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ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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Economic education in the 21st century has a set of common requirements. First, economic education is indeed global in nature, reflecting the realities of commerce and organizations. Second, effective economic education needs to simulate the demands of the business environment. To achieve this objective, business educators constantly search for new teaching methods. Increasingly these are becoming known as the «Four C's»: Creativity, Collaboration,

Communication, and Critical thinking. These skills are difficult enough to address in traditional educational settings and the methods of active learning are new challenges to old problems. While active learning as a concept dates back centuries, in modern times it was first researched by the English scholar R.W. Revans [1]. Briefly, Revans refers to active learning as reflection on experience and states that learning is achieved through focusing on problems in a social context [2].

Active learning is a broadly inclusive term, used to describe several models of instruction that hold learners responsible for their own learning. The leaders in the field of active learning, Bonwell and Eison have contributed heavily to its development and to the acceptance of active learning as a viable approach. Meyer and Jones state that active learning involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject [4].

Bonwell and Eison suggest that active learning provides the following benefits: students are more involved than in passive listening; students are engaged in activities such as reading, discussing, and writing; student motivation is increased; students can receive immediate feedback; and students may engage in higher order thinking, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. [3].

Auster and Wylie suggest that four dimensions are necessary to create a systematic approach to promote active learning in the classroom: context setting, class preparation, class delivery, and continuous improvement. Context setting refers to creating an open and relaxed atmosphere for learning in the classroom. [5].

In economic education types of active learning include experiential learning [6], problem based learning [7], participative learning [8], and cooperative learning [9]. We will briefly describe active learning techniques that are used in economic education in the USA.

Experiential learning is an associated concept in which students learn from relevant experiences provided in the course of instruction [6]. Business educators should be aware of two cautions. First, experiential exercises alone may not be sufficient to induce learning and, secondly, students will need time to reflect on the experience [10]. Kolb explains that learning is a process, not an outcome; that learning comes from experience; that learning requires resolution of dialectically opposed demands; that learning is holistic and integrative; that learning requires interplay between a person and an environment; and that learning results in knowledge creation [6].

Another approach is problem-based learning (PBL) which structures a course around the resolution of a real world problem. This approach traces its

beginnings to the philosopher and educator, John Dewey, who claimed that problems are a stimulus to thinking [7]. To discover the solution to a problem, students must learn the basic principles of a subject. Having borrowed the concept of problem-based learning from service learning in which students learn by performing some service for the community, Miller applied the approach to organizational behavior classes in the business school. Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that enables learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills in order to develop a solution to a defined problem [11]. According to Barrows the key components of PBL are (1) unresolved, ill-structured problems that will generate multiple thoughts about the cause and solution, (2) a student-centered approach in which students determine what they need to learn, (3) teachers serve as facilitators and tutors, and (4) problems are authentic and reflect professional practice [12].

Participative learning is defined as engaging the student in the learning process by giving them an opportunity to take part in selecting activities and/or assignments in the class [8]. The Participatory Learning Approach (PLA, pronounced «play») engages students as active participants in the full life cycle of homework, projects and examination. Participative learning's main idea is that students design the questions or projects, execute them, and then assess and grade their peers' solutions. Each stage can be performed by individuals or by teams. Students should be able to observe (read) everything their peers do so they can learn further from others' efforts. Participative learning is grounded in constructivist theories of learning [13], which suggest that knowledge is actively constructed by, rather than transmitted to learners.

In cooperative learning, students are required to work together in small groups and class discussions. In order for small groups to develop cooperative learning, five basic elements are necessary: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction (promote each other's success), individual and group accountability (no social loafing), social skills, and group processing or feedback [9].

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