

[0.5] Teaching philosophy statement: The teacher as a student

Sibe Doosje, PhD, lecturer at the Department of clinical and health psychology, Utrecht University

In this statement I will apply the model presented by Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor (2002) to my experience as an academic teacher, in order to develop and describe my own teaching philosophy.

Of course the academic teacher should be well-informed and skilled in his area of expertise, both theoretically, empirically and methodologically. However, the teacher should also emit an *academic attitude*. What is that? To me, a basic element of an academic attitude is a burning curiosity about the domain that one is teaching in. This means that one wants to learn as much as possible about one's domain (be it a certain subject or teaching itself). To me, an academic teacher is basically an academic student. I think as a teacher I should be prepared to take the *attitude of a student*, especially the attitude and state of mind of the student I am working with. This means that I try to be aware of the students' questions (empathizing with the questions that they bring into the classroom), not only the right answers. Answers do not motivate to find answers, whereas questions do. Questions make students think and act. It is this active student role that I am looking for in my teaching practice. It is the art of teaching to create a learning environment which enables the student to come up with (possible) solutions or answers. The paradox of academic teaching is that it is aimed on the one hand at learning students what the state of affairs in a certain academic domain is, on the other hand at criticizing current understanding and extending it by finding new ways of learning more about it. I have been a student coach in many research projects. Here, students apply their theoretical and methodological knowledge to real-life research questions that they own and are hopefully passionate about. It is this process that I like best, to discover new and exciting insights that make the heart of students (and my own) tick.

My *teaching methods* are first of all to create a safe learning environment for the student. Such an environment allows students to hypothesize, think, compare, choose, decide and make mistakes. In this learning environment the student should be enabled to become a master of the situation. Both self-confidence and critical thinking skills are necessary ingredients for such a successful learning environment. Second, I want to be a good role model for the student, which means that I myself hypothesize, think, compare, choose, decide and make mistakes. In short, I aim to present my knowledge, skills, and personality as unfinished business, thus allowing the student to respond. Third, I encourage students to feel confident about what they know already. I do this by not only providing criticism, but also positive feedback (and believe me, there is good reason to be positive about students' accomplishments). Fourth, I use the Socratic method a lot, to engage students in the learning process and to involve them in thinking about problems, research and questions. Fifth, I like to make students feel that theoretical and methodological concepts are tools that enable us to understand our psychological reality. However, if these tools do not work, we will have to rethink them and come up with new ones. Assessing critical thinking skills is my basic evaluation tool.

Reference

Schönwetter, D.J., Sokal, L., Friesen, M., & Lynn Taylor, K. (2002). Teaching philosophies reconsidered; A conceptual model for the development and evaluation of teaching philosophy statements. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, 7(1), 83-97.

Abstract

Central stance

'The academic teacher should be a student'

Teaching methods

1. Create a safe learning environment
2. Be a good role model for the student (adopt the attitude of a student)
3. Establish confidence in the student
4. Use the Socratic teaching method
5. See concepts as possible tools to understand

Assessment method: assess critical thinking skills