Research on Innovative Approaches in Aromatherapy

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Abstract. This research aims to discuss and study the innovative approaches in aromatherapy. The “NAHAI11 Advanced-Level Course in Aromatherapy” developed by the International Association of Aromatherapy was selected as the study reference for future educational and vocational training programs in aromatherapy. The authors conducted this study using innovative approaches on multiple cases, including in-class observations, interviews and analyses on related documents. The results showed that the trainees praised such curriculum highly and benefited from the approach greatly due to its practicability, asynchronous online learning, situated teaching approach, interactive forum and internship programs.

Introduction

In recent years, aromatherapy has become a symbol of healthy, regimental, and innovative business in the industry. It provides a wild range of services to the public which covers beauty and health, recreation, psychological consultations, preventive medicine, hospice and home care services, etc. The key factor of developing this potential market successfully is the “Human Capacity Building Program”. Globally certified aromatherapists, who have oriented knowledge of aromatherapy, skillful massage techniques, and personal development in art and beauty, have taken an important role in the promotion and application of aromatherapy in the market. Therefore, providing professional training and education for aromatherapists is crucial.

In Europe and America, the certification of aromatherapists is covered by registered and Government-approved organizations, where the job opportunities and aromatherapy-related services have taken place. However, there are only a few registered aromatherapy associations and organizations available in Taiwan. Moreover, traditional forced-feeding education (memorization without understanding) is commonly used in Taiwan, which reduces the effectiveness of knowledge migration and limits the creativity, as well as the flexibility, of trainees [1]. Vocational training programs should be more innovative not only to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the training, but to meet the demands of the market.

Currently, most studies concerning innovative teaching approaches in Taiwan mostly involve conventional fields such as science, vocations, or arts and crafts within elementary and high school curricula [2]. Elaborative discussions in other fields are still scarce. The goal of this study is to explore alternative innovative teaching approaches in aromatherapy, and provide future references for vocational training in Taiwan.

Literature Review

Comprehensive Guide to the Education of Aromatherapy

In relation to the education and training of aromatherapy, globally well-known and organized associations are listed as follows: (1) UK: International Federation of Professional Aromatherapist (IFPA) and International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA); (2) USA: National Association Holistic Aromatherapy (NAHA) and International Natural Healers Association (INHA); and (3) Australia: International Council of Integrative Medicine (ICIM)In 1998, training and education in
aromatherapy was introduced to Taiwan by Yu-jun WENG of ANIUS. Followed by the booming of demand in certification of aromatherapists, the International Association of Aromatherapy (known as IAA), a well-organized and internationalized association, was established in 2006 [3]. Meanwhile, the cosmetic and beauty departments in both public and private schools have also introduced natural concepts of healthcare and included aromatherapy as required or elective topics to meet the demands of the market, and thus enhance the employment of the trainees.

The Ministry of Labor, Taiwan, also provides a comprehensive vocational training program, which includes essential oils and business developments in aromatherapy, for both employed and unemployed citizens who are interested in aromatherapy.

**Applied Strategy in Innovative Approach**

**Definition of Innovative Approach.** Simplicio (2002) believed that innovative approach was the trend of the century; hence trainers must accept the challenge of self-teaching [4]. Based on the definition of the ERIC Thesaurus, “Innovative Approach” refers to the “approach introducing new concepts, methods and tools in teaching [5], and transforming and utilizing knowledge upon fundamental understanding”. A qualified trainer must have fundamental concepts and understanding regarding various teaching approaches [6]. Innovative approach is one of the practical methods assisting trainees in obtaining skills and academic knowledge in class, and transforming them into industrial practice [7]. Stott & Mozer (2016) indicated that people who work in educational circles should focus on designing and updating courses regularly, and utilizing online sources to stimulate students’ creativities to conform to the fast pace of the world [8].

**Applied Strategy in Innovative Approach.** Shi-zhong ZHANG (2002) believed that the principles of innovative approach should include: transforming regular teaching methods, creating open-minded situational themes for teaching, rotating authorities and characters in class, applying multiple teaching techniques, encouraging student presentations, increasing students’ abilities, and conducting multiple assessments [9]. Zhi-yan WU & Yu-fu YANG (2005) mentioned that the innovative approach modes consisted of three aspects, including the innovative approaches, innovative materials, and innovative environments [10]. Based on the previous analyses, this study used the curriculum design, teaching methods, situational approach and classroom management as bases for in-depth interviews.

**Methodology**

This is a qualitative case-report study targeting two classes of “NAHAI” Advanced-level Courses in Aromatherapy” organized by the International Association of Aromatherapy in Hualien County. Trainees must be qualified in the “NAHAI” Beginner level before applying for the Advanced level and complete a 100-hour course (in 10 weeks), including a combination of theory (50 hours), skills and techniques (46 hours) and internship (4 hours).

In order to obtain an effective result, a “triangle validation”, known as “mixed-method research” which facilitates the validation of information and data (the in-class observations, interviews, and analyses of related documents) through cross verification from more than two sources, was applied to this research. Data was collected from the source of in-class observations, records of interviews, trainers’ log books, trainees’ homework and comments from trainees’ feedback. This research was conducted between October 1st, 2015 and April 30th, 2016. Researchers not only studied and analyzed related data and references, but also performed semi-structured interviews in five themes, including: 1. Course designs and syllabus; 2. Teaching methods; 3. Creative environment; 4. Course management; and 5. Instructional Assessment. To reveal and study the instructional concepts, creative ideas, and strategic teaching methods, in-depth interviews were conducted by four lecturers (at least 1.5 hours of each). A total of 10 in-class observations were conducted. Researchers interacted with both students and teachers. The interactions and responses between lecturers and students were also recorded and documented for case studies and analyses.
Results & Discussion

Based on the analyses of in-class observations, in-depth interviews with lecturers, course contents, and feedback from the students, the results showed that the innovative teaching methods containing creative strategies were highly valued by the students.

Details of Analyses are shown as follows:

Courses are Designed for Practical Business Operations through Sharing with Experiences and Written Records

The contents of this course consisted of the analysis on 40 essential oil recipes, the application of essential oil, the elaboration of aromatherapy stages, the awareness of botanical nomenclature, the chemical constructions of essential oils, the study of body secrets, the physical and spiritual therapy, deep tissue messages, aromatic facial treatment, and the pairing of essential oil with horoscopes. The course also included fundamental theories, recipes of essential oil and insightful tips which are learned from the experiences of physical-spiritual consultations and soothing massages by the lecturers. Trainees are taught to apply varies techniques with different essential oil formulas according to the body mapping templates. So the trainers could become competitive in the aromatherapy market through creating essential oils that could be well-accepted by the majority. Trainees are not only required to attend training courses, but participate into emerging aromatherapy conferences to establish their own experiences and insights through exchanging knowledge and ideas, written essays and photographs.

Assimilating Asynchronous Online Learning Systems, Advanced Digital Teaching Methods into Lectures

Based on recent education revolution and theories on teaching methods, trainers should utilize internet technology and digital learning systems to establish effective learning programs [11,12]. Through the online learning system, one could practice and review their progress before or after courses. There are no restrictions against time or space if the learning platform is based on the internet. Not only the quality of teaching, but the effects of training could be observed promptly [13]. A handful of proven studies showed that the application of innovative teaching approach may both reflect the quality of the teaching skill of the trainer and the learning results of the trainee [14]. For students who have difficulties in memorizing demonstrations performed during lectures, they could greatly benefit from the online/digital learning systems.

Emphasizing Situational Designs and Creating Aromatic Atmosphere in Lectures

Well-designed aromatic classrooms help create positive effects on learning [15]. Aromatherapy emphasizes the senses of auditory, visual, olfaction and touch. Therefore, situational teaching plays an important role in aromatherapy. The lecturer graduated from the HANAI II Advanced Aromatherapy course could create a soothing atmosphere, decorate a holiday-like spa retreat room, and preserve a stylish classroom for the course. With well-matched wall paint, spacious room, glossy and green garden, designer’s curtains along with relaxing music and the fragrance of the essential oil, the trainer could deliver a sense of peace and elegance to the room and as well as the trainees. An aesthetic experience has thereby been created around the trainer and the trainees.

Utilizing Line Group Messaging Platforms for Class Management

The Line group messaging platform nowadays is very common in Taiwan. Students can raise questions without time restriction, and receive immediate and affirmative responses, and appropriate encouragements from teachers. Group members can also exchange tips or experiences with others. Teachers need to monitor group messages and help avoid conflicts that are irrelevant to aromatherapy. Moreover, attitudes, responses to questions and involvements of the students in the same class should be observed and recorded accordingly onto the teachers’ log books. Information should be shared and exchanged among teachers in order to give appropriate suggestions and emotional supports to the students.
Emphasizing Practical Experiences in Instructional Evaluation

Effective learning is the key factor to instructional evaluation. According to the goals of this course, transforming theories and techniques into practices is the ultimate game. Practical assignments will be evaluated by the end of the course. Beside homework and exams, trainees are required to accomplish sampling 40 bottles of essential oil, consulting actual cases (consultation records, treatment plans, sharing cases and advices as aromatherapists), accomplishing clinical practice and massaging technique documentation. As for essential oil, each bottle should be sampled personally for students to describe and record the scent, the color and the touch of each formula, and the relationships between the body-and-mind reactions and the essential oil. As for internships, consultation skills, treatment arrangements, massaging techniques will also be tested strictly.

Conclusion

Based on the above analyses, teachers are eager to pursue the continuous improvement on teaching quality, and to help students develop abilities to transform theories into practical skills through innovative course designs, teaching methods, situational teaching approaches, class management and assessment. Aromatherapy training courses are designed for practical business operations through sharing with experiences and written documentaries. Due to its uniqueness, the requirements of beauty and hospitality, the courses are also constructed to invigorate the students’ concentration, imagination and awareness of aromatherapy. Advanced information has been given to support innovative instructions. To improve the teaching quality in school education, related associations should provide trainers or back-up systems to support and assist in developing multi-media teaching materials. Situational teaching methods and class management create a relaxing environment. In summary, the assessments of aromatherapy should not be limited to regular exams. Trainees should be encouraged to gain actual experiences through internship in order to enhance the opportunities of future employments. Individualized treatment nowadays is equipped with its very own unique techniques and specialties. Trainers are strongly encouraged to use innovative and creative approaches in education and vocational trainings.

References


