to tread the path of commonalities differences, the impact of culture as well as the benefits and challenges that human diversity brings to relationships and communities.

Psychology teaching should be a journey of insight, emotions and imagination. It is very important for the teacher to foster the development of

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independent, critical thought, evaluative skills, depth of learning, to explore ideas and questions. Teaching of psychology is better performed through demonstration. Cramming of details should never be on the agenda, but a clear understanding of the concepts for an insightful delivery of knowledge is mandatory. It is also important to recognize students as individuals sans their 'student identity'. There should be a sound emphasis on the practical aspects. The students should be provided structured opportunities to reflect on their own developmental paths, ways of learning and patterns of motivation. Such a class could be offered outside the school/college premises in the form of after-school or community based program, to help students avoid any sort of self-consciousness and conflicts of interests among teachers.

The teaching style in a psychology class can be varied by introducing the trend of group discussions. Video and slide presentations could be another interactive mode. Diversification of course material by encouraging students to read other research studies could be very beneficial. Psychology can be very interesting as a subject if explained with case studies and instances the students can relate to. The best part about teaching psychology is that it scores over many other disciplines because of an inherent aspect of 'empathy' Most students who want to specialize in this discipline are more sensitive to human relationships and conflicts. Consequently, the subject matter becomes a source of supplementing their perspectives and developing their perception.

The following quote from the text of a speech made by Henry Glietman at the 1983 meeting of the APA sums up this discussion both aesthetically and rationally,

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'In the last analysis, I believe that the academic business is not just a profession or trade; it comes down to being a calling. The calling is to perpetuate knowledge, and add to it, and hold it dear, and transmit it to others.'

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