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How Attitudes Change: A Primer for Faculty Developers

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Professors' attitudes can make roaring successes or dismal failures of the elaborate plans and programs of the faculty developer. To achieve personal, instructional, and institutional vitality, faculty developers need professors to make changes. Anyone who has worked in faculty development can cite many examples of faculty who knew how to improve teaching but did not do it. Schuster (1990) notes that we know the goals of faculty development and the means to reach the goals. What remains is the gap between information and practice. We often have the information, but not the will to change how we act.

It seems rather obvious to suggest that a professor must be motivated to change in order for change to take place. However, the rewards and punishments of academic life appear to be insufficient to bring about change and vitality. We have to persuade professors to change what they do and how they do it. The role of the faculty developer can be viewed as dealing with persuasion: helping professors to change their attitudes to those that will improve vitality.

This article deals with attitude, what it is, and how some theorists have suggested it can be changed. It presents principles that explain how and why attitudes change. It should help readers understand and apply some of the principles to their own work. Because the principles are based on theories, the reader may find conflicts in the suggestions within the article. Theorists view the problem of attitude change from their own perspective. Their differing perspectives are not unlike several people looking into a room from different windows: each sees the contents of the room from only one perspcetive. Similarly, theorists appear to concentrate on one area.

To be effective, a faculty developer must encourage professors to learn about effective teaching and personal development strategies like those

suggested by Eble and McKeachie (1965) and Cross (1980). Learning is not enough, however, if the teaching and other development procedures do not change. Since attitude appears to influence whether professors actually act on the knowledge they have about teaching, they must be persuaded to change their attitude and their behavior. The developer, a key catalyst, must understand attitude formation and the techniques of persuasion. What helps professors to change their behavior? What conditions are related to the development of new attitudes? These become crucial questions in an educational environment facing new challenges and new technology with an established faculty and a limited budget.

The Nature of Attitude

Attitude describes how we feel about something: a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). The attitudes we express suggest how we might behave, and help others know how to deal with us. Attitudes cannot be measured directly. They must be inferred from some behavior, usually verbal expression, sometimes prompted or from expressions on a printed form. Even with available attitude-measuring methods we cannot assume that we have correctly inferred a person's attitude. Expression of attitude can vary as a result of the audience, the instrument, and other factors related to the subject under study such as physical condition and state of mind.

Some attitude change theories place emphasis on the beliefs we hold, suggesting that if beliefs can be changed, attitude change will follow. Beliefs represent the information we have about a topic. A belief may be factual (independently verifiable) or it may be quite fallacious. Other theories place emphasis on rewards, punishments, and factors unrelated to beliefs, implying that attitude change can result from rewards or punishment.

Theories of Attitude Change

Every school of psychology has a theory on how and why attitudes change and how to bring about attitude change in a manner consistent with the theory. Petty and Cacioppo (1981) suggest that all attempts to change attitude follow either a central or a peripheral route.

The central route to attitude change emphasizes the information people have about a topic. The theories related to the central route suggest that people change their attitudes because of the facts of a situation. To change attitude, a persuader must present information. Theoretically, a person ac-

cepts information and then integrates the information to form new attitudes. The process is rational and logical.

The peripheral route suggests that attitude change is determined not by information itself but by other factors associated with the information, such as rewards or punishments, judgmental distortions, or the motives of the presenter. Attitude change results without active thinking, but more as a result of external cues. Petty and Cacioppo (1981) suggest that attitude change brought about by the peripheral route is less enduring than change brought about by the central route.

To change attitude by the central route, one adopts a factual, no-frills approach. Assume that the person will evaluate information logically. Organize the information in the best way possible and present it. When all the facts are known, the person will change his or her attitude in a manner consistent with the information presented.

To change attitude by the peripheral route, one must provide some reward and/or change a person's perspective and/or carefully control who presents the information and how and why it is presented.

The two routes are not exclusive. Petty and Cacioppo (1981) suggest that a communicator wishing to change attitude may have to start with the peripheral route and then move to the central route. Thus, if people are not aware that they need to change, one must get their attention by any means possible, reward or punish where necessary, and control external cues related to the message which suggest that change is important. Once the person is open to receiving factual information, rational approaches to attitude change can be used.

Classical Conditioning Theory

Just as two stimuli can be linked through classical conditioning, an attitude may be linked to another stimulus (Staats & Staats, 1958). For instance, when we feel happy, we may associate that happiness with a product or event. An odor or sound may evoke memories. Advertisers use classical conditioning by identifying our needs and wants and then linking a product with them. Classical conditioning of attitudes consists of complex chains in which previously neutral stimuli such as words become like unconditioned stimuli.

The faculty developer should make every effort to link concepts and words with the correct stimuli. For instance, the word "teaching" has taken on a connotation that is related to presentation of information in class (much like a performance). The preparation activities so essential to teaching get lost. Similarly, teaching evaluation has become linked to results from forms

that students use to rate teaching. Since classical conditioning appears to occur almost imperceptibly (Staats & Staats, 1957), developers would be wise to link desired attitudes with unconditioned stimuli. For instance, we may have to link the term "teaching evaluation" with a wider range of assessment measures such as peer evaluation, self- evaluation, observation, and assessment of syllabi and assignments.

Ambrose (1990) provides an example of classical conditioning in a faculty development program. The faculty development workshops were accompanied by lunch. As a result, the workshops, previously a neutral stimulus, became a conditioned stimulus by being linked with the lunch, an unconditioned stimulus. Linking neutral stimuli with previously conditioned stimuli or unconditioned stimuli may help change attitude towards certain faculty development activities.

Reinforcement (Behaviorist) Theory

The behaviorist school maintains that attitudes can be conditioned in the same manner as other operant behaviors: if people are reinforced for a behavior from which an attitude can be inferred, that behavior will occur more often (Hildum & Brown, 1956). The indicator behavior can be either a verbal report of attitude or a reaction on an attitude scale. Changes effected in this manner are sometimes subject to fading when the consequences are removed.

For instance, not too long ago, racial, ethnic, and even regional jokes were routinely heard at meetings of academics. Today, such jokes should be and often are greeted with grimaces and stony silence. Theoretically, when a behavior is not reinforced, it should decrease. The grimaces and stony silence should not reinforce the behavior, thus reducing its incidence. However, in situations where such humor is tolerated by a receptive audience, the behavior will persist.

Here is how the theory could be applied. If faculty members express positive ideas about faculty development, they would be reinforced, usually verbally. Comments negative to faculty development could be challenged or ignored. Behaviors that show evidence of attempts to improve teaching, like excellent course outlines, varied instructional techniques, and valid evaluation techniques, could be reinforced through recognition in publications or teaching awards. Bland and Schmitz (1990) report that fifteen authors mention faculty development activities as being important to the success of faculty development.

Modelling Theory

In many situations, operant conditioning is difficult to attain. Advertisers use models to persuade an audience. Someone in the ad is shown being rewarded for the desired behavior. For example, a person who played the lottery (the desired behavior) is shown winning (the reinforcement). Or, someone who uses a particular brand of mouthwash or toothpaste is shown having success in attracting the opposite sex. Advertisers hope that the audience will identify with the model and mimic the behaviors preceding the reinforcement.

Publicizing the rewards of teaching may be a way in which faculty developers could apply reinforcement. By linking a reward (possibly a teaching award) with good teaching and then by publicizing the award winners, an office of faculty development could use both the reinforcement principles and the observational learning principles. The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Canada recently published a national newsletter highlighting the 3M Canada Teaching Fellows and describing why they deserved the award. Winners of the Bright Idea Award, which recognizes teaching innovation, receive the award at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education. The implicit message is: teaching innovators are rewarded for what they do; if you do likewise, you may be rewarded as well.

Message Learning Theory

According to Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953), four factors affect message learning: the source, the message, the channel, and the audience. Source attractiveness and credibility play an important role in determining how well a source could convince people. According to Bland and Schmitz (1990), the literature suggests that influential opinion leaders be among the first clients for faculty development activities. These leaders would normally be similar, attractive, and credible to the audience.

People who communicate have three sets of characteristics that influence persuasion: *similarity, credibility,* and *attractiveness.* A *similar source* has features in common with the target audience. University professors appear to want to learn from other professors and often balk at learning from non-academics. *Credibility* refers to how believable a source is. Faculty developers without much teaching experience may not be seen as credible, especially if they have not taught for what their colleagues view as "enough" time. *Attractiveness* refers to the set of behaviors that make a person trustworthy and honest. In this culture, avoiding eye contact indicates untrustwor-

thiness. In academic environments, credibility and similarity should play more of a role than attractiveness. However, sources who have difficulty communicating, or who continually use abrasive techniques, may not be effective persuaders.

Workshop leaders, teaching support personnel, and other instructional support staff should be selected and trained to exhibit the behaviors described in the message learning approach. If the source presenting information about faculty development is not seen as credible or similar, persuasion will be inhibited. When publicizing workshops, some key details about the presenter (degrees, awards, experience, and publications) would raise the credibility level. Mentioning classroom teaching and the subject area would also make the potential audience feel some similarity with the presenter, thus increasing the potential for persuasion.

Balance Theory

According to Heider (1958), people like balance, a condition in which a person's attitude towards a subject and opinion of another person or object are similar. If A likes B, but B expresses an attitude with which A disagrees, A must do something to correct this state of imbalance. There are two possibilities: either A changes his or her attitude towards B, or A espouses B's attitude towards the subject. Practically, this theory suggests that if a faculty developer can create a state of imbalance, clients will have to move to redress the imbalance. A practical example might help illustrate this theory. Many professors (clients of faculty developers) appear to believe that they should teach the way they were taught by professors they knew and liked. If their teachers (now senior, tenured full professors) express the belief that they want to change their teaching methods to incorporate research in teaching and learning, this set of events should set up imbalance in the client. According to balance theory, the client must now either change his or her positive sentiment towards the senior member or change the view about teaching. Since attitude to the senior member is unlikely to change, changes in attitudes towards teaching may result.

Impression Management Theory

Impression management theory suggests that people may present an image to others simply to achieve a goal, usually some type of social reward (Goffman, 1959; Arkin, 1981). The social reward may simply be the approval of those present. The image may not be consistent with one's attitude, but can be altered to suit the new situation or the audience being addressed.

The "research-teaching" argument can illustrate this theory quite well. When addressing different audiences, the importance accorded to teaching and research can vary dramatically. This variance can be detected in public speeches, reports, and often in committee and governing-body meetings. When an administration official is speaking to parents of prospective students or alumni, the importance of teaching may take precedence. However, when the same official addresses a government funding agency the institution may be portrayed as primarily a research university. This variance illustrates that a communication source may alter the message to match the views of the audience.

Impression management theory suggests that expressed attitudes may not be accurate reflections of behavior, but may instead be altered to suit the occasion. The developer must be conscious of the audience and situations in which comments about development or teaching are made. If the audience wants to hear something, a professor may be happy to oblige them, ignoring his or her own deeply-held views about the topic. The developer who is aware of such behavior will be cautious in trusting the views expressed in certain situations.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance is a state of tension that occurs when we receive two opposite elements of information about a topic important to us (Festinger, 1957). New professors often face much dissonance when trying to balance the various roles (teacher, counsellor, researcher, author) they are expected to perform (Baldwin, 1990). Senior members of the academy will often provide conflicting advice on the weight to place on the roles. Dissonance must be resolved if a person is to return to a state of harmony. Festinger suggests that dissonance can be reduced by eliminating one of the dissonant elements, by getting more information on one of the elements (consonant cognitions), or by changing the value assigned to one of the elements. When reviewing possible roles, new professors could ignore people whose positions are contrary to theirs, seek those whose views are consonant to theirs, or suggest that the differing views do not matter.

If the faculty developer can create dissonance within a client, change may occur. The developer can create dissonance by producing a situation in which the person discovers that two actions, or an action and knowledge, conflict. If the faculty member expresses a commitment to student learning but then neglects to distribute course outlines, the developer may be able to create dissonance by pointing out the discrepancy between research (showing

that course outlines increase learning and satisfaction) and the person's current practice.

In one workshop, the author began by soliciting favorite modes of learning from the participants. None cited listening to lectures as his or her favorite learning mode. The author also presented information on effective means of conveying information based on learning principles (Charles, 1976). In a second exercise, the author asked participants how they taught. The third exercise asked participants to review the results of the two exercises and the learning principles, and then to discuss their conclusions. The lively discussions and justifications gave evidence of cognitive dissonance. This workshop was followed by one on learning to use active learning techniques, the means of reducing the dissonance.

Self-Persuasion Theory

If people think about an issue, attitude change can result (Tesser, 1978). However, attitudes can also remain the same if no new information is present. The trick is to get someone to think about a particular issue and to generate attitudes about it by providing a stimulus that will cause new thinking. Fisch (1990) describes the role of mere thought as an attitude change strategy. He chronicles the events and stimuli that caused him to re-examine how and what he was teaching, resulting in the development of a new approach to teaching. Theory predicts that attitude change resulting from mere thought is much more enduring than attitude change derived from other means. Fisch is probably more committed to his position than others who have attended a workshop and can describe a new model of teaching.

Role-playing appears to be one of the best ways to get people to think about a topic and perhaps even to change their attitude towards it (Janis & King, 1954). The concept of "walk a mile in my shoes" probably illustrates this point best. If I can feel what you feel, then I may change my attitude towards the situation. The role-play which can simulate the real situation can help evoke a change in attitude. For instance, faculty members could be asked to assume various university administration roles to solve a problem. In a recent workshop, the author was placed in a role-playing situation of negotiating a contract from the union side while another group assumed the management role. While in the roles, there was a definite identification with the expectancies of the role as opposed to a person's real position. As a result, staunch union people found themselves acting more like the management people they detested. This change disturbed them more than the outcome.

Role-playing, while used extensively in some disciplines like social work, does not appear to be popular with professional development activities

like those presented at POD conferences or in most of the workshops attended by the author for over 20 years.

Role-playing appears to make people feel that they are persuading themselves. Because attitudes generated from within can be espoused more deeply than those generated from without, faculty developers might be well advised to consider changing some of the modes of presentation in workshops. By leading faculty members to change their own minds, the developer may achieve greater effects than by using techniques that tell them what to think. To be specific, letting a faculty member experience the power of discovery learning or problem-solving may lead to more powerful and enduring attitude change than a lecture on the topic.

Probabilogical Theory

According to some theorists, attitudes are based on beliefs, the information which we have on a topic (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). To change attitudes, therefore, one must change beliefs, eliminate old beliefs, or introduce new beliefs (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Beliefs form structures that create new beliefs and support attitudes. If structures can be altered, attitude change may follow. McGuire (1960) suggests that beliefs are organized into patterns of logical or hedonistic consistency. Fishbein and Ajzen (1981) specify mathematical relationships between beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

To apply these theories, faculty developers would identify beliefs and belief structures through basic research and then try to alter the beliefs. For instance, everyone probably has a set of beliefs about how people learn. Although most personal theories of learning are quite complex, they are probably based on one of the major schools of psychology. The beliefs that make up a personal theory of learning will influence the way a professor performs academic tasks. For instance, a professor who believes in contingency management will arrange rewards and punishments within a course to make sure that the students do the required tasks. Such a person is likely to hold the attitude that if people are not controlled, they will never perform well. By identifying and perhaps altering the beliefs related to how people learn, attitudes and then behavior might undergo change.

Faculty developers would try to identify the relevant beliefs and then try to provide the information and contingencies that would change them. Attitude change may follow the belief change. North and Munson (1990) suggest that providing information about wellness appears to have helped some faculty members examine their state of wellness and perhaps follow the new awareness with action. In a powerful presentation at the 1990 POD conference, North (1990) demonstrated the power of presenting small pieces

of information that challenged the beliefs of participants. Citing research, demonstrating stress reduction through massage, and watching bio-dots, helped people become aware of body messages. Once aware, the decision to act might well follow.

The Foot-in-the-Door Effect

The foot-in-the-door effect suggests that performance of a small favor will be followed by performance of a larger favor later (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Recently, six offers for magazines arrived in my office. Each asked me to peel off a sticker and place it on a card or punch out a small attractive token and place it in a slot. To subscribe to the magazine, I had to return the card. One recent offer from a computer magazine had three stamps: "YES," "MAYBE," and "NO." The hope is that I would take a small step and then perhaps later, a larger step: subscribe to the magazine.

This theory could be applied in faculty development by asking faculty to make a small commitment to something to get them started. For example, a preregistration form might increase the likelihood that some would actually attend the workshop later. On a larger scale, a small "favor" of attending a single session of interest might lead to instructional innovation. On one campus, the author has discovered that although some faculty are not particularly concerned about their teaching, they are very concerned about conference presentations in front of their peers. While teaching workshops drew 15-20 people, a workshop on presenting papers at conferences drew over 40 registrants. Getting faculty members to commit to improving one conference presentation may help them to improve overall teaching in their classes.

Conclusion

Communicating knowledge about theory and research findings may be insufficient to change professors' behavior, because such knowledge does not necessarily change how they teach or act. Programs that apply attitude change theories should increase the success rate of a faculty development program by encouraging them to change their behavior. Incorporating reinforcement, dissonance creation and reduction, role-playing, and the other techniques will help good programs become excellent ones. Several reference works (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991) can help developers to change professorial behavior while increasing their knowledge.

For some, an ethical issue may be raised by this paper: Should faculty developers be using powerful persuasion techniques, used so well by advertisers, for faculty development? The response has to be that if we plan to commit resources to faculty development, we should do so with all the available tools, as long as the objectives meet ethical and moral standards. Applying attitude change theory can help speed our progress towards our goal of fostering personal, instructional, and institutional vitality.

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