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TEACHING STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING

Quality of teaching has always been an important issue. It is known that the lack of students' motivation is a big problem that teachers are constantly facing nowadays. Nevertheless some strategies and instruments can significantly change the learning environment. Due to active learning techniques students stop being the passive receptors and learn how to apprehend knowledge and skills and use them meaningfully. It appears that the more students are engaged in the classroom, the more they are interested in the subjects that are taught.

Active learning has a lot of different forms and can be applied to teaching any discipline. It is aimed at engaging students as active participants in their learning during class time with their instructor that is why this kind of teaching strategy place a greater degree of responsibility on the learner than passive approaches such as lectures, but instructor guidance is still a crucial point in the active learning classroom.

For many teachers the active learning as a term has no well-established definition and is more an intuitive connotation. As a consequence they consider that the learning process is incredibly active when students listen to a formal presentation in a classroom. However literature suggests that the concept of active learning has the following characteristics:

- students are involved in more activities than listening (reading, writing, discussing);
- students are encouraged to think critically;
- less emphasis is made on transmitting information and more on developing students' skills.

Active learning activities may range in length from a couple of minutes to whole class sessions or may take place over multiple class sessions. Typically, they involve some individual work as well as some students working together during class. These teaching approaches range from short, simple activities like journal writing, problem solving and paired discussions, to longer, involved activities or pedagogical frameworks like case studies, role plays, and structured team-based learning. The following activities can be used to promote active learning: think-pair-share, turn and talk, polling, individual plus group quizzes, tests/quizzes with common preconceptions as distractors, jigsaws, sorting strips, partial outlines, fish bowl, idea line up, four corners

Let's consider the Jigsaw Technique which can serve as an example of one of active learning strategies for large group instruction. To practice this activity several different, related assignments for the class have to be prepared. It can be for example, four assignments, one for each of four teams. Students work in small groups to read information that has been organized into sections. Each student in the group reads one piece of the material and then shares that information with the rest of their group. In this way each member of the group is responsible for teaching the rest of the group what he/she has learned from his/her team assignment. The group then puts all of the pieces together and completes a group task (a synthesis activity) that can only be answered once all of the team pieces are together (hence the name "jigsaw").

While reading and sharing information, students answer the questions such as: what do you think each idea means? What do you agree/not agree with?

Thus, active learning is an approach to instruction that involves actively engaging students with the course material through different activities centered around writing, talking, case studies, role plays, problem solving and reflecting, and other methods. The application of various teaching strategies to promote active learning in the classroom is crucial to have a positive impact on the quality of the students learning process and outcome.