“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves…. ”(James 1:22–25). Dallin H Oaks said; ”The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord’s teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must ACT and think so that we are converted by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to BECOME SOMETHING.  (Oct. 2000, The Challenge to Become. Dallin H. Oaks)

A study of adult learning theory and practices in higher education often focus on reaching higher thinking such as analyzing, evaluating and creating. Bloom's taxonomy even places applying at the lower end of his taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating). However, at first look at the plan of salvation- applying appears to be central to God’s plan.

Abraham 3:

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever.

Why is it that some students are responsive to this principle and others are so far from acting for oneself in the learning process?
As the learning model embraces, “acting for yourself and accepting responsibility for learning and teaching” seems easy enough in principle, but why is it that some students are responsive to this principle and others are so far from acting for oneself in the learning process? It seems as though many are just focused on the grade and not on learning. My twelve years experience here has truly changed as application, doing the word has become a paramount part of my courses.

Have you ever stopped to ponder the circumstances that surrounded the prophet Joseph Smith’s declaration after reading James 1:5 in Joseph Smith’s History 1:12? “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force....” Wow! If only our students could receive the words we bring to them like that! Three principles that play out here in the life of Joseph Smith that might explain why he had such an experience: he was an honest seeker, he had a true problem, and he was spiritually and emotionally immersed in the learning.

Interestingly, I have found in my own research—and more recent adult learning theory—more emphasis on creating questions to develop honest seekers of truth, problem based learning, and affective learning.

I have in my own experience set up application experiences that create opportunities for affective response to learning along with real life dilemmas that in turn promote real life question of honest seekers of truth. Examples from the teacher education program are practicum experiences and case studies associated with course work. Not case studies developed by others and studied, but actual case studies carried out with real children/students that need help.

I have noticed a few other examples across campus that move to this real applying level. One is the business department’s student-run enterprises. I can get some great food for a pretty good price by visiting one of these small business operations. Think what the BYU-Idaho student is learning about—cost of running a business, location, competition and management. Another example on campus is the communication department’s video productions. About a year ago I had some communication majors come to me about making a video about promoting special education. I met with them a few times and by the end of the semester they had made three videos that are now being used by the State of Idaho and our department to promote early childhood special education. Wow, talk about learning how to negotiate between, what they as the movie-maker wanted and meeting the needs of a department and a state organization. Others that I have seen are the Pathway’s student-to-student mentoring, the English department’s real life grant writing, Secondary
Education’s teaching via technology and the intern program for off-campus experiences.

You might be saying to yourself, but my subject area does not lend well to application. It appears to be true that some subject areas are more natural for applying, but all subjects can be applied at different levels. I was asked to teach a teacher education course on being responsive to culture and diversity in the classroom. I really wanted the students to apply what we were discussing, but the class size was typically large and each student had experiences that were vastly different from each other. I could not create practicum with a diverse student population for them to practice the strategies on. So I asked the student to choose principles they valued from class, reflect on their significance and then create their own application in their everyday lives. This assignment really changed the dynamic of the class. The assignment was really little work for me as the instructor (outside of grading). And, with the exception of the required write-up, the actual applying of the concepts was just part of everyday experiences for the students. However, what I saw was students adopting principles in their life, talking about them in class and showing deep learning for the principles associated with the course.

From my experiences, there are at least four ways to effectively apply content from a class. The first two were essentially described above and appear to create the greatest depth in learning. The first is the actual real life experience, where you apply your knowledge in a real experience. This requires finding an internship, practicum or an assignment that requires you to do something real. The second is creating or embedding your learning into the life you are already experiencing. This is easy and does not require setting up anything outside of training the students in course to understand what changing your behavior looks like and how to document it.

The third level of application is simulation. Simulation requires some work by the instructor, but lends ways to understanding how to use the content of the course. The instructor must set up an experience in which the students are required to use the knowledge being learned in a contrived experience. If I was math teacher for example, a simulation would be setting up an experience that is hands-on in your class that would require them to use algebra. For example, using algebra to determine the strength of magnets or to level a two-arm beam scale with different materials moves the abstract concepts into reality that can be later applied in more complex computations. Simulations are great for physical sciences and social sciences. I remember using students we grabbed from the hall to replicate (at smaller scale) social science experiments to show the difference in gender. These first-hand and hands-on experiences change the learning in the classroom.

The fourth level is where most instructors start when trying to move their content to applied level. This level is using case-studies often written and experienced by someone else. I have found that they are effective and that they do bring the student to see how to apply especially if they are realistic and carry some level of human reality and emotion. However, if not carefully written or selected, it is like using a story problem in math. The case/story may create connections between the content being learned and something more real, but does not create real

These first-hand and hands-on experiences change the learning in the classroom.
dilemmas nor affect for the problem. Deep learning is usually associated with solving problems and with some level of emotional response to the problem and resolution.

These four levels are on a continuum and I find that the first-hand, real experience level is far more life changing. These experiences get to the hearts of the students. The applications have less of an effect the less real they become and thus the deepness of the learning diminishes as the application experience moves from real to embedded application, simulation and then case study.

What I have found as I have put application experiences into my courses is that students are expressing what I hoped they would express. Instead of getting scores on tests and papers I hear them speak from their heart and with conviction the principles they should have learned. They are “doers” and are “becoming” what they need to do to be effective professionals, parents and saints.

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