From the Editor

For each graduating resident, career decisions come down to determining which environment is best suited to his or her personality with regard to orthodontics. Choosing a path that coincides with one’s beliefs, philosophy, personality and lifestyle is omnipotent. There are compelling advantages to both private practice and academics, but in order to consider teaching as a career, clinical experience is certainly necessary.

For the most part, postgraduate orthodontic programs have been content with faculty members teaching in the same manner as he or she was taught (show, tell, do). However, the process of education itself is changing as well. We are moving toward an age where new academic skills such as the (a)

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methods of teaching, (b) process of course designing and (c) modality of learning have become the new standards of the educational process.

There are core areas of knowledge that teachers will be required to learn and understand. Without such basic knowledge of education and the learning process, students may remember information by rote but might never possess a broad and deep understanding of how to apply or adapt such knowledge in all situations.


As Freire suggested, educators should consider the best methods for serving our patients. With this in mind, the efforts of educators would best be focused on learning modalities, which are not the same for all individuals. One of the learning theorists whom educators often look to for guidance is Dr. Howard Gardner.

Gardner’s work encourages reflection upon the praxis involved for translating theory into action by considering the different learning modalities in new and creative ways. Students utilize different core methods of learning to process information, which includes: (a) visual, (b) spatial, (c) auditory, (d) tactile, (e) logical, (f) interpersonal and (g) intra-personal modalities at an unconscious level, not necessarily in any particular order.

According to Gardner (1993), most learners retain a dominant and an auxiliary learning modality throughout life. Human beings access information through all senses, but generally favor one or more processes such as visual (sight), auditory (hearing), kinaesthetic (moving), and tactile (touch).

Recently, new and creative programs in orthodontic education have been created that address new academic skills to improve the teaching ability of orthodontic faculty members. These conferences are intended to provide our educators with tools and methodology to implement a rigorous, thorough and broad curriculum on classical clinical situations.

The preservation of pedagogy in orthodontic education, the potential social justice implications, and impact on the public are directly related to: (a) education of well-trained orthodontists, (b) health-care delivery, (c) welfare agencies, and (d) public service communication. Teaching is all about the fundamentals of education.

Most postgraduate orthodontic faculty members have never had any formal training in the methodology of teaching or course design. They teach what they learned from their own clinical experiences. With this in mind, it is encouraging to see the creation of a few new and novel educational programs designed for junior and mid-career orthodontic faculty members to learn such academic skills. These conferences are part of a 2012 AAOF Educational Innovation Grant.

One of the first workshops on faculty career enrichment in orthodontics (FACE) occurred in October 2012. The second FACE workshop was held on March 7 at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. These workshops, led by recognized orthodontic teaching experts included an interactive format with topics such as:

- principles of course design starting with the end in mind,
- methods to encourage active learning in the classroom and clinic setting, and
- methods for successfully incorporating technology into the classroom.

Another related program for faculty members is the James L. Vaden Educational Leadership Conference on May 3. This conference will emphasize excellence in orthodontic education, concentrating on graduate program standards. These programs will hopefully improve the education of our orthodontic faculty members and train our students to become better clinicians. Incremental changes for teaching skills is often needed if putting the student at the heart of the system is to be anything more than a hyperbole.

Improving the standards of education can lead to trying times but abhorring ignorance, I prefer to quote Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), “Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity.”

References