

APPLICATION OF THEORY INTO PRACTICE IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING: A CASE STUDY UTILIZING IMOGENE KING'S THEORY OF GOAL ATTAINMENT

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Abstract

Perceptual misalignment between educators and students regarding course objectives and evaluation criteria frequently disrupts the teaching-learning process in higher education. This case study evaluates the practical application of Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment in resolving perceptual discrepancies within a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) classroom setting. Utilizing King's interpersonal system concepts—specifically perception, interaction, transaction, and mutual goal setting—the intervention facilitated structured dialogue and reciprocal feedback between the educator and students. The purposeful interaction transitioned misaligned expectations into synchronized understanding, directly optimizing student engagement and pedagogical outcomes. The findings demonstrate that King's framework extends beyond clinical practice, offering a robust theoretical model for mitigating communication barriers and enhancing educational quality in graduate nursing programs.

INTRODUCTION

Effective higher education relies fundamentally on synchronized communication and mutual understanding between educators and learners. In academic settings, particularly within advanced nursing education, explicit clarity regarding course expectations, learning outcomes, and assessment standards is vital for academic success. However, instructional content transmission

often suffers from cognitive and perceptual discrepancies. Educators and students frequently interpret identical pedagogical directives through distinct contextual frameworks, leading to perceptual misalignment, confusion, and reduced learning efficiency.

Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment provides a structured theoretical lens to examine and bridge these communication gaps. Premised

on the dynamic interplay within interpersonal systems, King posits that perception forms the foundation of human interaction, directly influencing communication, transaction, and ultimate goal achievement (King, 1992; McEwen & Wills, 2023). While traditionally applied to nurse-patient interactions in clinical settings, the core constructs of King's interpersonal model—perception, communication, interaction, transaction, and mutual goal setting—are highly applicable to academic environments.

This paper analyzes a real-world MSN classroom scenario where perceptual differences hindered the teaching-learning dynamic. By translating King's theoretical principles into educational practice, this study demonstrates how structured educator-student interactions can reconcile mismatched expectations, align academic perceptions, and foster an effective collaborative learning environment.

Case Scenario

In the MSN classroom, during the “Theoretical Basis for Nursing Course”, the teacher clearly clarified the course goals and evaluation criteria to the students. After this classroom discussion, it was noted that while some students perceived the teacher's explanation accurately, but others did not perceive it correctly.

As a consequence, a perception misalignment occurred amongst the teacher's perception and the students' perception. This led to confusion within the students who had different understandings from what the teacher was trying to convey. As a result, these students had little or no idea of what was expected of them in this course as well as what would be assessed, thus having a negative impact on the teaching - learning process.

This scenario shows how the differences in perception between teachers and students can be a barrier to understanding, to effective communication and to the achievement of desired educational outcomes.

Problem Question

What are the potential application of Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment in resolving

problems of perception misalignment in order to make the teaching-learning process more effective in an educational context?

Hypothesis

In educational aspects, application of Imogene King's Goal Attainment theory can be achieved if there is an effective teacher-student interaction and shared goal setting, then the misalignment of perceptions between teacher and student will be reduced and turned into perception alignment, thus, education goals can be achieved through an effective teaching-learning process and perceptions of teacher and student are aligned.

Overview of Theory-Application

The scenario presented in the classroom was critically analysed and resolved using a theory of Goal Attainment which focuses on perception, communication, interaction, transaction and mutual goal setting in reaching desired outcomes. The theory was used to understand and address the misalignment of perceptions between teacher and students that arose during the classroom discussion (King, 1992; McEwen & Wills, 2023). The teacher first expressed the aims and assessment standards of the course and achieved different understandings, depending on the students' interpretations. As the initial perception misalignment between the teacher and some students showed that the intended meanings were not understood uniformly, resulting in confusion and an ineffective teaching-learning process. Teacher was aware of the fact that accurate perception is the basis of meaningful communication, so she began purposeful interaction, encouraging students to express their perception of the discussed ideas. It was an open conversation, allowing the teacher to delve into the perceptions of the students and to uncover areas of misinterpretation, and to re-explain and constructively dialogue with the students in a timely manner (King, 1992; Arnold & Boggs, 2020).

To overcome this, the teacher began to elicit students' perception and understanding from the discussion of the course. Active communication

enabled the teacher to listen to what the students were saying and to identify the misconceptions that were present, prompting him to repeat explanations in order to clarify the concepts (King, 1992; Bastable, 2019).

The interaction gradually moved towards transaction, one of the main points of King's Theory of Goal Attainment, as communication improved. The teacher and students discussed the concepts of the course, the learning objectives and the evaluation criteria with each other, without interruption. The teacher and students discussed the concepts of the course, the learning objectives and the evaluation criteria without interruption, using reciprocal feedback and participation. This process helped bring both parties to a common understanding, helping to overcome the "misaligned perceptions" and making "aligned perceptions" a reality.

When the process of attainment of perception alignment was repeated, the successful attainment of mutually established educational goals was reproduced. Based on the theoretical model presented by King, the teacher and students created a learning partnership characterized by effective communication, shared understanding and shared perception. This led to a more structured, meaningful, and effective teaching-learning experience, making Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment a very useful framework in nursing education to reinforce communication, achieve perception alignment, and enhance the educational outcomes (King, 1992; McEwen & Wills, 2023; Butts & Rich, 2021).

Discussion

The theory application demonstrates that the misalignment of perception between teacher and student may cause the teacher to delay the effective teaching and meaningful learning or teaching. The teacher was clear in stating the learning goals and the criteria for assessing them, but there was misunderstanding and differing interpretation of the message due to differences in how the students perceived the goals and criteria. The results show that it is not just the

transmission of information that is important in teaching, but also the building of a shared understanding of the educational expectations. If communication and perception don't match, it can have an undesirable impact on the involvement, confidence, motivation, and achievement of students. So, teachers need to repeatedly assess students' understanding to check if learning goals are being understood as they were intended.

The results of this study can be understood within the context of Imogene King's theory of Goal Attainment. Perception is the basis of communication, interaction, transaction and goal attainment according to King. Students' perception of information will vary based on their experiences, knowledge and expectations. So, it is important for teachers to test students' knowledge, not assume it has been achieved. In this instance, the teacher's involvement, clarification and reciprocal feedback with students was well planned and changed the perception gap into opportunities for co-learning. This process is in keeping with King's philosophy that effective goal achievement relies on meaningful interpersonal communication and inter-participation.

During the interaction, mutual consensus about goals to be met and how those goals will be measured led to transactions and successful goal attainment. This application is an interpretation of the educational concept of transaction as a shared understanding between the teacher and the student: perception alignment. This alignment facilitated effective communication, collaboration, active participation, critical thinking, reflective learning and shared responsibility for meeting education objectives, which was seen as a practical indicator of effective communication and successful transaction.

The results justify the proposed hypothesis which is that the use of King's Theory of Goal Attainment in the context of meaningful interaction and goal setting between teacher and student helps to reduce perception misalignment and enhance the teaching/learning process. The improved alignment of perception led to better

communication, learning by group, students' participation and student-centered education, that is, the understanding of the other was the basis of achieving good educational results.

This application further demonstrates that King's theory ranges beyond clinical practice to education. Its theories of perception, communication, interaction, transaction and shared goal attainment are systematic ways of reducing misinterpretation, enhancing teacher-student relationships, and optimizing teaching and learning outcomes. In addition, perception alignment can be transferred to interdisciplinary health sciences and other schooling contexts in which communication and collaboration is a key component.

The application in general shows Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment as a useful theory in relation to educational practice. The theory is able to convert the misalignment of perceptions to the alignment of perceptions by using purposeful communication, meaningful communication, and goal setting in a manner that strengthens the teaching-learning process and thus supports shared goals in education. Perception alignment builds on King's theory and provides teachers with a framework to address communication barriers. This concept should be tested in various educational contexts to further explore how it effects communication, student involvement, learning outcomes, and the quality of education, and to enhance the integration of nursing theories in nursing education in the future.

Recommendations

To enhance perception alignment and maximize pedagogical effectiveness in nursing education using Imogene King's framework, the following measures are recommended:

Implement Early Formative Feedback Loops: Faculty should establish structured, real-time feedback mechanisms early in the syllabus orientation to assess student interpretations of learning objectives and assessment criteria.

Institutionalize Mutual Goal-Setting Protocols: Educator-student transactions should be

formalized through collaborative goal-setting sessions, encouraging active student participation in defining achievable learning milestones.

Faculty Development in Nursing Theories: Educational institutions should conduct targeted faculty workshops focusing on operationalizing nursing frameworks—such as King's Goal Attainment Theory—within academic instruction and classroom management.

Empirical Validation Across Diverse Educational Contexts: Future research should empirically evaluate the impact of perception alignment strategies on student academic performance, critical thinking, and institutional learning satisfaction across various health discipline curricula.

Conclusion

The use of Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment is clear to see and has been successful in achieving accurate perception. The theory effectively transformed the misalignment of perceptions between teachers and students into shared perceptions, ensuring effective teaching and learning through purposeful teacher-student communication, meaningful interaction, and shared goal setting for successful achievement.

It is demonstrated in this application that Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment is not just a clinical theory but also a practical educational tool. It highlights perception, interaction, transaction and getting to a common goal, allowing teachers to tackle perceptual differences, enhance team cooperation and boost education outcomes.

The bottom line is that perception alignment is crucial to success in education. However, by building effective communication and common goals, King's Theory of Goal Attainment will enhance the teaching-learning process and further nursing education.

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