A Step-back to Becoming a Better “Driver” in the Clinical Teaching of General Dental Practice

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ABSTRACT

My journey as a dental student to a clinician and back to dental school as a teacher has taken me from one time zone to another. As a student, I was exposed to the traditional teacher-centred learning environment, where my teacher was the “giver of knowledge” and controller of my learning environment. Today, the teacher, in a student-centred environment, is at most a facilitator, mentor or guide. The students are in control of their own learning and responsible for what they learn. Teaching in the clinical environment is a demanding, complex and often frustrating task. It requires a supportive learning environment, relevant clinical content and a teacher skilled in facilitating both immediate and lifelong learning while role-modelling professionalism and ethical practice. In the course of my journey to becoming a clinical teacher, I realised that an excellent clinical teacher must be enthusiastic, supportive and honourable, serve as a positive role model, ready to employ a varied and dynamic approach to teaching, and never be indifferent or seek praise and glory. This, in essence, was the reason for me to embark on this research; to rediscover the learner in me, and to become a better “driver” in my General Dental Practice clinical teaching journey.