Use of Active Teaching Methods

Nordplus project "Teaching and Learning in Multicultural Classroom."

Report

Seminar: September 29-30, 2021

Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences

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1. Defining Active Learning and Teaching Methods

Active learning occurs in the classroom when students solve problems, answer questions, formulate their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm. This type of learning facilitates the recall of information and the use of that information in different contexts ("What is active learning," n.d.)

Active learning and teaching methods include traditional classical methods like a conversation, answering questions, discussion, and modern techniques like a case study, simulation, brainstorming, etc. According to Ciobanu, everything traditional is not outdated, and not everything new is always suitable. Active learning and teaching can successfully combine traditional and modern methods. (Ciobanu, 2018, p. 70)

Active teaching allows learning by understanding, storing, and applying knowledge personally, carrying out the research, and rediscovering the truths instead of reproducing the material the teacher gave. This type of teaching aims to train students' capabilities to solve any unexpected problem, focus on an activity for a longer time and develop students' full potential. (Ciobanu, 2018, p. 72-73)

A frequently used active learning method is asking and answering questions. Questioning includes various opportunities like answering, generating, or checking and commenting on peers' questions. Student question generation is a more practical but hardly practiced strategy for enriching learning. It is essential to encourage questioning to develop thinking and reasoning. Questioning motivates us to think about the topic, create new links between previous and new knowledge, and compare the information. (Aflalo, 2018)

Discussion allows students to participate actively, engage in cooperative interaction, communicate effectively, and utilize self-directed learning. Therefore, the discussion has been introduced and assessed as a teaching-learning method to improve the participation, learning, and communication skill of students. (Tandel et al., 2019)

It is not possible to transfer knowledge into learners' brains. Learning requires doing work. But, teachers can help students by changing typical classroom roles. Instead of presenting information to students, the teachers can set up conditions where the students do more work by themselves. (Barkley, 2009, p. 23)

Several studies show that playing games as an active learning method are more effective than passive learning. The studies' results indicated that digital games positively affected problem-solving. (Chuang et al., 2021, p. 29)

The seminar about active teaching and learning methods was an opportunity to improve knowledge and share experiences in the field.

2. Aim, objectives, and program

The seminar aimed to share best practices of active teaching and learning in a multicultural classroom.

In multicultural classrooms, cultural diversities are an issue that makes teaching more complicated. Multicultural groups include learners from cultures with solid authority and opposite, more or less open-minded learners, and diverse values. In conditions of such diversity, learning efficiency relies more on active learning methods where teachers and lecturers are in mentors' positions.

The objectives of the seminar were:

- acquiring new knowledge through the observation of different practices;
- reflecting on seminar participants' experiences;
- getting feedback to use active teaching and learning methods

Active learning and teaching methods were used throughout the seminar activities, not only during observing and participating in the classrooms.

The hosts used an active learning method called the Bingo game for an ice-breaker. Participants had to get to know each other and fill out cards with the beginning of a sentence or statement.

After that, EUAS provided an overview of the project's activities, objectives, and achievements, and the goals and organization of the session were under discussion. The introduction about cultural differences (Elena Pruvli, EUAS) helped to focus on teaching and learning principles and objectives in a multicultural classroom.

The seminar participants experienced problem-based learning in the Rocket 69 Sciencestudio ("Rakett 69 Teadusstuudio") event center as a practical activity. The goal of the project Rocket 69 is to create a new concept for the entertainment and science landscape, turning the passive customer experience into an active one and creating excitement in both children and adults alike ("Rakett 69 Teadusstuudio," 2022). The purpose of the visit to the event center was to cooperate with members of various educational institutions (partners) and to give some examples of problem-based learning. Multicultural teams of seminar participants solved various research tasks in a small competition. The discussion about the pros and cons of the experience activity followed the event.

On the second day of the visit, participants could attend EUAS and an International School of Tallinn lectures and view or participate in studies using different active learning methods.

The classrooms that were observed at EUAS:

- Entrepreneurial behavior and characteristics
- Estonian A1.2

- HRM strategies and policies
- Self-management in university
- Lessons in International School of Tallinn

The second day included a seminar to reflect on the participants' experiences, get feedback, analyze what had been done, and set goals for the project's future activities. In conducting the seminar, we used the open space methodology, which included creating and discussing presentations and analyses.

3. The Experienced Active Teaching Methods

The active teaching methods that were used were the following:

- **Asking the questions** and getting the answers from the classroom to understand different topics and students' perceptions of them;
  Asking the students to talk to each other about the topic only by saying the title and later discussing with others to find out what the students know about this topic and what precisely the lecturer can offer;
- **The students discussed** different topics after the lecturer showed the slides and covered the issue by herself. After that, the students shared thoughts to memorize new knowledge.
- **Watching videos** instead of presenting specific topics by the lecturer. The lecturer let students watch the video, and then they discussed together what they did hear and saw;
- **Playing games** (e.g., Cashflow, folding paper, receiving a gift voucher) allows students to learn to see other perspectives and opportunities through real-life simulations. Sometimes the simulations open your eyes better than talking about them;
- **Solve the case studies** and learn from existing companies;
- The students **study a topic** in a lecture or at home and **make a presentation**; this opportunity enables them to remember a lot because those who must prepare have to answer any questions that arise. Topics are related to real-life cases so that the theory can be more captivating and better acquired
- **Group work** is where the students can communicate with each other, decide the tasks outside the lecture and learn the new aspects of cooperation between different persons;
  The groups for teamwork were divided according to the countries where the students came from, and the group's values were written based on the group members (generally, they were based on the central values of their country). Each group introduced the values (further development: to discuss in detail why such values and what weight they carry; to point out the differences between the values of different groups and, if necessary, how to support and manage them; as well as finding common ground). If there was only one person from a country, they could choose the team to join.
  The groups were divided based on specialties, and one larger group was divided into three. So the group's everyday learning environment was mapped (the homework was to get acquainted with the mapping of the personal learning

environment), and each group introduced its own and described why it was mapped in this way.

- **Mind Mapping** helps students learn more effectively by improving how information is recorded. For homework, students had to write at least one assessment criterion in the forum, based on which to assess the mappings of their learning environment.

4. Outcomes

Learning efficiency in multicultural classrooms relies on active learning methods, such as case studies, problem-based learning, discussions, and teamwork. Every student works with an effort related to their role in the team. Lecturers and teachers are in mentors' positions, and guidance is still crucial. Still, the level of students' responsibility is much higher if they are in autonomy and feel less external control.
Less external control and higher learning motivation require clear student learning targets. Targets have to be deeper than instructional goals. It also requires elaboration on the criteria by which student work will be judged.
Self-evaluations, peer reviews, thinking aloud and reading in a group, and other methods can be problematic in learners' low self-esteem. Learning is never comfortable. Critical thinking, data analysis, and building new synapses mean that learners need a significant effort.
Students from Asia have had different previous experiences. Some said that teamwork is not the usual method and some are very well prepared for teamwork, caring and supporting, giving value each-others ideas and proposals, and being ready for co-working. Teamwork, led by a lecturer or student, is the best method to improve self-confidence instead of unsureness.
In conclusion, self-regulated learning with high-level motivation gives the best results.

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