Teaching Strategies

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KNSS 399: Leadership in Education

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Date

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Teaching children or adults requires an understanding of how to develop the information to best achieve one's goals. M. Logan (personal communication, September 20, 2011) states how important it is to keep students as active as possible in the learning process. Active Learning is described as anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture (Logan, 2010). Research has shown that active learning improves students' understanding and retention of information and can be very effective in developing higher order cognitive skills such as problem solving and critical thinking (Merlot Pedagogy, 2009). Active learning strategies for teachers can take many forms. Class environments that utilize such methods as cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and teaching with cases can all be utilized to keep students actively involved in the learning process.

**Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is an instructional approach in “which students work together in small groups to accomplish a common learning goal” (Merlot Pedagogy, 2009, para. 2). Paulson & Faust (2008) categorize cooperative learning as a subset of active learning activities (p. 2). Kagan (1994) states that cooperative learning promotes student learning and student retention as well as assists students in developing oral and social skills.

The use of group activities must be carefully planned and executed. Johnson and Johnson (2005) list some general considerations for group work. These include positive interdependence, face to face interaction, and support for each other and individual accountability. Johnson and Johnson state that another component of group work is
interpersonal and small-group skills. Social skills that must be taught include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication and conflict-management skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Tanner and Tanner (2007) reinforce this when they state how so much of the social-personal growth of the learner has been lost in teaching and must be brought back. The final step of group work is group processing where members discuss whether or not they achieved the desired goals and how well they maintained the working relationships within the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2005).

The use of pairs as a cooperative learning tool is very beneficial. Paulson and Faust (2008) state that the use of pairs creates more discussion for individuals that have a difficult time participating in larger size group. Creating discussion topics, sharing and comparing notes, and evaluating peer work allows for pairs of students to learn from each other (Paulson & Faust, 2008). In groups of three of more, it is also important that students learn from one another (Paulson & Faust, 2008). Determining whether spontaneous groups or heterogeneous groups are used requires the instructor to evaluate how best to achieve the goals of the project. Paulson & Faust list such cooperative activities as “cooperative groups in class, active review sessions, blackboard work, mapping, role playing, panel discussions, debates and games as possible cooperative learning techniques” (pp. 29-38).
Problem-based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is “a student-centered instructional strategy in which students collaboratively solve problems and reflect on their experiences” (Problem-based learning, n.d., para. 1). Markowitz, Dupre, Holt, Chen and Wischnowski (2008) enhances this definition by stating that PBL is a “complex, collaborative, inquiry based, student centered teaching and learning strategy” (p. 422). The use of PBL not only encourages independent learning as it “orientates students towards meaning-making over fact-collecting” (Rhem, 1998, p.1). Through the use of problem sets and situations along with independent investigation and group work, they comprehend information at a higher level and develop more learning and social skills (Rhem, 2008). This approach also enables students to bring prior knowledge into play faster and assists students in adapting their learning to new situations (Camp, 1998).

The development of such a teaching strategy can be developed using the model described by Markowitz et al. (2008). It begins with a real life problem that is presented to the learners who initially work on it individually then in teams of four. During these times the students identify facts and questions that they see within the scenario. Once the facts and questions have been determined, questions are ordered in terms of importance and students are then instructed to utilize a web-based search to find the answers to their questions. Students then report the results to their PBL team and/or to the entire class which allows for more discussion and the addition of more information. (Markowitz et al., 2008, pp. 422-423)

The teacher’s role in PBL is first of all is to develop an ill-structured problem, which is one that is open-ended with multiple solutions (Chin & Chia, 2008). Following
the presentation of the problem to the class, the teacher becomes a metacognitive guide as they help set up a plan of action, evaluate what was found and synthesizing the information (Chin & Chi, 2008). Through metacognition, the teacher encourages students to think and reflect on their own thoughts.

**Teaching with Cases**

Case studies present students with real-life problems and enable them to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real life situations (Merlot Pedagogy, 2009; Gutek, 2004). Students define problems, analyze possible alternative actions and provide solutions with a rationale for their choices. Higgins (1998, as cited in Mueller, 2003) calls the case method a type of active learning, which has been previously discussed. Bruner (as cited in Mueller, 2003) discusses various reasons for using cases. This type of learning allows students to teach themselves through self-discovery. It helps to build critical thinking and decision-making skills and prepares students for lifelong learning.

Herreid (2006) explains how to write a case that is used in the classroom. He states that pre-existing material such as found in newspapers, magazines, videos, and television dramas can be used. For example the advertisements for health food, vitamins, and pharmaceutical agents can be utilized as cases. Other suppliers include medical journals, graphs and tables (Herreid, 2006).

Herreid (2006) describes how to use various formats for teaching cases. Some examples include “discussions, debates, problem based learning, scientific research team format and a team-learning format” (Herreid, 2006, pp. 33-38). Whatever method is used...
the instructor must have objectives in mind so that the structure of the presentation can develop analytical skills of the students and ensure that all are actively involved.
References


TEACHING STRATEGIES


**Examples of references, not in this paper.**


The American Psychological Association (2009) states that for figures such as graphs, charts, maps, drawings or photographs insert them into the text only if they augment the text, convey essential information, omit distracting detail and are easy to read and understand (pp. 152-153).

APA (2009) continues on to say that when you use a figure in your paper that has been adapted or copied directly from another source; you need to reference the original source (p. 128). This reference appears as a caption underneath the figure that you copied or adapted for your paper and does not need to be on the reference page. As well, any image that is reproduced from another source also needs to come with copyright permission; it is not enough just to cite the source (APA, p. 128).

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*Figure 4.* Schematic drawings of a bird's eye view of the table (a) and the test phase of the choice task (b). Numbers represent the dimensions in centimetres. Adapted from "Visual Experience Enhances Infants' Use of Task-Relevant Information in an Action Task," by S.-h. Wang and L. Kohne, 2007, *Developmental Psychology, 43*, p. 1515. Copyright 2003 by the American Psychological Association.

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