

Practical Active Learning Teaching Strategies

Active learning is a successful teaching strategy that aims to involve students in the learning process. Active learning includes a variety of learning and teaching techniques, which may be very diverse based on individual instructor's preferences. Active learning should share the following characteristics: (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006)

- The instructor is a facilitator instead of a lecturer.
- Students are expected to actively engage with the course content.
- It encourages students to develop higher-order thinking skills (Applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating).
- Students are expected to construct their own understanding of the course materials.

Case Studies

This technique focuses on developing students' problem-solving abilities. Present a real-life problem to the students. By analyzing the issues or problems, students are expected to apply newly acquired knowledge or concepts to address the problem.

Group Work

Group work allows every student to speak and share personal opinions. The instructor can break the class into groups of any size, although it is typically recommended in a group of 3-5 students. A variety of tasks can be assigned in group work activity, such as assigning articles to read, information to share, interesting topics to discuss, specific subjects to teach to other groups, etc.

Icebreakers

Icebreakers are an effective approach to get students' attention and have them discuss their interests and expectations for the course. For example, instructors can start a class by dividing students into groups and have them talk about the most interesting things about themselves.

One-Minute Paper

By asking students to write down a short paragraph in class, instructors can have students reflect on presented knowledge and collect informative feedback. The instructor should allow students to complete the writing in one-minute or less (Davis, Wood, & Wilson, 1983).

Reciprocal Peer Questioning

Reciprocal Peer Questioning is a strategy emphasizing higher order thinking by allowing students to observe the question patterns of their teacher, which directs students to learn how

to critically and recognize what is the important information (Helfeldt & Henk, 1990). In class, instructors can ask some questions and expect students to answer them based on their understanding. Once students are familiar with this teaching method, instructors can encourage students to develop their own questions by filling in the blank. Some question templates can be: "What is the main idea of ___? How does ___ differ from ___? Why is ___ important (King, 1991)?"

Think-Pair-Share

It is suggested that instructors pair students for a few minutes at the beginning of each class, then, have students review the previous class content, and discuss their thoughts with their fellow students. Each pair of students then shares their findings with the whole class as part of a formal discussion. By monitoring students' discussion, the instructor is able to clarify students' misconceptions in class (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2006).

References:

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