

Experiential Learning: Roles and Attributes of an Optometry Educator Recommended by a Millennial Generation

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Abstract : There is evidence that experiential learning is truly influential and favored by the millennial generation. However, little is known about the role and attributes an educator has to adopt during the experiential learning cycle, especially when applied in optometry education. This study aimed to identify the roles and attributes of an optometry educator during the different modes of the experiential learning cycle. **Methods:** A qualitative case study design was used. Data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire survey, following the application of nine different teaching-learning methods based on the experiential learning cycle. The total sample population of 68 undergraduate students from the Department of Optometry at the University of the Free State, South Africa were invited to participate. Focus group interviews (n=15) added additional data that contributed to the interpretation and confirmation of the data obtained from the questionnaire surveys. **Results:** The perceptions and experiences of the students identified a variety of roles and attributes as well as recommendations on the effective adoption of these roles and attributes. These roles and attributes included being knowledgeable, creating an interest, providing guidance, being approachable, building confidence, implementing ground rules, leading by example, and acting as a mediator. **Conclusion:** The findings suggest that the actions of an educator have the most substantial impact on students' perception of a learning experience. Not only are the recommendations based on the views of a millennial generation, but the implementation of the personalized recommendations may also transform a learning environment. This may lead an optometry student to a deeper understanding of knowledge.

Keywords : experiences and perceptions, experiential learning, millennial generation, recommendation for optometry education

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