

Introduction

What is the Value of Active Learning to the Students?

The most important value is that active learning increases students' retention and comprehension of the course material. Tasks to be accomplished become explicit. Active learning utilizes the students' data and knowledge base. Students have an opportunity to provide personal insights and interpretation (develop their own answers). The process allows students to experiment with ideas, to develop concepts, and to integrate concepts into systems.

Research shows that active learning seeks to engage a greater range of students in effective learning. Furthermore, it positively affects the attitude of students toward self and peers in the learning process. Active learning develops social experiences between students and between teacher and students. It can build community within the classroom.

What is the Value of Active Learning to the Teacher?

Active learning concentrates on the teaching function. It helps the teacher select objectives at the correct level of difficulty to meet the students' needs. The teacher encourages the students to be responsible for their own learning. Active learning brings the students into the organization, thinking, and problem solving process of the discipline. Active learning also gives the teacher time to perform the helping teacher functions of coach, listener, and advocate.

Source: <http://fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingandLearningResources/InstructionalStrategies/content/ActiveLearningGuidelines.pdf>

Professor is Student Oriented

- Course begins where the students are, not where the professor is
- Though students are expected to bring needed skills and background knowledge and to be self-motivated, the professor also accepts responsibilities for motivation, clarity, and diagnostic/supportive teaching
- Students are treated with the same dignity and respect expected by the professor
- Individual differences are expected, welcomed, and supported

Students Participate in Goal Setting

- Some goals are provided by professor
- Students create or select additional goals
- Goals are individualized (different students may have different goals)

Classroom Climate Collegia- Supportive-Spontaneous

- Everyone knows and uses everyone else's name
- Everyone knows (and respects) everyone else's background, current position, interests, goals, etc.
- Professor does no more than 50% of the talking and no more than 75% of the decision making
- Discussion, group work, and active participation is encouraged and expected

Activities are Problem-Centered and Student-Driven

- Students are expected to be active learners
- Course is built upon real problems that relate to student goals and interests
- Some easier problems are dealt with early in the course and are used to provide paradigms and activity models
- Students have some flexibility in problem selection
- Busy work and unnecessary repetition are minimized
- Whenever possible, students work at own pace and on own schedule
- Students are encouraged/required to work together in groups and to provide suggestions, feedback, and support to one another

Assessment is Continuous and Supportive

- Formative developmental feedback is emphasized over summative grades
- Professor's comments focus upon success and suggestions for improvement rather than upon mistakes and corrections
- Students are allowed/expected to revise and resubmit work that does not meet expected standards, and summative grades are based upon revised work
- Professor's role is primarily to help students toward success, not merely to point out their shortcomings; students should build pride in accomplishments and existing abilities
- All assessment should be criterion-referenced rather than normative
- Assessment involves facts/concepts/applications
- Assessment is often authentic

Developmental Not Directive/Presentational

- Students are active creators of knowledge, not passive receivers of information
- Multiple answers (rather than one right answer) are often accepted
- Emphasis is upon understanding and application rather than upon memorization and repetition
- Professor teaches disciplinary (subject area) methods and provides access to information; students gather, organize, and use information
- Professor helps students to understand learning styles and methods and help students to identify and remediate any personal learning problems
- The methods of the discipline are as (or more) important than the content
- Professor guides but does not entirely dictate task identification, activities sequencing, and working strategies
- Newer technologies, media, content, and methods are emphasized
- Students are allowed broad flexibility and encouraged toward self-direction
- Professor emphasizes and teaches metacognition

Multi-level Outcomes are Expected

Learning includes:

- Facts and information
- Concepts and understanding
- Processes and applications
- Metacognition and reflections



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