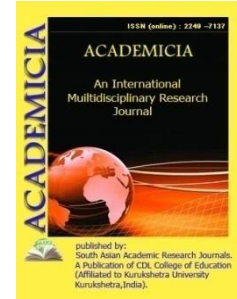




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ACTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Requests for changes in teaching at all educational levels are normal consequences because of the rapid technological development and today's dynamic and complex reality. To improve educational achievements and students vocational training at the university, it is required to use alternative methods and procedures of teaching, blended in a combination of original strategies that promote active learning. This article indicates that the method of lecturing is the dominant one on the respondents' studies, but with a frequent use of guided conversations and discussions, which indicates a gradual reorganization of higher education. Results obtained in this paper do not demonstrate a continuing willingness of students towards intellectual and emotional involvement in the learning process and taking responsibility for learning on their own.

KEYWORDS: *Higher Education, Teacher, Student, Teaching Strategies, Methods and Procedures, Active Learning and Teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The consequence of the ever more important role of knowledge for the economic and social prosperity and of the focus on the active role of individuals in the building of his knowledge is the tendency to implement the new guidelines in the organization of the teaching process where the teaching – learning relationship is more flexible, students are encouraged to take an active role in instruction processes and the teaching outcomes must include the acquisition of knowledge but also the gaining of competences. The goals of education defined through the learning outcomes or development of competences cannot be realized by sheer usage of traditional didactic strategies, approaches and methods, and more efficient form of teaching and learning are required. The goal of this paper is to direct the attention to strategies of teaching at the higher educational level, in particular the strategies which foster active learning and

acquisition not only of new knowledge but also skills and attitudes in answer to the requirements of the rapid technological development and contemporary labor market.

Teaching has been changing under the influence of social changes which require the university education to answer the requirements of the dynamic and complex reality by organizing a learning process able to train students to operate in professional practice (Apel, 2003, 32). The first step in the changes is to shift the emphasis from the teacher as knowledge provider to the student as the knowledge and skill acquirer. The student is no longer a passive recipient but becomes an active searcher in the process of knowledge building and application of knowledge and skills. This results in a more efficient education of young people, able to take their position in society. An American author, Prince (2004), considers that active learning can be achieved by any method of teaching which actively involves students into the process of authentic learning. Naturally, this mode of learning supersedes sheer memorizing and repetition of what the professor had said or done. The essence of such learning is in constant intellectual participation in the learning process. An Italian author, Zanchin (2002), also thinks that active teaching implies involvement of students in the teaching of curriculum contents, which fosters development of their procedural knowledge and its integration with declarative and metacognitive knowledge. Strategies of active teaching must possess the following characteristics: • integrate thought and practical activities; • enable varied learning styles; • enable a methodologically correct teaching of curriculum contents regarding single disciplines; • promote cognitive interaction with the others, whether adults or peers; • develop higher-level cognitive processes; • foster reflection and metacognitive activity; • support readiness to carry out tasks and motivation to learn; • enable observation and monitoring of students (e.g. their pre knowledge and learning styles). Lecture has so far remained the dominant form of academic teaching in spite of continued attacks, critiques and intentions to suppress it and replace it with more efficient methods and procedures (Apel, 2003, 27-37). In the effort to introduce changes in the approach to teaching at university, numerous researches have been carried out. These researches show that direct teaching is efficient in the transfer of knowledge, but is not sufficient for deeper understanding, problem solving, creative work and similar. (Terhart, 2001, Vizek Vidović, Vlahović-Štetić, Rijavec, Miljković, 2003, Apel, 2003). Academic education is broadened by learning with the help of the new media, but personal interaction in social situations remains important in the learning process. New methods which will encourage students to participate in the teaching process, in a written or spoken form or actively, are therefore being researched

Authors Vizek Vidović, Vlahović-Štetić, Rijavec and Miljković (2003, 335- 375) do not use the term strategy, but a much narrower term: teaching methods or methods of teaching, defined as the learnt generalised form of behaviour which can be systematically applied in various teaching fields in order to facilitate and improve the learning outcome. Teaching techniques i.e. specific actions which are developed for the purpose of teaching a particular type of content, are an even narrower form of behaviour. The authors classify the teaching methods in accordance with the level of activation of students and teachers during teaching, and in accordance with the number of people taught. The extremes considering these two criteria are the maximum activity of teachers teaching in a numerous class vs. one student learning independently with occasional consultations with the teacher. Between these two extremes the authors included the following basic teaching forms: direct teaching, teaching based on guided discovery and discussion and

independent learning regulated by feedback from the teacher on learning success. Direct teaching thus comprises the lecturing technique and the technique of display and modelling for the purpose of acquiring skills and procedural knowledge. The teaching based on guided discovery method comprises techniques of total and guided discovery, dialogue and discussion. The authors consider that independent learning requires development of skills for following the teaching process and skills of independent learning such as: organisation and elaboration of course-book texts, problem solving, revision, exercising, critical thinking and metacognitive skills. The above described overview of methods was amended by the authors (2003, 473-498) in the chapter of humanistic approach to education based on the following principles: student oriented instruction, teacher as the facilitator, assistant and partner in the process of learning, contents is not the goal but the means to realize educational goals, learning is best encouraged in a cooperative environment. The best known forms of humanist education in practice are the open education, learning through research, learning through discovery and group discussion

Turbulent social processes require a flexible and dynamic university ready to change and accept the fact that it is no longer the exclusive place where information is gathered and knowledge acquired. Any demand for a change involves innovative approaches to teaching and learning as a response to the challenges set by new media and learning theories, such as cognitivism and social constructivism. An especially important role is played by active teaching methods and procedures which recognize different needs of individual students, asking them to assume liability for personal learning and promoting critical thinking and independent learning. The leader of these changes is the teacher who must be able to implement various different teaching methods and procedures and to alternate them strategically encouraging creativity, problem solving, experience-based learning and metacognition. The fact that working methods and procedures, such as guided conversation, participation of student in discussions and debates, are being used on a more frequent basis, indicates a positive movement in the reorganization of university teaching process. Nevertheless, our research indicates the still predominant position of the oral lecture method and the need for a more varied usage of teaching methods and procedures enabling students to be more active and to assume greater liability in their own educational process.

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