

Debate in the Classroom: Improves Student Learning and Cultural Relativism

By Tammy K. Swecker M.Ed. and Anjum Shah, Ed.D.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion, participant will be able to:

- Describe how debates have been used to enhance student's learning experience and improve student perspectives of cultural relativism
- Review strategies to implement debates in the classroom to create a safe learning environment



Debates Defined

“The process of debate requires consideration of multiple viewpoints, reflection, internalization and then arriving at a reasoned opinion about an issue, and can occur in both individual and group settings. For individuals, an internal mental process takes place before a specific decision is made whilst for a group, this often involves active deliberation and argumentation over the facts and differing facets of the issues .”

(Freeley A, Steinberg, 2005; Ang, Chew et al., 2019, pg. 1)

Theories in Debates

Adult learning theory

- ❖ Learning is enhanced when a learner sees the need and immediate relevance of the learned content, when there is a clear problem focus, and when learning is experiential in nature.

Self-determination theory

- ❖ Debates enhance engagement and motivation, and the process of preparation fosters a sense of autonomy, competency and belonging within the team.

(Bruner, 1966; Knowles, Holton, Swanson, 2005)

Benefits of Debates

- ❖ Foster research skills, evidence-based learning
 - Critically appraising of the scientific literature and evidence-based practice
 - Otherwise not done by students
- ❖ Enhance student engagement, active learning
- ❖ Strengthen teamwork
- ❖ Promote content reinforcement and active listening
- ❖ Encourage deeper exploration and consideration of issues

(Ang, Chew *et al.*, 2019)

Benefits of Debates Cont.

- ❖ Improve communication and public speaking skills to articulate relevant points clearly and concisely
- ❖ Improve critical thinking skills, and higher order cognitive skills
- ❖ Students perceive the learning process to be more interesting as compared to didactic teaching
- ❖ Effective modality in knowledge acquisition with feedback through quizzes for pre/post debate, both for participants and the audience

(Ang, Chew *et al.*, 2019)

Limitations of Debates

- ❖ Require a specific controversial/ complex topic (problem-centered), and not just a topic requiring factual recall
- ❖ Time consuming for students and faculty
 - Extensive preparation
- ❖ Small debate group for maximize effectiveness and audience participation
- ❖ Familiarity with the style of debate, comfort with public speaking and arguing
- ❖ Safe environment for students to openly discuss issues

Debates Instructional Design

Presence of a debate theme (problem focus), reading around the topic (need to know, readiness to learn), conducting research (experiential learning), and the understanding that these efforts would assist in the debates content (immediate relevance)

- ❖ Requires classroom presentations of pre-assigned topics by the faculty
- ❖ Requires pairing student groups and the topics and assigning sides (pro/cons)
- ❖ Pre-and post-debate assessments using quizzes, surveys or judging by the audience vote

Cultural Relativism

- Alternative Perspectives
- Multicultural Perspectives
- Cultural Norms



Benefits of Debate Methodologies in Learning Cultural Relativism



Civic Knowledge

Civic Abilities and Skills

Benefits of Debate Methodologies in Learning Cultural Relativism

Civic Attitudes and
Values

Civic Actions and
Behaviors



Navigating Differences through Debate

Cultural relativism poses a challenge for those in Western dentistry who may argue that patients and their families should be expected to behave on the basis of Western values and norms.



Debate as a pedagogical method

1 | Description

Explore a topic that has more than one correct stance in the setting of a complex healthcare environment

Utilize available data that supports a stance as it relates to best practices/a patient's best interest

Communicate a stance to others with differing opinions in a persuasive, professional manner.

2 | Implementation

Setting

Controversial topic

Literature Review

Preparation of Debate

Debate

3 | Assessment

Students are graded on:

Articulation/Decorum

Organization of viewpoints

Refutation/Advocacy

Participation

Example Topics for Debates

1. Access to dental care-a multifactorial problem
 - Children
 - Elderly population
 - Rural areas
 - Dental workforce
1. Water fluoridation
2. Dental Hygiene scope of practice
3. Ethical moral issues in dentistry

March 15th: Bachelors vs. Associates		
Pro:	Con:	Jury:
Samantha Smith	Kayla-Mae Conley	Brittany Tomlinson
Nick Fields	Morgan Noland	Hagir Saleh
Betty Thimothi	Tu Bui	Katlyn Hardy
Kristin Smith	Haley Headley	Kaitlyn Carrick
Miranda Menk	Bella Pollard	Nikol Nikolova
		Kourie Crismond
March 22nd: Dental Hygienists should be able to give immunizations.		
Pro:	Con:	Jury:
Brittany Tomlinson	Kristin Smith	Samantha Smith
Haley Headley	Kaitlyn Carrick	
Bella Pollard	Katlyn Hardy	Nick Fields
Kourie Crismond	Hagir Saleh	Betty Thimothi
Nikol Nikolova	Miranda Menk	Tu Bui
Morgan Noland		Kayla-Mae Conley
March 22th: Introduction of mid level healthcare provider in dentistry, similar to expanded function hygienist.		
Pro:	Con:	Jury:
	Brittany Tomlinson	Haley Headley

**What are some potential debate topics in
the courses you direct?**

Debate implementation:

1 | Pro

First Affirmative Speech

BREAK

First Affirmative Rebuttal

First Affirmative Concluding
Remarks

2 | Con

First Negative Speech

BREAK

First Negative Rebuttal

First Negative Concluding
Remarks

3 | Jury

Decision Makers Listen

BREAK

Decision Makers Questions

Open discussion

FINAL POLICY DECISION

Assignment Expectations:

1. All students should read one general article on each of the two controversial issues (pro/con articles)
2. Role-play as stakeholder advocate- (pro)
 - A. Research controversial issue with team partner from the perspective of given stakeholder, create bibliography
 - B. Create and deliver persuasive pitch on controversial issue to decision-makers from your given stakeholder's perspective, must orally cite 4 qualified sources and each partner must speak equally (6 minute time limit)
 - C. Ask and answer questions from stakeholder perspective
 - D. Create and deliver final 2 minute speech as team, each speaking roughly equal
3. Role-play as stakeholder opponent- (con)
 - A. Research controversial issue with team partners from the perspective of a given opponent, create bibliography
 - B. Create and deliver persuasive pitch on controversial issue to decision-makers from your given opponent's perspective, must orally cite 4 qualified sources and each partner must speak equally (5 minute time limit)
 - C. Ask and answer questions from opponent perspective
 - D. Create and deliver final 2 minute speech as team, each speaking roughly equal
4. Role-play as decision-maker- (Jury/audience)
 - A. Listen to persuasive speeches from decision-maker perspective
 - B. Ask and answer questions from decision-maker perspective
 - C. Deliberate on controversial decision, utilizing the given rubric
 - D. Present decision to the class

Rubric Example:

Debate Scoring Sheet

Debate Topic: _____

Date: _____ Pro or Con (circle one)

Team Member Names:

(1) _____

CLASSROOM AND WRITTEN RESPONSE DEBATE RUBRIC

Levels of Performance

Criteria:	1	2	3	4
1. Organization and Clarity: viewpoints and responses are outlined both clearly and orderly.	Unclear in most parts	Clear in some parts but not over all	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts	Completely clear and orderly presentation
2. Use of Arguments: reasons are given to support viewpoint.	Few or no relevant reasons given	Some relevant reasons given	Many reasons given: fairly relevant	Most relevant reasons given in support
3. Use of Examples and Facts: examples and facts are given to support reasons, with references	Few or no relevant supporting examples/facts	Some relevant examples/facts given	Many examples/facts given: fairly relevant	Most relevant supporting examples and facts given
4. Use of Rebuttal: arguments made by the other teams are responded to and dealt with effectively	No effective counterarguments made	Few effective counterarguments made	Some effective counterarguments made	Many effective counter-arguments made
5. Presentation Style: tone of voice, use of gestures, and level of enthusiasm are convincing to audience.	Few style features were used; not convincingly	Few style features were used but they were used convincingly	All style features were used, most convincingly	All style features were used convincingly
6. Debate written submission: has viewpoints and responses that are outlined	Unclear in most parts	Clear in some parts but not over all	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts	Completely clear and orderly presentation

Example Post- Survey

Closed-Ended Questions

Compared to *before* you participated in this debate activity, *now* how would you rate your ability to...

	Much worse	A little worse	About the same	A little better	Much better
Search primary literature?	1	2	3	4	5
Analyze primary literature?	1	2	3	4	5
Organize your points in an argument?	1	2	3	4	5
Consider others' perspectives?	1	2	3	4	5
Have a civil disagreement?	1	2	3	4	5
Analyze a real-world issue and draw meaningful conclusions?	1	2	3	4	5
Defend a clinical recommendation?	1	2	3	4	5

Debate example:

74 year old female presents to clinic with her husband with a large lesion on her right mandibular ridge with significant swelling on the right side of the neck.. The husband states it has been there for about 6 months but it is getting worse so he believes it is time to have a dentist evaluate the area. The dentist begins to discuss possible diagnoses prior to taking a biopsy. The husband immediately stops the dentist from speaking and asks the dentist to please step out of the operatory for a private discussion. The husband states he makes all decisions for the household. He does not want his wife to know if she has any disease. All medical decisions for the family rest with him. The dentist returns to the operatory, performs the biopsy. The patient/accompanying spouse is scheduled to return for the results and treatment plan.

The patient returns to the clinic for the results of the biopsy. Her husband states he does not want her to know the results and he will make all treatment plan decisions. The diagnosis is SCC.

**CREATE A DEBATE TOPIC FROM
THE CASE PROVIDED**

Debate

...is where I'd like to go next!



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