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Communicating with Children

Teaching Soft-Skills: Team-based learning

Team-based learning (TBL): Team-based learning is a learner-centred, instructor-directed strategy that incorporates class-based teamwork and assessment to enhance active learning and critical thinking.

Team-based learning is a learner-centred, instructor-directed strategy that incorporates class-based teamwork and assessment to enhance active learning and critical thinking. Originally developed by Larry Michaelsen in a business school environment to promote the benefits of small-group teaching in a large group setting, it has since been increasingly used within medical education. It can be used with large or small classes, and involves dividing a class into multiple small groups of between 5-7 students in a single classroom. One content-expert can instruct 20 or more teams, and grading, peer evaluation and feedback are used to promote individual and team accountability and learning. It is recommended that teams are created by the instructor with members selected on the basis of diversity of skills and other characteristics, and that members should work together in the same teams for as long as possible. The approach is characterised by three key components:

1. Individual student preparation in advance of the class. Students receive a list of learning activities and a set of learning goals to be completed before the class.
2. Individual (iRATs) and Team readiness assurance tests (tRATs). A set of 10-20 multiple choice questions (MCQs) focussing on the concepts the students need to master in order to complete the next stage. This is completed individually, and then again as a team through consensus-building discussion, and is followed by a clarification review by the instructor.
3. In class team application (tAPP) assignments. Students are presented with a significant problem, authentic to the type they will encounter in the workplace, which they must interpret and as a team select a specific response from a range of answers that they should also be able to explain and defend. All teams have the same problem and must make a simultaneous report of their answer.

A backward design, outcomes-based approach is recommended to ensure the focus remains on what learners should be able to do. As such, instructors should establish the situational factors and learning goals before the team application, readiness assurance tests and advance assignments.

Students are graded on all stages of the work. Teams can appeal a question in the readiness assurance tests and team application if they think it is poorly written or have an alternative answer by providing an alternative question and a written, referenced argument to support their case.



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