

ACTIVE LEARNING PEDAGOGY INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Dr.Swapnil B. Nirmal,

Principal,

Motiwala College Of Educational Sciences, Nashik.

INTRODUCTION

What is pedagogy?

Although pedagogy is sometimes seen as a nebulous concept, it is essentially a combination of knowledge and skills required for effective teaching. The more traditional definitions describe pedagogy as either the science/theory or art/practice of teaching that makes a difference in the intellectual and social development of students.

More specifically, new research is defining pedagogy as “a highly complex blend of theoretical understanding and practical skill” (Lovat, ACDE, p.11 2003). This research is highlighting the vast complexity of teachers’ work and specifying just what the nature of that work truly is. As Lovat further emphasises: a teacher is “a highly developed autonomous professional, with a requisite professional knowledge base and practitioner skills which could stand alongside the equivalent in medicine, law and engineering” (ACDE, p.11).

Different research and theories may underpin different models of pedagogy but it is the contention of Freebody and Luke that within a certain range of procedures, differing teaching approaches work differentially with different communities of students; and effective teachers know that” (A Map of Possible Practices, Luke & Freebody, June, 1999).

Effective teachers “have a rich understanding of the subjects they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organised, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings. While faithfully representing the collective wisdom of our culture and upholding the value of disciplinary knowledge, they also develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students” (NBPTS 1999, 3-4 in Lovat, ACDE p12).

In other words, good pedagogy requires a broad repertoire of strategies and sustained attention to what produces student learning in a specific content domain, with 1-4

group of students and a particular teacher. Teachers need to rely on quality educational research for different pedagogical models and strategies; at the same time they have to practise the art and science of teaching themselves, refining it as they go according to their own needs and resources and particularly those of their students.

Fortunately, research has dispelled two myths about teaching: (Shulman in Lovat, p12)

These two myths are that:

1. Good teaching follows naturally from subject mastery
2. A good teacher can teach anything at all.

Thus, accomplished teaching “emanates neither from sheer knowledge of a subject nor from sheer teaching craft....” The notions of ‘authentic pedagogy’ (Newmann, 1996), ‘quality pedagogy’ (Hammond, 1997) and ‘productive pedagogies’ (QSRLS 1999) have all arisen in the last few years out of the need to identify that essential blend of knowledge and skills required for effective teaching.

Within such a context, this module on pedagogy provides a brief overview of various pedagogical frameworks and strategies to give teachers a reference point for the succeeding modules on the integration of ICT into classroom practice.

| Table 1 The four dimensions of Productive Pedagogies Intellectual Quality | Relevance / connectedness | Supportive environment | Recognition of difference |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Higher order thinking | Knowledge integration | Student direction | Cultural knowledge |
| Deep knowledge | Background knowledge | Social support | Inclusivity |
| Deep understanding | Problem-based Curriculum | Academic engagement | Group identities |
| Substantive conversation | Connectedness beyond classroom | Explicit criteria | Active citizenship |
| Problematic knowledge | Student self-evaluation | Narrative | |

Active Learning

- ⊙ We might think of active learning as an approach to instruction in which students engage the material they study through reading, writing, talking, listening, and reflecting.

Basic Elements of Active Learning

Active learning strategies use one or more of these elements:

- ⊙ Talking and listening
- ⊙ Writing
- ⊙ Reading
- ⊙ Reflecting

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Categories of Active Learning Strategies

- ⊙ Individual activities
- ⊙ Paired activities
- ⊙ Informal small groups
- ⊙ Cooperative student projects
- An important learning principle, supported by extensive research is that students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process
- This is illustrated using the learning pyramid
- The further down the pyramid students go, the more information they learn and retain

Goal: Get students engaged in learning –

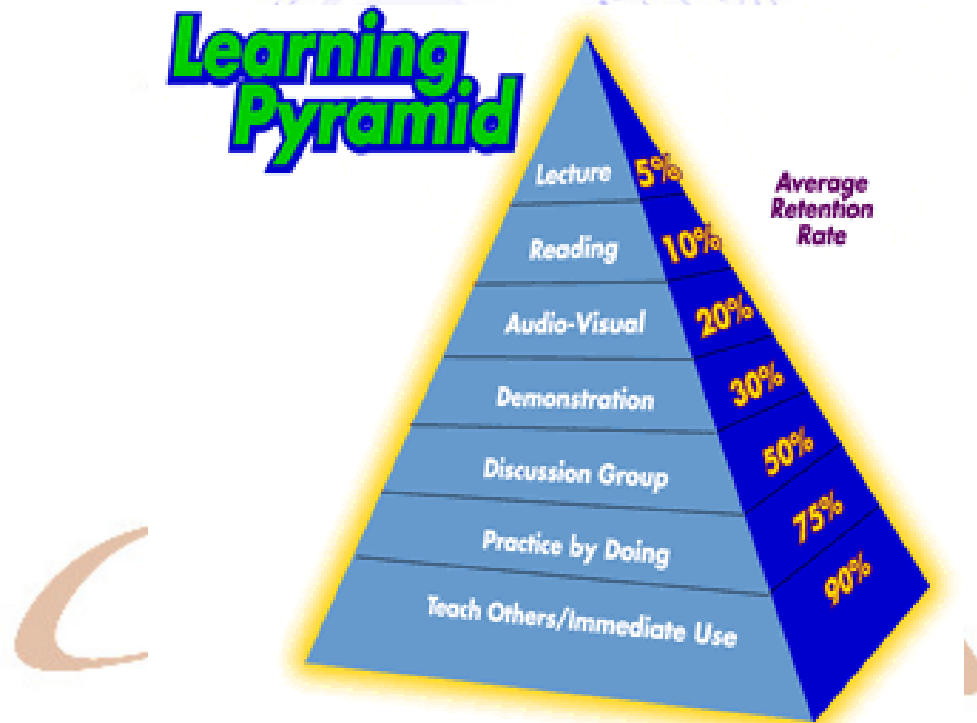
Thinking, talking, moving, or emotionally involved so that what you teach gets into long-term memory.

In other words, so they will go from this



The secret to being a bore is to tell everything. Voltaire

To this.



Why use active learning?

- Behind every good teacher is an exhausted class!
- “Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand.” *Chinese Proverb*
- “Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime.” *Author unknown*
- Business and industry have clearly advocated that in today’s education system, there must be a place for teaching students to become team members, to share resources and talents,

and to acquire social skills that will help them in the workplace.

Texas Higher Education Co-ordinating Board

- “What children can do together today they can do alone tomorrow.” *Vygotsky, 1965*
- Experience + Reflection = Learning
- What is the most effective method of teaching? Students teaching other students.”
McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin, & Smith, 1986
- When students were asked to discuss with a partner what a teacher presented at frequent intervals during the class, they received up to two letter grades higher than students in the control group did . *Ruhl, Hughes, and Schloss, 1977*

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Active Learning Strategies

- Group projects
- Role playing
- Research
- Table quizzes
- Crosswords
- Word-search
- Mind-maps
- Think-Pair-Share
- Paired Reading
- Drill and Review Pairs
- Turn-to-your-neighbour summaries
- Four-step review
- Matching exercises
- Whip-around
- Graphic Organisers

Teacher’s Role

- ⊙ In active learning, the teacher moves from being the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side”
- ⊙ Teaching methods are student-centred, and should move away from using lecturing, individual reading assignments and isolated work

- ⊙ Teachers become coaches, guides, sources of information, experience and encouragement

Tips

- ⊙ Use short segments of time e.g. “you have three minutes to complete the first two questions”
- ⊙ Keep group size small. It takes a lot of skill to manage a group of 4 or more. Group size of 2 or 3 is best
- ⊙ Don't let students choose their own groups. The temptation to go “off task” is too great
- ⊙ Carefully monitor groups while they are working
- ⊙ Only distribute [one resource](#) per group, which encourages positive interdependence

We're all familiar with giving students 15 minutes to answer 20 questions in a pair or a small group. They spend the first 10 minutes chatting and the last 5 frantically trying to answer the questions. A useful trick is to give a short period of time to answer just the first couple of questions. With less time to waste, students get on task quicker and remain on task for longer.

Conclusion

The teaching attributes outlined above are what keep teachers grounded in their day-to-day dealings with students. However, good teachers also appreciate the value and power of research by colleagues at all levels in the educational field to broaden perspectives and enhance teaching practice. They can exchange ideas and knowledge about teaching and learning to the benefit of their students. In so doing, they become confident users of shared language and understandings associated with all aspects of pedagogy. Despite what is seen by some as educational jargon, many teachers enjoy talking the ‘teacher talk’ or a ‘professional parlance’ about what they do. Discussions about what is educationally appropriate for their students and their learning isn't ‘dumbed down’. There is common ground when speaking to colleagues at all educational levels, whether from colleges and universities or pre-schools and middle schools. It should be as much a code for professional acceptance and credibility as it is for other professional colleagues in law, medicine and other tertiary fields of endeavour.

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