Engaging Students in Instruction through Active Learning: A Research-Based, Student-Centered Approach to Teaching

Dr. Mamadi K. Corra
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
Thomas Harriet College of Arts and Sciences
Effectively Integrating Research/Creative Activity in Teaching: Some Basic Questions

I. Lecture vs. Instruction through “Active Learning”?  
   • VS. a Combined Approach?

II. Using web-Based Technology vs. Traditional Classroom methods?  
   • VS. a Combined Approach?

III. Original Scholarly Articles as Core Readings vs. Textbook(s)?  
   • VS. a Combined Approach?
ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES AS EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

- “Experience is always necessary for intellectual development... the subject must be active...” (Piaget cited in Labinowicz 1980)
- “Experiential learning.”
- “Hands-on learning.”
- “Learning by doing.”
- (Bonwell and Eison 1991; McKinney 2010).
**ACTIVE LEARNING VS. LECTURE**

I. Bonwell and Eison (1991) equate active learning strategies to lectures.
   - In terms of promoting content mastery among students.

II. Active learning techniques superior to lectures, According to Bonwell and Eison (1991)
   - In terms of developing thinking and writing skills (Bonwell and Eison 1991).

III. Armstrong (1983) found that actively engaged students receiving formal education learn better than those not actively engaged in the learning process.

IV. Research also suggests that, for the best results, active learning should be combined with guidance.
   - Guidance early, practice later being most effective.
EXAMPLES OF ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES

1. “Learning by teaching” (LDL) (Martin 1985; Martin and Oebel 2007).
   E.G., with guidance from the instructor, students select a topic from the scheduled readings, prepare and deliver a lecture on it.
   (Individually or in groups of 4 to 5).

2. Students work in pairs or in small groups of 3, 4 or 5 as:
   - Topical Discussion Groups.
   - Partners in constructing short-written exercises.
   - Debate groups.
   - Case study partners.

3. “Think-pair-share activities”
   - Students reflect on a previous lesson, share with partners, followed by a formal class discussion.

4. Collaborative learning groups.
   - Students assigned in small groups to complete a task together (McKinney 2010).

5. Student Debate Groups.

6. Students reflect on video clips.
   - Orally or in writing.
USING WEB-BASED TECHNOLOGY VS. TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM METHODS?

- 1. Blackboard.
- 2. Camtasia
- 3. Centra
- 4. Second Life
- 5. WordPress Blogs
Blackboard: ECU’s Course Management System.

- “[A] comprehensive technology platform for teaching and learning, community building, content management and sharing.”
- (AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences).
  - Sample Educational Uses:
    - Organize and post course materials and resources, including multimedia
    - Post daily or weekly important announcements.
    - Create assignments with links for student uploads.
    - Utilize the email function within the course.
    - Create discussion forums for threaded discussions.
    - Engage in real-time chat sessions and/or virtual classroom.
    - (Source: AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences).
CAMTASIA

- Screen-recording software
  - Sample Educational Uses:
    - Pre-record course lectures.
    - Provide supplemental course material.
    - Provide step-by-step tutorials.
    - Provide a tour of your online course environment.
    - Record webcam introductions to weekly course content.
    - Provide a video to help with those frequently asked questions in your course.
  
  (Source: AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences)
CENTRA

- Enables faculty and students to attend class “live” from anywhere they have access to an Internet connection.
- Accessed using a web browser.
- Enables the student to see and hear the instructor as well as respond to the instructor’s questions with audio chat.

(Source: AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences 2012).
SECOND LIFE

- A virtual world using graphical representations.
- “A survey of Distance Education students prior to 2007 revealed that students felt they did not know the peers in their Distance Education classes.”
- “One of the solutions to this problem was the usage of Second Life, which allows students and professors to attend class as ‘avatars.’”
- (AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences 2012).
  - Sample Educational Uses:
    - Class meetings.
    - Office hours.
    - Project creations/displays.
    - Education simulations.
    - Field trips.
    - Presentations.
    - Social interaction.
    - Application and web sharing.
    - Source: AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences).
WORDPRESS BLOGS

Sample Educational Uses:

- Use the blog for a course or department site.
- Allow for the creation of interactive websites.
- Use your blog for tutorials.
- Generate dialogue among students and/or colleagues.
- Create enthusiasm for writing and communication.
- Engage students in conversation and learning.
- Develop and promote individual and/or common interests.
- Make the blog available to everyone or restrict it to a group of students or colleagues.
- Use the blog for conferences.

(Source: AS: DE Module – College of Arts and Sciences).
Effectively Integrating Research/Creative Activity and Mentorship

I. Graduate Student Mentoring.
   A. Formal Department Graduate Student Teaching Mentorship.
   B. Encouraging and helping students to disseminate their works in scholarly venues.
      o Presentations at professional meetings.
      o Publication in scholarly outlets.
   C. Serving on graduate student theses committees.
   D. Supervising graduate students theses.

II. Involving Undergraduate Students in the Research Process.
   A. Honors by Contract.
   B. Honors College Research Assistantship Program.
## Co-Mentorship through Collaboration with Other Faculty vs. Solo Work?

A Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Solo</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Articles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly Presentations</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited Papers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article Publications in Proceedings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles Under Review</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Presentations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Organizer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Session Presider/Discussant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally Funded Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally Funded Research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Proposals Not Funded</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources