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A Guide to Engaging Methods for Learning

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A Guide to Engaging Methods for Learning

The guide is another publication that we would like to present to the academic teachers at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. It has been produced by the Centre for Academic Didactics, as an outcome of the MEiN project Educational Excellence. The aim of the publication is to encourage our teachers to embrace methods that enhance the level of student engagement in the learning process. The guide discusses only some of the active learning and teaching methods that improve classroom dynamics to make academic education more attractive for both students and teachers. We plan to extend the list in the future, but we are convinced that the currently presented set of methods can inspire our teachers' interest in applying them. This, in consequence, is likely to open the teachers to new discoveries in the area and new creative didactic applications.

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Introduction





The „teaching-learning” strategy has the longest tradition in higher education. The primary method associated with this traditional approach to teaching is lecture, which has its deep roots in academic culture. Meticulously prepared and skilfully delivered, lectures can be an effective way of delivering relatively large batches of content to large groups of students. Moreover, when in the hands of a qualified teacher, lectures create a space for lecturer-student interactions, allowing for increased student engagement in content reception, with adequate focus on the content conveyed. This happens when a lecturer succeeds in inspiring the audience with their passion for the subject matter and with an effective emphasis on its theoretical and applied relevance (Race, 2007).

Most of us are familiar with the traditional approach to teaching, sometimes called the passive approach, in which the lecturer is the main source and provider of knowledge. The student, on the other hand, is mostly a passive content recipient, expected to listen, take notes and memorise the material, without a necessity of thorough understanding. This mechanism is strengthened by partial assessment of the degree of assimilation of the material taught since it makes students focus on exams and test results, which overshadows the learning process itself. Moreover, not infrequently, traditional teaching takes the form of one-way communication, in which the lecturer imposes a uniform rhythm of content transmission on all learners – irrespective of individual abilities and varying rates of student content assimilation.

A lecture-based approach can lead to numerous complications. Firstly, lectures, by their very nature, form a serious obstacle to the development of practical skills. Secondly, they limit teachers’ choice of tools to respond to diverse and specific needs of individual learners. Thirdly and finally, lecturers receive impoverished

feedback from their audiences, which makes them unable to assess the level of learners’ understanding of the content delivered. (Charlton, 2006).

At the opposite pole to the passive approach lies the active approach. This approach emphasises the role of the student as an active participant in the learning process, which is expressed primarily in their involvement in exploring and solving problems vital to the subject of study. Under this approach, students acquire knowledge and develop skills through action and practical experience of applying knowledge in real (or real-like) situations. This in turn fosters engagement, raises motivation levels and increases interest in the subject of study. It is also worth noting that under this approach, the attention of the lecturer and the student is directed not only to the grading (outcomes), but also to the very process of acquiring knowledge and developing competences.

Civilisation change contributes to the modification of the historically shaped functions and tasks of the university. We can see how the emphasis in academic education is shifting towards the “market value of education,” where students’ professional competences are becoming the primary measure of learning outcomes (Ciechanowska, 2004).

Under this approach, a primary goal of academic education is to realistically help students reach for meaningful educational achievements, but also to prepare them for their chosen professions and jobs by providing them with available educational solutions and practical skills training. This direction of change is not enthusiastically embraced by the advocates of the classical approach as it marks a departure from an in-depth scientific pursuit of purely theoretical solutions. How, then, do we ensure that students can





optimally integrate the knowledge they acquire at the university? Moreover, how do we enable them to effectively transfer this knowledge to their future professional actions and solve real-life problems they face? Should we, as university teachers, focus mainly on teaching, or should we focus more on engaging students in the process of learning? Should we continue to act primarily as “masters” of our own field, passing on our knowledge to students (sage in the stage), or should we act more readily as companions and facilitators of the students’ quest for knowledge (guide on the side)?

This educational conundrum is not a new one, yet it constantly calls for novel solutions. Especially since the two perspectives outlined

above need not be mutually exclusive, but can complement each other to the great advantage of the learning process.

This short guide to active learning methods is an attempt to – at least partially – address the questions posed in the previous paragraph. The guide was written as part of the Ministry of Education and Science’s project “Didactic Excellence of Universities,” implemented by the Centre for Academic Didactics at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The guide discusses selected methods of active learning and is a starting point for a broader, more comprehensive description of these methods planned for the near future.



1.

Student-Centred Teaching and Active Learning





The centrality of the student in the learning system requires academic teachers to construe a student as an autonomous person, an agent and actor, someone unique. A student is equipped with a variety of talents that they actualise through different learning styles (McCombs and Whistler, 1997).



A fundamental principle of student-centred teaching and learning is to ensure that students have an opportunity to influence both the content of the course and the choice of learning methods, thereby emphasising the participation of the students in the learning process (John, 2007).

Although recent years witness an increased interest in student-centred education, its very idea is hardly new. It owes its conceptual foundations to authors such as Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Carl Rogers or Lev Vygotsky. Student-centred education, in its original intent, aims to enhance student autonomy (Johns, 2007) and focuses on developing the skills that constitute a student's resource for lifelong learning, solving complex problems that arise at different life stages (Hoidn, 2017).

The centrality of the student in the learning system requires academic teachers to construe a student as an autonomous person, an agent and actor, someone unique. A student is equipped with a variety of talents that they actualise through different learning styles (McCombs and Whistler, 1997). Student is a person, who needs individualised approach on the one hand, but social interaction on the other. Collaborative and mutual learning is a great advantage of learning in social groups, which fosters knowledge consolidation, and which endows meaning to the whole new knowledge reality (Moffett and Wagner, 1992).

The following aspects of student-centred teaching and learning are most frequently listed as distinctive (cf. Corley, 2008):

- a) learning is an active search for meaning in the learning content and the creative construction of knowledge, which results from the processes of shaping and being shaped by concrete experience.

- b) students are active participants in the learning process; they make decisions about what and how they want to learn; they understand why they are learning what they are learning, and not some other material; they are aware of the educational requirements and are willing to evaluate their own performance; they monitor their learning outcomes to find appropriate learning strategies; they are willing to cooperate with other students due to the impact of teamwork and exchange of experiences on learning outcomes.
- c) teachers: notice and respect students' points of view; they identify and adapt to different learning styles and personal differences; guide the student towards optimal solutions and correct conclusions in a non-directive way; they encourage students to think critically and seek comprehension of the subject beyond mere memorisation; they share responsibility for the learning process with the student.

Student-centred teaching uses methodologies and various teaching strategies that aim to create conditions for active learning (scaffolding), to engage students through discovery, enquiry, explanation, problem-solving, decision-making, justification, practising skills (etc.). A vital component of this approach is the skill of effective use of teacher feedback concerning both the results obtained by the student and the effectiveness of the learning process.

Education research shows that using active learning strategies in academic classes significantly improves students' learning experience (Theobald et al., 2020). Research on the effects of active learning methods in a group of students of physics indicated twice the overall learning performance (Hake et al., 1998) and two to



three times the understanding of basic concepts compared to traditional methods (Laws et al., 1999).

Available research indicates that active learning improves understanding and memorisation of information (Michael, 2006); develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Davis, Minife, 2013); increases the level of student engagement in learning (Optal, 2021) and creates conditions for students' readiness to take greater accountability for learning outcomes (Laal and Laal 2012). What is more, active learning methods positively influence many other skill areas, such as collaboration, interpersonal skills, communication skills with a focus on giving and receiving feedback, team leadership, negotiations (cf. Harris and Bacon, 2019).

Given the characteristics of student-centred learning, as well as the benefits of this approach, when expanded to cover active learning methods, we can have the general sense that applying this model to our daily teaching activity is a relatively uncomplicated thing to do. In fact, this is not an easy task. For it is not enough to be tempted to "try out" a new didactic or pedagogical activity in the classroom. Effective use of the potential of active learning methods requires an academic teacher to change his or her teaching "philosophy" (pedagogy) and redefine their role, which is different than classical yet, paradoxically, still crucial in the entire educational process.

The benefits of active learning are attractive enough to be convincing to almost every

teacher, yet this pedagogical approach faces obvious challenges for both stakeholders in the learning process. Students may lack or possess insufficient skills that are prerequisite for active learning. These may include teamwork skills, self-regulation, proactivity etc. **Students who lack these skills need support from the lecturer, especially their talent for organising the process in a way that enables the student to find and select information, pose questions vital to knowledge construction, discuss, argue, act and cooperate in a team context.**

Furthermore, under the active learning approach students are expected to be accountable for their learning process and results. This, in turn, requires disciplined class attendance, keeping commitments and deadlines, producing and improving evidence of their learning and so on. This pedagogy undoubtedly necessitates a more

intense learning effort compared to passively receiving content in the transmissionist mode. Here again comes the key role of the lecturer as a facilitator: a person who inspires student empowerment, infects students with their passion and sustains their motivation for growth at an optimal level.

A useful taxonomy of academic teacher roles in the learning process is presented by means of the seven-role model, which integrates Bloom's taxonomy with the instructional model of teaching. The latter describes the structure and sequence of teaching in 5 phases [engaging, exploring, explaining, developing, assessing] approaching learning in a non-linear way, as successive waves of

Students who lack these skills need support from the lecturer, especially their talent for organising the process in a way that enables the student to find and select information, pose questions vital to knowledge construction, discuss, argue, act and cooperate in a team context.



consolidation of new with old knowledge to create new insights and concepts (Kudryashova et al., 2016).

The teacher roles understood this way are the following:

1. **motivator** – engages students and stimulates motivational processes,
2. **authority** – presents developed theories, concepts or models to students,
3. **controller** – monitors the results achieved and their progress,
4. **trainer** – offers training in the practical application of acquired knowledge and skills,

5. **moderator** – moderates the course of learning and the processes that influence the results achieved,
6. **facilitator** – facilitates the application of students' learning gains in new situations and to latest problems,
7. **leader** – stimulates students' in-depth reflection on the results achieved and progress.

Taking up the above roles by a teacher at a particular point in time, along with an adequate teaching strategy and methods of active learning should contribute significantly to both high learning outcomes and valuable interactions between academic teachers and students, inspiring further growth of both stakeholders.



2.

**Selected
Engaging
Methods
in the Learning
Process**



Active teaching methods can be divided depending on the approach and teaching strategies they represent. Teaching practice often relies on pragmatic ways of ordering active teaching methods: from simplex to complex; from individual to group-based; from less activating to more activating etc. In what follows, we outline a typology based on educational approach adopted.

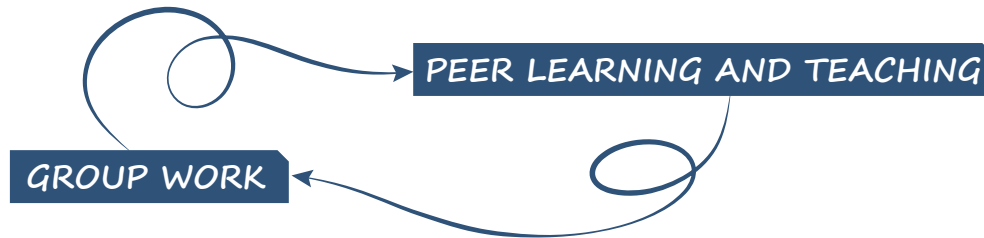


2.1.

Collaborative learning

...assessment and feedback on group and peer activities is essential to help students improve their collaborative and teaching skills.

This educational approach emphasises group work and student interaction. The aim is to enrich students' educational experiences by rooting the process in two strategies: a) group work, b) peer learning and teaching.



1) Group work:

Group work involves students working together in small groups to achieve a common goal. This can take many forms, such as group projects, problem-solving tasks or discussions. The most important aspects of group work include:

- a) **shared accountability:**
in group work, students share responsibility for completing a task or project. This encourages them to rely on each other's knowledge, experience and strengths;
- b) **diverse perspectives:**
working in groups allows students to present their unique perspectives and ideas. This diversity can lead to more creative solutions and a deeper understanding of the topic;
- c) **collaborative skills:**
students develop important collaborative skills, including communication, teamwork, conflict management and dispute resolution, which are valuable both in an academic context and in the real world;
- d) **social learning:**
working in groups can be socially rewarding and foster a sense of community within the occupational group, which can increase the motivation and commitment of group members.



2) Peer learning and teaching:

Peer tutoring is a specific form of collaborative learning in which students take on the role of teachers and explain content to their classmates. This approach can take many forms, such as group presentations, study groups and peer tutoring. Key aspects of peer tutoring include:

- a) **learning empowerment:**
when students teach their classmates, they must first thoroughly understand the material, which enhances their own comprehension of the subject;
- b) **active involvement:**
peer teaching leads to increased involvement of both teachers and students, with the direct benefit of a deeper understanding of the content;
- c) **lowered teacher dependence:**
peer teaching can reduce students' dependence on the academic teacher for explanations, as they can turn directly to their peers for help;
- d) **greater self-confidence:**
teaching others can increase students' self-confidence in their own knowledge and communication skills.



Both group work and peer teaching are effective in promoting collaborative learning and enhancing students' understanding of the material. However, they may require careful planning and preparation of guidance by a teacher to ensure that learning objectives are met, that all students are actively involved and that they contribute to the success of the group. In addition, assessment and feedback on group and peer activities is essential to help students improve their collaborative and teaching skills.

The aim of problem-based learning (PBL) is to encourage students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills...

2.2.

Problem-based learning

The aim of problem-based learning (PBL) is to encourage students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which simultaneously leads to gaining a deeper understanding of the subject. Problem-Based Learning is characterised by the following qualities:

- a) **working on real-world problems:** students are presented with a real-world problem or a complex, open-ended scenario that is often based on a real-life situation. The problem should relate more or less directly to the subject of the class;
- b) **brainstorming and exploration:** group work begins with students' brainstorming and discussing what they already know about the problem. This allows them to identify key issues, potential solutions and gaps in their knowledge;
- c) **self-directed learning:** when students encounter gaps in knowledge or are challenged by a problem, they are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning. This involves researching, reading and acquiring new information to better understand the problem;
- d) **regular meetings and discussions:** students meet regularly to share their findings and discuss progress. Classes are often scaffolded by a teacher who is responsible for the process and feedback;



e) critical thinking and problem solving:

throughout the process, students are encouraged to think critically, analyse information and evaluate potential solutions. This empowers their problem-solving skills;

f) knowledge consolidation:

PBL encourages consolidating knowledge from diverse sources and disciplines. Students often discover that problem solving requires a multidisciplinary approach;

g) presenting learning solutions:

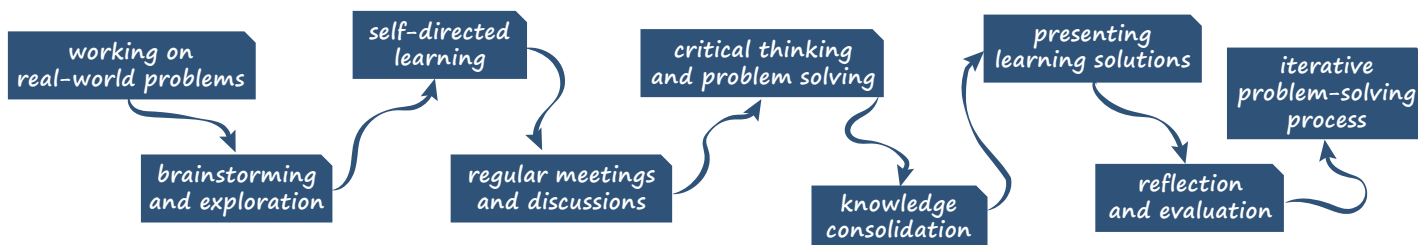
after thoroughly researching and analysing the problem, the groups present their solutions to the whole class. These presentations promote communication and critical thinking skills;

h) reflection and evaluation:

after the presentations, students analyse their learning experience from different perspectives. They can thus evaluate the effectiveness of their solutions and discuss what they have learned. Assessment methods may include self-assessment, peer assessment and assessment by an academic teacher.

i) iterative problem-solving process:

in problem-based learning, students are repeatedly confronted with a variety of problems of varying difficulty. This allows them to continuously enhance their problem-solving skills and apply their knowledge to consequent challenges.



...students engage in long-term projects...

...effective project-based learning requires careful planning, guidance from the teachers and a supportive learning environment.

2.3.

Project-based learning

A distinctive feature of this approach to teaching and learning is that **students engage in long-term projects**, adding to a deeper understanding of the project's subject matter. The implementation of a long-term project extends the time for active learning, critical thinking, problem solving and application of knowledge in real-world contexts. Key features and advantages of project-based learning include:

a) situatedness (embedding in the real-world context):

the learning process involves projects that reflect real-world challenges and scenarios. This helps students realise how to practically apply what they are learning and encourages them to take a more active role in their education;

b) interdisciplinary learning:

projects often require students to consolidate knowledge and skills from multiple subject areas. This promotes an integrated approach to learning and helps students make connections between different areas of knowledge;

c) inquiry and research:

students are encouraged to ask questions, conduct research and explore topics in an advanced way. This fosters curiosity and a desire to find out more;

d) problem solving:

projects usually involve complex problems or challenges that students have to deal with. This helps develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities.



However, it should be noted that **effective project-based learning requires careful planning, guidance from the teachers and a supportive learning environment**. Teachers play a significant role in facilitating the process, providing resources and offering guidance when students work on projects.



...active student engagement and critical thinking.

Inquiry-based learning is widely recognised for its effectiveness in promoting deep understanding, critical thinking, problem-solving and lifelong learning skills.

2.4.

Inquiry-based learning

This educational approach puts a strong emphasis on **active student engagement and critical thinking**. Students take on the role of inquisitive learners who ask questions and conduct research to explore issues, often leading to deeper insight and understanding. Key principles and elements of inquiry-based learning (IBL) include:

a) **asking questions:**

students are encouraged to ask questions on a specific topic. These questions can range from general explorations to specific ones. The process of formulating questions helps students develop their curiosity and critical thinking skills;

b) **research and investigation:**

Students actively seek answers to their questions through research and data investigation. This may include reading books, articles, conducting experiments, interviews or using other methods of inquiry;

c) **problem-solving:**

subject to inquiry are often authentic problems that students have to solve through their research. This not only makes learning more relevant, but also helps students develop the skills to solve problems they encounter;

d) **autonomy:**

students have a considerable degree of autonomy. They are responsible for deciding what questions to ask, how to investigate and how to present their findings. This promotes a sense of accountability and learning autonomy.



e) critical thinking:

inquiry-based learning develops critical thinking skills as students evaluate information they gather, take different perspectives and make informed judgements.

f) collaboration:

although IBL is often seen as individual activity, it can also involve collaborative learning. Students can work together to explore topics, share insights and seek answers to questions together.

g) reflection:

an essential element of inquiry-based learning is regular reflection on the process and learning outcomes. Students reflect on what they have learned, how they have learned it and how they can apply this knowledge in other contexts.

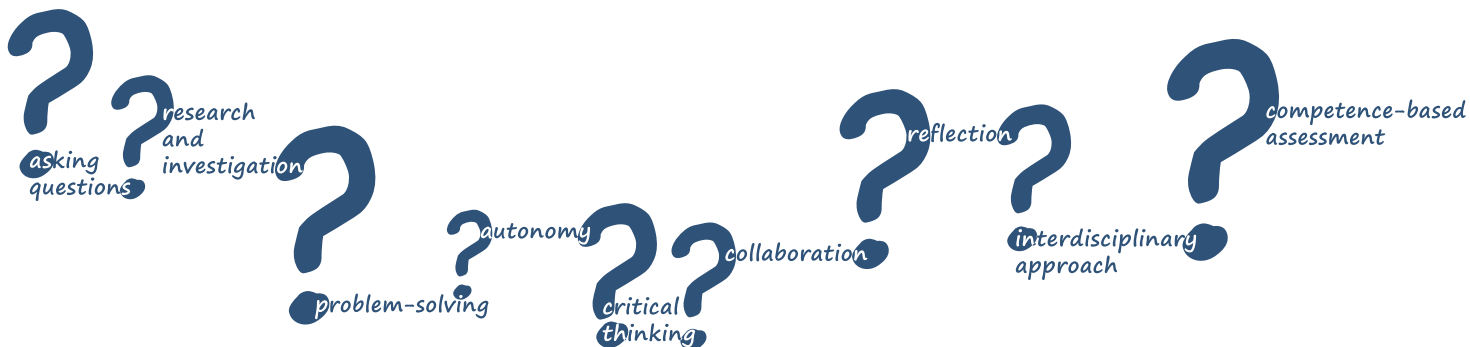
h) interdisciplinary approach:

in inquiry-based learning, the boundaries between subject areas are often blurred, resulting in the exploration of topics from different perspectives and the integration of knowledge from different fields.

i) competence-based assessment:

inquiry-based learning also focuses on assessing students' ability to ask meaningful questions, conduct research and apply their own findings to real-life situations, rather than just memorising facts.

Inquiry-based learning is widely recognised for its effectiveness in promoting deep understanding, critical thinking, problem-solving and lifelong learning skills. It can be applied across educational levels and subject areas. It is particularly valuable in developing a passion for learning and a sense of curiosity in students.



...pre-class preparation allows students to gain basic knowledge of the subject matter.

...a way to promote active learning, critical thinking and deeper understanding of the material.

2.5.

Flipped classroom

This teaching approach involves a reversal of the traditional classroom model. In the flipped classroom, lecturers provide students with instructional materials, such as video lectures, readings or other resources, which they can familiarise themselves with before coming to class. This **pre-class preparation allows students to gain basic knowledge of the subject matter**. Key flipped classroom aspects include:

a) preparation for classes:

lecturers create or supervise the selection of materials, ensuring that they are useful, interesting and varied in form. These materials, prepared in this way, are made available to students in advance, which allows them to prepare well before classes.

b) class activity:

the learning process is built on student activity, discussion and application of concepts discussed in the materials provided before class. This can range from group discussions, problem-solving exercises, debates, case studies or practical exercises.

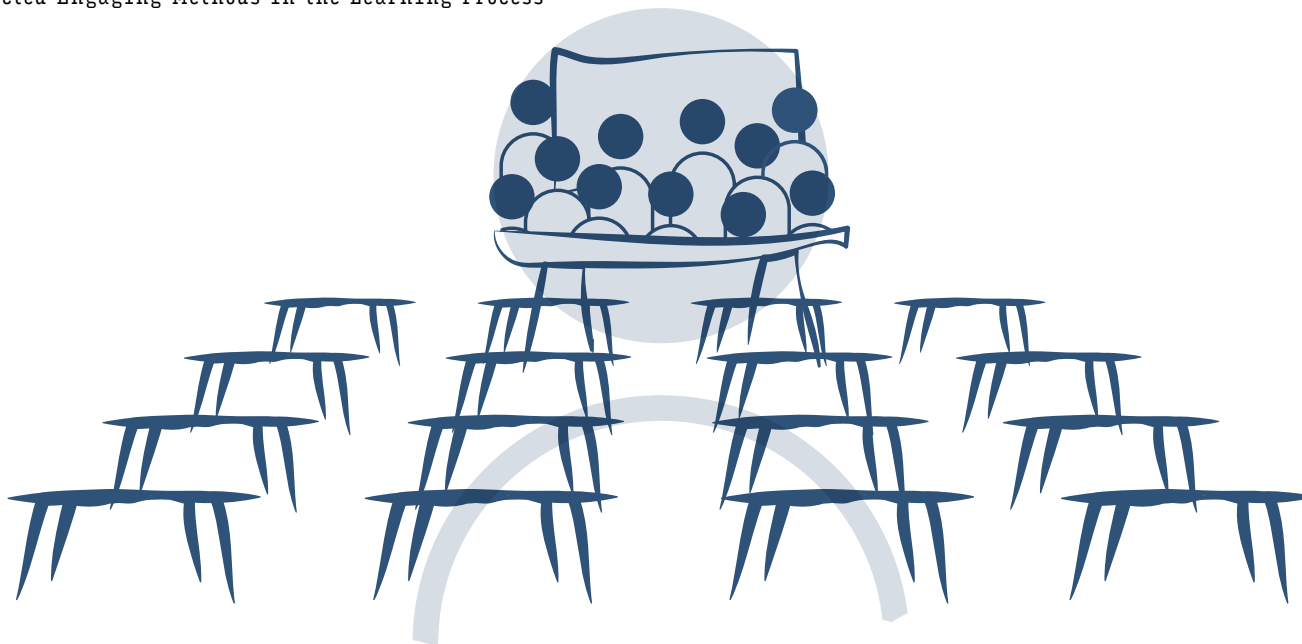
c) student-centred learning:

the flipped classroom approach emphasises student engagement and participation. Lecturers only act as facilitators and guides, helping students apply what they have learned and clarifying any doubts or questions that may arise.

d) learning individualisation:

students are able to review material prepared prior to class at their own pace, making it easier for them to assimilate the content. This can be particularly beneficial for students with different learning styles and tempos.





e) **assessment and feedback:**

teachers can use formative assessment and feedback in-class to check students' understanding and adjust teaching styles accordingly. This can help identify areas that may need further support.

The flipped classroom model is often seen as **a way to promote active learning, critical thinking and deeper understanding of the material**. It can also be effective in promoting independent learning and creating a more interactive and engaging environment in a practice group, conversation group and the like.



2.6.

Case-study based learning

...a student-centred approach that promotes active learning and critical thinking.

This teaching method encourages students to apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills to real or hypothetical situations. It is **a student-centred approach that promotes active learning and critical thinking**. Case-based learning is characterised by the following elements:

a) case selection:

teachers select appropriate and engaging cases for students to analyse. These cases can be real-life scenarios, fictional situations or hypothetical problems. Most importantly, the cases should be rich in content and complexity, providing students with a platform to explore various aspects of the issue being addressed.

b) preparation:

students are provided with case materials, which may include written narratives, films, documents or relevant information in any form. Many times these materials are presented to

students in advance, and students are asked to review and study them before coming to class.

c) discussion:

students take part in class discussions on a given issue. The discussions can be led by the lecturer or a selected student. During the process, students are encouraged to share their insights, different views of the cases presented and workable solutions. The process promotes active participation and critical thinking.



d) knowledge application:

when students discuss a case, they are encouraged to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained in-class to the practical problems presented in the case. This helps bridge the gap between theoretical conceptions and real-world situations.

e) problem solving:

students work together to analyse a case and develop solutions or recommendations. They can explore a range of solutions, weigh up the pros and cons and make decisions based on the rationale or evidence provided.

f) feedback and evaluation:

the analyses and solutions made by the students are subject to evaluation and feedback. Feedback and evaluation can come from both the lecturer and the students themselves. This helps students to improve their problem-solving skills and encourages continuous improvement.

g) reflection:

case-based learning often includes a reflective element, during which students reflect on what they have learned from the case and how this can be applied to other situations. This self-assessment helps to consolidate the learning process.



...a valuable approach to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application...

2.7.

Simulation-based learning

Students take part in realistic simulations reflecting vital problems in the field of study. This method is characterised by the following elements:

- a) **realistic scenarios:** simulations reproduce authentic situations that students may encounter in their future careers. These scenarios often involve complex problems and challenges, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.
- b) **practical learning:** students actively participate in these simulations of professional conduct in various professional situations. This type of experience helps them develop practical skills.
- c) **safe environment:** simulations offer students a safe and risk-free environment in which they can make mistakes, learn from them and improve their skills. This can be particularly important in areas where mistakes can have dire consequences, such as psychological interventions.
- d) **active engagement:** simulation-based learning encourages active engagement and participation, promoting a deeper understanding of the topic. During simulations, students have to make decisions, solve problems and adapt to changing circumstances.

e) immediate feedback:

simulations often provide immediate feedback, allowing students to evaluate their performance and make corrections in real time. This feedback loop helps students improve their decision-making skills.

f) interdisciplinary learning:

simulations can be designed to span different disciplines, promoting interdisciplinary learning. For example, a business simulation may require students to use financial, marketing and strategic management concepts simultaneously.

g) adaptability:

simulations can be adapted to different learning levels, from basic to advanced, making them suitable for a wide range of students and skill levels.

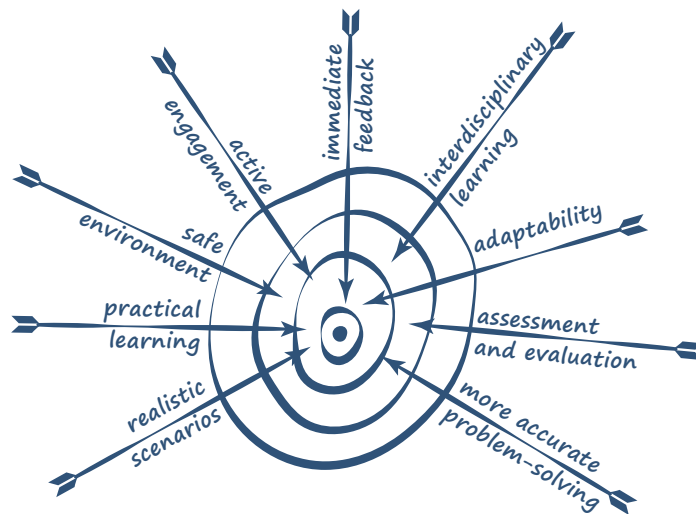
h) assessment and evaluation:

teachers can use simulations as tools to assess students' skills and also to identify areas for improvement.

i) more accurate problem-solving:

by repeatedly facing complex challenges in simulations, students develop problem-solving skills and make informed decisions under pressure factors.

Simulation-based learning is becoming increasingly popular in various academic fields. For example, in health education, medical students can practise surgical procedures in virtual environments, and in business education, they can take part in business strategy simulations. Overall, this is a valuable approach to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, preparing students for the complexities of their future careers.



2.8.

Role-playing and educational games

These are tools that intensively promote active engagement, critical thinking, problem solving and experiential learning. Their characteristic elements include:

1. Role-playing in education:

- a) **critical thinking:** role-playing encourages students to think critically when making decisions and solving problems within their assigned roles.
- b) **empathy and perspective-taking:** allows students to step into the shoes of different characters, promoting empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives. This is valuable for subjects related to human interaction and social issues.
- c) **communication skills:** students need to communicate effectively with their peers, negotiate and persuade in role-play scenarios. This enhances their interpersonal and communication skills.
- d) **creativity and imagination:** role-playing fosters creativity as students have to invent their character's thoughts, actions and dialogues. This can be applied to subjects such as creative writing or storytelling.

2. Games in education:

a) **engagement and motivation:**

educational games are inherently engaging, making learning fun and motivating. They often include elements of competition, rewards and advancement levels to keep students engaged in the learning process.

b) **problem solving:**

games often present challenges that require problem-solving skills. Whether solving puzzles in a maths game, or developing strategies in a historical simulation, students need to think critically in order to progress.

c) **feedback and evaluation:**

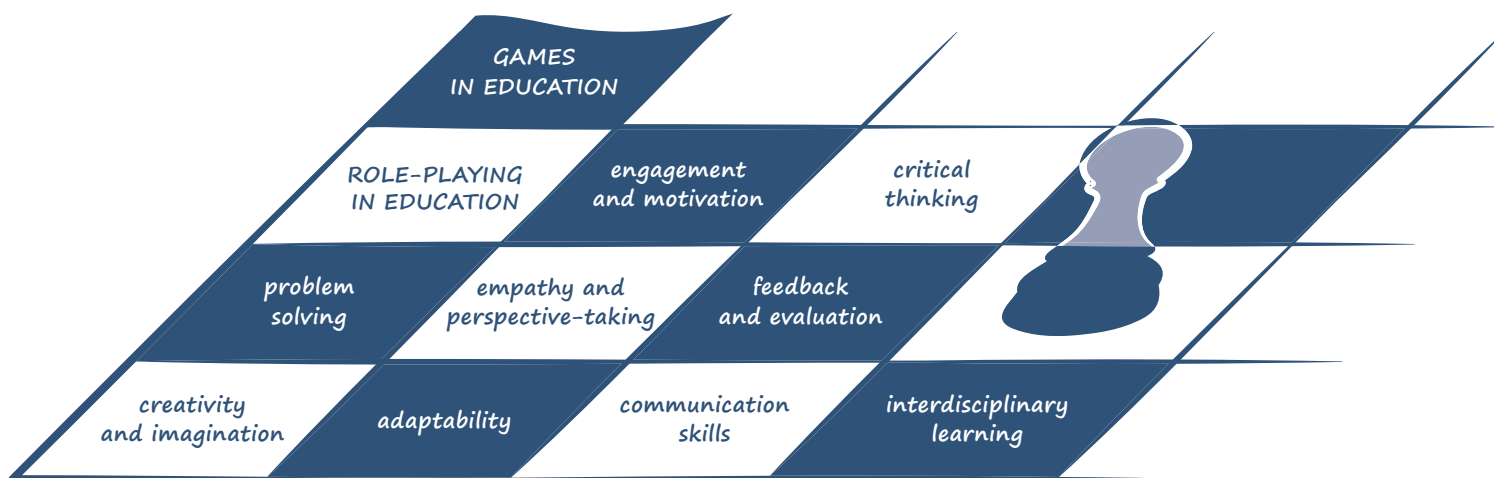
games provide immediate feedback, allowing students to observe the consequences of their actions and learn from their mistakes.

d) **adaptability:**

many learning games can be adapted to the students' proficiency levels. As the level increases, they become more challenging for the students, ensuring that they remain in the zone of proximal development.

e) **interdisciplinary learning:**

games can involve different subjects or fields. For example, a science game may require students to apply mathematical and problem-solving skills, promoting interdisciplinary knowledge.



...learning through direct experience and active engagement...

Ultimately, the aim of experiential learning is to prepare students to confront the real professional world by equipping them not only with knowledge, but also with the ability to apply that knowledge effectively in practical contexts.

2.9.

Experiential learning

This method emphasises **learning through direct experience and active engagement** rather than passive teaching (transmission). It is a method that encourages students to learn by doing and often involves real-world experiences, practical training and hands-on application of knowledge. Here are some key points about experiential learning:

a) **learning by doing:**

experiential learning is based on the idea that individuals learn best when they are actively engaged with the material rather than simply passively receiving information. This can involve a range of activities, from conducting experiments and solving problems to participating in real-world projects.

b) **real-world relevance:**

experiential learning activities are often designed to relate directly to real-world situations. This helps students combine theoretical knowledge with practical applications and gain a deeper understanding of the subject.

c) **active engagement:**

students are actively involved in the learning process. They can work in teams, ask questions, make decisions and reflect on their experiences. Active engagement can lead to a deeper and more lasting understanding of the material.

d) **reflection:**

is key to experiential learning. After engaging in an activity, students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, analyse what they have learned and consider how they can apply their knowledge.



e) variety of experiences:

experiential learning can take many forms, including internships, collaborative programmes, fieldwork, laboratory experiments, simulations, service learning, internships and others. The specific format may vary depending on the educational context and objectives.

f) skills growth:

in addition to subject knowledge, experiential learning often helps students develop strategic skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication and teamwork.

g) constructivist learning theory:

experiential learning is in line with constructivist learning theories, which suggest that individuals actively construct knowledge based on their previous experiences and interactions with their environment.

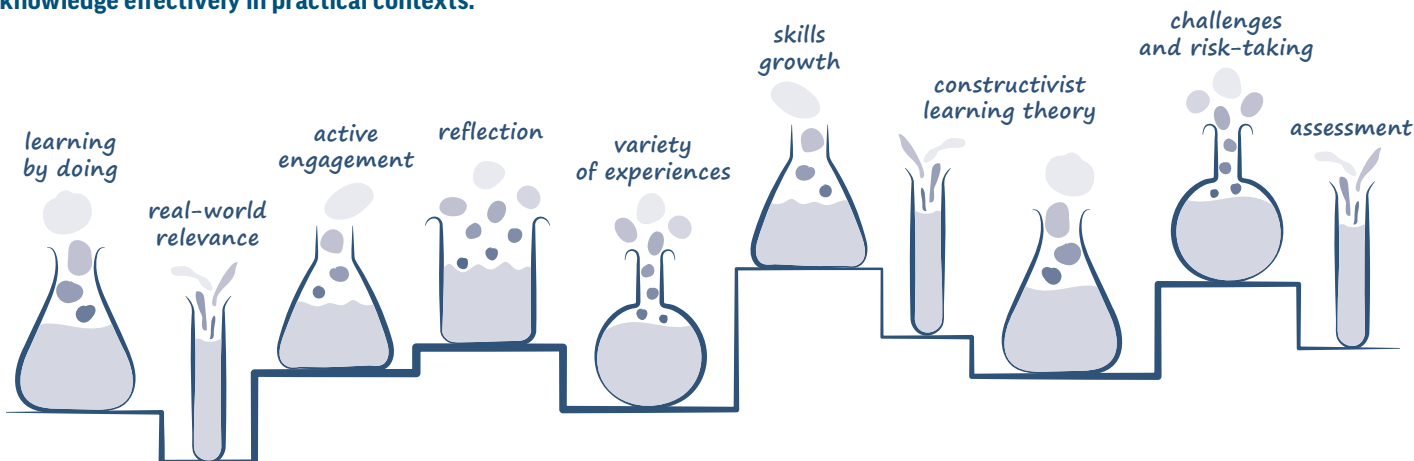
h) challenges and risk-taking:

experiential learning can involve challenges and risk-taking as students engage in activities with real consequences. This can foster personal development including adaptability to different circumstances.

i) assessment:

assessment of experiential learning can be more complex than traditional teaching. It often involves a combination of self-assessment, peer and lecturer assessment, as well as an assessment of the quality of the experience itself.

Experiential learning is used in a variety of educational settings. It is particularly widespread in fields that require practical skills and knowledge application, such as science, engineering, business and healthcare. **Ultimately, the aim of experiential learning is to prepare students to confront the real professional world by equipping them not only with knowledge, but also with the ability to apply that knowledge effectively in practical contexts.**



...reflective learning is a powerful educational strategy that enables students to take control of their own learning.

2.10.

Reflective learning

This educational method encourages students to think critically about their learning experiences, both in and out of the classroom context. This process of self-reflection promotes self-awareness, self-enhancement and deeper understanding of the educational content. Here are some key points to consider in relation to reflective learning:

a) self-awareness:

reflective learning encourages students to become more self-aware. They learn to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, learning preferences and areas for improvement. Self-awareness can be a powerful tool for their education and life.

b) critical thinking:

reflective learning encourages critical thinking. Students are encouraged to analyse and evaluate their experiences, which can lead to a deeper understanding of the subject and the learning process itself. It is not just about memorising facts, but to the authentic comprehension of these facts.

c) continuous enhancement:

the main goal of reflective learning is to encourage growth. By identifying what works and what does not work in their learning strategies, students can make the necessary changes to enhance their academic performance. This iterative process of self-enhancement is a valuable skill in academic settings and real-world situations.

d) metacognition:

reflective learning promotes metacognition: reflection on one's cognitive acts. Students learn to monitor their cognitive processes, identify areas where they need more learning effort and better planning of their learning strategies.



e) greater engagement:

when students are actively involved in reflecting on their learning experiences, they are more engaged in their learning. They are not just passive containers of knowledge, but active participants in constructing and pursuing their own learning trajectories.

f) different tools and techniques:

reflective learning can take many forms, like diary keeping, self-assessment quizzes or creative work techniques. Different students may use alternative methods that are more effective when diverse educational styles are applied.

g) real world application:

the skills developed through reflective learning are not limited to the university space. Self-awareness, critical thinking and commitment to continuous enhancement are valuable in career and life situations.

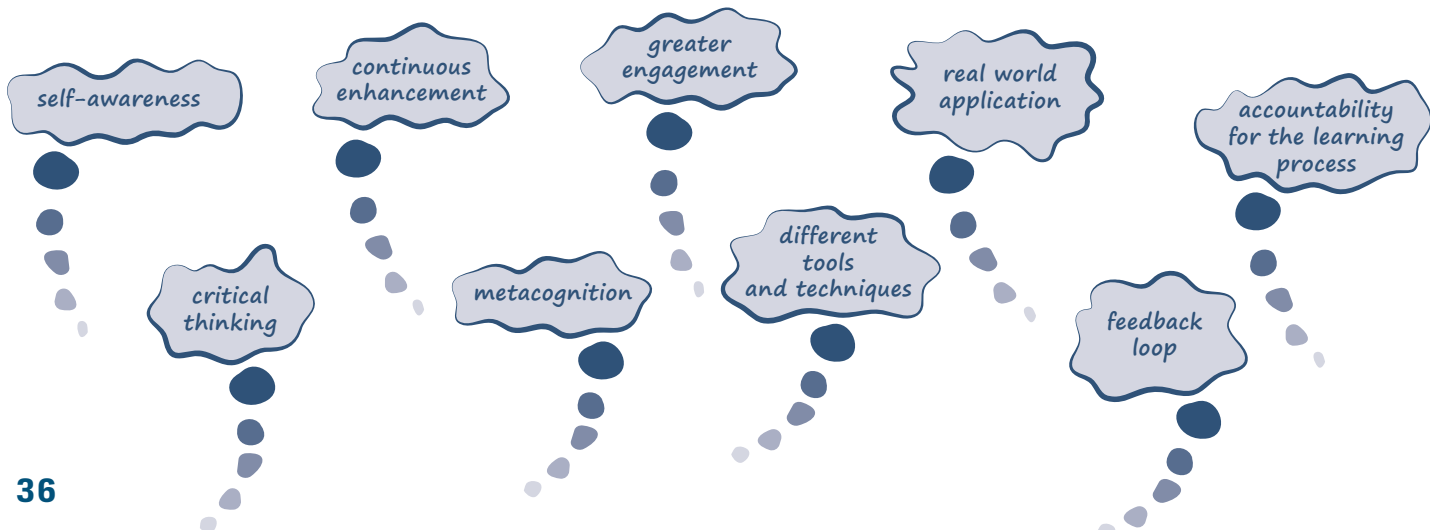
h) feedback loop:

reflective learning often involves seeking feedback from peers, lecturers or mentors. Constructive feedback can provide valuable insights for enhancement, and students learn to accept and use feedback effectively.

i) accountability for the learning process:

by actively reflecting on their learning experiences, students take on ownership of their educational process. They become more responsible for their learning, which can lead to better long-term memorisation and understanding of the material.

In summary, reflective learning is a powerful educational strategy that enables students to take control of their own learning. It is not just about accumulating knowledge; it is about understanding how you learn and how to learn more effectively. This self-awareness and commitment to enhancement are skills that serve students well throughout their academic and professional life.



It is a valuable approach to education that not only benefits communities, but also helps students become more engaged, responsible and informed citizens.

2.11.

Service-learning

In this teaching and learning method/strategy, community service is integrated with academic teaching and reflection to enrich students' learning experiences and foster social/civic responsibility. The approach engages students in structured service activities that address local needs, while developing their academic and problem-solving skills. Key elements of service-learning include:

- a) **community engagement:** service-learning projects aim to address real community needs. Students work with community organisations and their members to identify, plan and implement projects that benefit a community.
- b) **academic integration:** service learning is not just about volunteering; it combines academic content and learning objectives with service experience. Students are encouraged to apply what they learn in class to service work, which deepens their understanding of the subject matter.
- c) **reflection:** critical reflection is an essential element of service learning. Students are encouraged to reflect deeply on their experiences of service, academic learning and the connections between the two. This reflection offers a deeper understanding of the social issues they are dealing with, also in the context of their own personal development.
- d) **reciprocity:** learning through service should work both ways. Students contribute their time and skills to the community while gaining valuable insights and experience. It is a mutually beneficial partnership.



e) civic responsibility:

service learning fosters the development of civic responsibility and social awareness. Students become more aware of social issues and are encouraged to be active citizens who can make a positive impact on society.

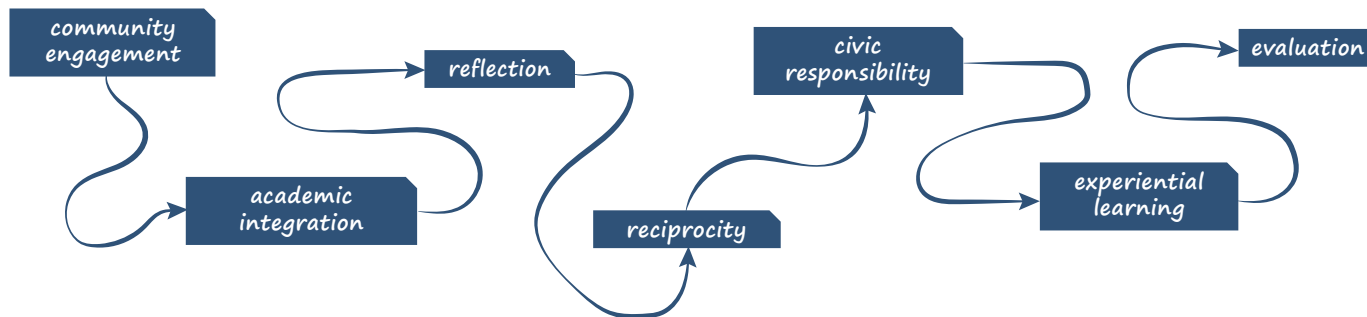
f) experiential learning:

through direct involvement in community projects, students gain practical experience that complements their theoretical knowledge. Experiential learning can be a powerful tool for personal and professional development.

g) evaluation:

service-learning programmes often include evaluation measures to assess the impact of the service on the community, as well as the educational outcomes of students. This evaluation helps improve the quality of the service-learning experience.

Service learning can take many forms from short-term projects to long-term commitments, and can be integrated into a variety of academic disciplines. **It is a valuable approach to education that not only benefits communities, but also helps students become more engaged, responsible and informed citizens.**



3.

**Debate as
a method
in academic
education**





Academic didactics proposes problem-solving methods that have a universal dimension, are based on factual argumentation and are not limited to the mere acquisition of information.



The acquisition of academic knowledge is not just about gathering as much information as possible, but above all about developing problem solving methods. With the current advances in technology, detailed knowledge of the world is growing to a size that is difficult/impossible for humans to grasp (over the course of life). Therefore, highly specialised tools for processing and storing knowledge are being developed, and their role in knowledge accumulation and use in the academia and on the market are becoming a central civilisation theme. These tools, assisting creative processes, often suggest solutions to scientific problems. Based on network resources, they create independent material with a scientific background, which is difficult to verify outside the network. Therefore, people are increasingly overwhelmed by vast amounts of information which is difficult to confirm as certain or true. Not to lose touch with reality and to cope with the demands of scientific knowledge, researchers need a method to improve cognitive processes and to rationally justify the solutions obtained. To this end, academic didactics proposes problem-solving methods that have a universal dimension, are based on factual argumentation and are not limited to the mere acquisition of information.

The use of such methods requires learning to discover the reasons and principles that underly facts, phenomena or processes under investigation. Most of these are not obvious and require considerable research effort, which most generally consists of developing mechanisms for formulating justifying reasons in the form of arguments. This requires both an appropriate cognitive orientation and theoretical preparation, as well as a properly directed

volitional commitment. All these elements need to be developed to the highest possible degree in order to attain an appropriate level of academic knowledge and acquire the skills to apply it in future professional work. It follows, thus, that the acquisition of knowledge is unique and individualised.

Before the students reach the level of conclusion-making, they must develop their critical view of the world. A method that supports the development of such skills is debate: a discussion-based learning method involving the argumentative resolution of a problem formulated in the topic (thesis, case).

The teaching process, especially at the first-degree (BA) level, is characterised by a high degree of persuasiveness due to propaedeutic reasons. Students mainly accept the knowledge they are provided, and this attitude is often considered sufficient. Mastery of basic knowledge within the framework of a university course is regarded as sufficient for graduation. However, the real verification of knowledge and skills takes place on the labour market. Employers often complain about the level of job preparation of young employees (graduates). Therefore, all didactic methods enhancing student engagement constitute a special kind of assistance in building an attitude of openness to challenges and self-enhancement. **Stimulating developmental processes in academic education requires reliance on engagement methods which often stay in creative interaction.** The debate can be a key advantage in this educational context.



3.1.

From dialogue to debate and back

Discussion (Latin *discussio*) etymologically refers to the deliberation, settlement or consideration of a matter or issue, formulated in the form of a problem.

Academic didactics essentially relies on two major methods: lecture and dialogue. The first form is communicatively unilaterally oriented and consists in the transmission of content in the form of a lecture concerning theoretical content in a given subject, the acquisition of which is usually verified by an examination. Dialogue, on the other hand, is an exploratory interaction through language interaction. Dialogue is thus an educational format which allows for several types of interaction, such as conversation classes, exercises or workshops. At the same time, dialogue as an educational format offers multiple ways of exploiting its dialogical potential. A particularly valuable way of realising the communicative function of dialogue is discussion. In this dialogical format, there is an oral or written exchange of ideas between participants who most often represent diverse positions on the issue under discussion. Discussion (Latin *discussio*) etymologically refers to the deliberation, settlement or consideration of a matter or issue, formulated in the form of a problem. For this reason, the aporetic nature of debate

and its main focus on a solution to a problem are paramount for the method¹.

However, not every debate ends in the resolution of a problem. It is possible to discuss the development of a common position on a given issue, the resolution of a dispute, equivalent (non-ambiguous) understanding of statements or the development of rules of action. This is done through the argumentative justification of arguments, the value of which is verified by refuting opposing arguments and formulating counter-arguments. Debates offer an advantage of looking at the problem from many angles simultaneously, which is made possible by the use of arguments for and against. It provides an opportunity to improve standards of critical thinking through argument cross-examination and exchange. Nevertheless, **a prerequisite for effective debate is an attitude of openness to different views and positions, which only reveal their weaknesses and shortcomings in the course of discussion.**

Therefore, it is not so much the degree of involvement of the participants that determines the value of the discussion, but above all the degree of their preparation for a sound argument juxtaposition.

Various conversational forms of a practical-didactic nature are helpful in conducting a structured debate. The ancient thinkers were already aware of this. Socrates taught dialectics as a method of debunking false arguments and formulating true conclusions. Aristotle, on the other hand, introduced a type of didactic debate that aimed to exercise precise use of language, improve argument building and developing defence against eristic tricks. These traditions have been taken over in modern times by various formats of debate, with one of the oldest (dating back to the early 19th century) called the Oxford debate. The practical and didactic objectives behind this form of debating stays in tune with the ancient prototypes. The Oxford-style debate has a formal course of procedure and a fairly often adopted tournament (contest) format. Debating in this format creates an excellent didactic tool for both the honing of public speaking and discussion skills, trained in the context of topical and vital cases. Therefore, it can successfully be implemented at schools to improve the communication skills of emerging adults, and to prepare them for civic participation in social discourse.

A crucial step in using debate as an educational method is to determine its purpose and then, to pick an appropriate form of debate. Any form can be an interesting problem-solving exercise. However, from the educational perspective, we can distinguish between two forms of debate, the rules of which are determined by the desired educational outcome.

1. If the discussion aims at a collaborative resolution, then we need a discursive form of cooperation, in which the cognitive

efforts of each participant are aimed at solving the problem and justifying the claims. In this respect, the debates takes on the rules of co-participation in discovering and justifying the solutions posed.

2. On the other hand, if the aim of the discussion is to justify one of the positions under consideration, then the debate takes the form of an argument. The unequal probability of judgments and arguments in communication naturally leads to discussions, disputes and polemics. In such cases, discussion takes the polemical form, and its structural arrangement is that of debate.

A characteristic accompanying debates is the audience that evaluates the debate, which can include both the expert (judge) panel and all passive participants in the debate (e.g. the practice group). Evaluation in a debate is not intended to value attitudes and does not allow for the subjective opinions of the participants. In a debate, participants should be told to go beyond their own feelings on the issue under discussion. They should concentrate on the correct reading of the topic



(thesis) by identifying the main axis of the argument and on the argumentative correctness of the statements made. This is accompanied by diverse types of evaluation criteria codified most often in the form of debate evaluation sheets. They allow for an objective verification of the course of the debate and a formal evaluation of its individual participants. The teacher naturally assumes the role of the judge as an authority and expert in the conduct of the discussion. This requires relevant experience and the development of the judge's attitude as a mentor, who should inspire respect and trust in the debaters, giving at the same time a guarantee of a fair and substantive verdict. The judge is expected not only to analyse diligently the argumentative material presented in the context of the thesis, but also to justify in depth the rationale behind the verdict. As the evaluation criteria are a determinant for the improvement of specific competences, this is of vital importance for the formation of debating skills in the participants.

The aspect of involving young people in the debate is also noteworthy. Without this involvement, the desired effects of the method used cannot be achieved. The issue is not clear-cut and requires

...young people are characterised by a unique emotionality, accompanied by a need to compete and a desire to win.

Therefore, engaging and activating educational approaches present an exceptional educational value. Thanks to them it is possible to acquire knowledge, improve the ability to discover and justify it and, at the same time, experience the entire process in the emotional tension of competition, which affects the formation of social relations. Debate can be such a method in the academic context, which enables students to be effectively involved in the didactic process of knowledge construction, skill acquisition and building social attitudes.

reflection not only on a methodological level, but also on a cultural level. The regular functioning of young people in the area of social media causes a change in their communicative attitudes. The result is an attitude of withdrawal from the public sphere and the formation of isolated groups focusing on various forms of communicative activity. Therefore, in the didactic process, students are increasingly adopting the attitude of passive recipients of content. The final examination remains an activating factor, provided, however, that it is an oral examination. Meanwhile, the currently dominant form of examination is the written exam, so the student's verbal activity often remains undisclosed. A noteworthy effect in this respect is the fear of public speaking (*glossophobia*), increasingly prevalent among young people.

Overcoming social trends will not take place without the use of engaging didactic methods. However, they must be relevant to the developmental conditions of young people and be activating in nature. Emotional engagement is a principal element in this context. Aristotle emphasised that young people are characterised by a unique emotionality, accompanied by a need to compete and a desire to win.



This predilection can help not only in sporting competitions, but also in the social realm (social attitudes), let alone its potential in stimulating intellectual development. Indeed, factors of emotional intelligence have a significant impact on motivation and academic achievement. The value of emotional involvement in educational processes and its importance for the development of social competences is increasingly being pointed out. Therefore, engaging and activating educational approaches present

an exceptional educational value. Thanks to them it is possible to acquire knowledge, improve the ability to discover and justify it and, at the same time, experience the entire process in the emotional tension of competition, which affects the formation of social relations. Debate can be such a method in the academic context, which enables students to be effectively involved in the didactic process of knowledge construction, skill acquisition and building social attitudes.

3.2.

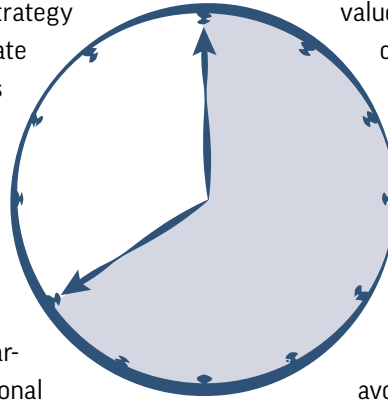
Debate in academic education

From the perspective of the academic teaching practice, debate may seem difficult to implement. Setting aside 40 minutes of class time for an in-depth discussion, which is supposed to cover only a fragment of the curriculum content to be delivered in the semester, may be a disincentive for the academic teacher. However, one has to wonder, is knowledge just an accumulation of information? After all, more and more perfect technological tools for gathering information are being developed. At the same time, the information received cannot always be verified effectively. Therefore, in the age of information technology, a young person is much more in need of tools to help verify knowledge than to merely accumulate it. For this reason, exercises and workshops should work with methods that improve critical thinking and match them with lecture content. Thus debates – however long they take – can improve knowledge management skills, which is worth much time and effort. That a student comprehends the topic of the debate in a meticulous fashion requires at least some research on their part.

A particularly beneficial educational element is to draw sides of an argument before the debate. This makes the preparation for the debate more comprehensive and allows one to see the strengths and weaknesses of the discussion problem posed in the topic. This is because it requires the ability to argue from any position – for or against the thesis. This makes uncritical attitudes more flexible and gives a diversified view on many issues linked to the issue at hand. At the same time, the participants in the debate can develop an attitude of openness to other positions, which marks the essence of why building dialogue is necessary in the public sphere.

Preparing for a 40-minute discussion on a given topic requires several hours of individual and team work. The main stages of such work are twofold: the collection of material on a given topic (mainly as individual work) and the development of strategies for discussion (as team work). In both, there is a focus on finding factual arguments to justify or refute the main claim. This stage

of work is the most important from the perspective of the debate itself, as the substantive content of the arguments determines the final outcome of the debate. The team's strategy is also conditioned by this factor since in the statements of each of the debate participants we can discover hints towards justification or rebuttal of the main claim. However, in order for the strategy to be properly revealed and presented, adequate rhetorical training is needed, which influences the structuring of statements and non-verbal communication. The rhetorical aspect mainly concerns the art of making speeches and answering questions, which influences the overcoming of fears and anxieties related to public speaking. If all these factors are underpinned by the emotional involvement of the participants in the debate, we can achieve exceptional results in terms of the implementation of the didactic process with a special focus on the level of knowledge gained.



The art of argumentation lies at the heart of debate and constitutes its main educational advantage. Every claim must be substantiated by carefully selected and correctly formulated arguments. However, it is not about the technical skill of arguing, but about submitting factual statements that justify a particular issue arising from the problem contained in the thesis. Only then do we actually have some knowledge when we are able to justify it. Therefore, the intellectual effort put into justification allows us to obtain proven knowledge in a given area and shapes our ability to solve problems independently. **Argumentation schemes in debate do not constitute complex intellectual operations, but they do require precise use of terms and distinguishing between the substance of the case and the context around it.** These two

aspects of argumentation in debate are of particular help in the acquisition of subject matter knowledge.

Rhetorical arguments are to be distinguished from evidence in the scientific sense, as they have a differentiated justificatory value and interact with the audience through different channels. Emotional argumentation (*pathos*) is constructed differently from rational argumentation (*logos*). At the same time, this affects the effectiveness of the messages, as well as the quality of the discourse. Rhetoric deals with plausible arguments and the formulation of structured argumentative statements. In this respect, **it is important to bring factual arguments of the *logos* type to the foreground in the debate, thus** avoiding affective messages and all forms of incorrect methods of justification. The art of argumentation also consists in the ability to unmask eristic tricks. This is an important part of the didactic process, helping to recognise and counteract forms of linguistic manipulation. The acquisition of such skills, which are generally categorised as critical thinking, not only has an effect on the academic discipline taught, but also shapes social attitudes of responsible participation in public discourse.

In this context, it is necessary to clarify the understanding of critical thinking as a skill necessary for the proper conduct of academic didactics, which in its intentions is to prepare competent persons for, for example, research or business management. Critical thinking etymologically refers to the process of judging (thinking), and derives from the Greek word *kritikos*, the meaning of which indicates a judge – an adjudicator in a contentious issue, deciding a given problem against the background of the reasons

pathos

logos

for and against. **Critical thinking, therefore, is a skill that seeks to refine an objective approach to a problem by analysing it and checking the results achieved.** Argumentation plays a key role in the development of critical thinking. This is because a critical attitude manifests itself in accepting only those rationales that have been duly substantiated. Reasoned questioning and confirmation brings one closer to understanding content, while distancing from its informative juxtaposition or emotional reception. This type of justificatory discourse results in a reflective, methodical and non-subjective reference to opposing views.

Critical thinking itself is a kind of skill that consists of a series of intellectual improvements. The art of argumentation brings a number of concrete, methodical indications leading to the acquisition of skills that distinctly characterise *kritikos*. At the level of rational rhetorical argumentation (*logos*) such a task can be successfully pursued.

The probabilistic status of the premises and conclusions of rhetorical argumentation is not an obstacle in this respect. Probability is not in an opposition to truth, but a starting point for the pursuit of truth. The building up of the justification of the argument invoked on the basis of the main point introduced is accomplished by an auxiliary reference to circumstantial motifs. This is because it is emphasised that every argument has its origin in circumstances. Circumstances are: person, deed-event, place, time, manner, cause, opportunity-means. Since circumstances reveal the conditional framework within which each person functions, they can be successfully applied speculatively in argumentation. Equipped with this kind of universal rhetorical technique, the mind addresses each argument in a planned way and is able to efficiently generate the necessary argument. Of course, this can be done at various

levels of sophistication, ranging from one-sentence justifications to overly complex arguments. It is not a schematic process because it requires different causal justifications each time.

The effect of practising and developing this skill is to improve reasoning processes comprehensively. Therefore, critical thinking is most often associated with logic and the formal way of justifying claims. However, from the soft-competence perspective, it encompasses many issues outside logic, e.g. forms of rhetorical and dialectical argumentation that occur at the level of colloquial discourse or that only introduce scientific issues. Applying critical thinking in this way does not only involve the use of unambiguous language and is open to the richness of reality, i.e. qualitative and analogical content. In this way, it connects with the natural language used in everyday interpersonal communication. These areas formed the educational basis of the *artes liberales*, taught at the elementary level (*trivium*) for many centuries. This stage of education has now been neglected at both secondary school and primary academic levels. And although contemporary research on critical thinking moves towards establishing ways of reflecting on thinking processes, the conclusion is an aporetic structure of discursive enquiry. Therefore, the foremost place in it is given to a specific debatable issue to be resolved against the backdrop of the pros and cons presented by the parties to the dispute. Debating is aimed at developing these skills and can help to bridge this educational gap.

The added value of debate in education is that it empowers creative thinking skills. Creative acts represent the perception in a recognised communicative structure of the possibility of its intellectual modification. The essential property of these operations is the ability to formulate constructions, which are carried out by

selecting the criterion of the creative process. It is the moment of noticing the possibility of constructing communicative content, which is distinguished by inventing innovative ways of grasping the systems of sign relations, arising from generally available cognitive data. In this way, a creative thinking process emerges, which is a combination of intellectual construal and decision-making factors, expressed through the formulation of an original criterion for the construction of updated content systems. However, creative processes in debates cannot be limited to subjective content arrangements. It is essential to move from subjectively initiated creative acts to the intersubjective effectiveness of constructed arrangements. The usefulness of these constructions is primarily visible through the forms of argumentation used in the debate. In this context, the argumentative utterance is verified at the level

of the interaction between the speaking debate participant and the evaluating audience.

The intellect improved in this way influences the volitional sphere of debaters, which simultaneously shapes attitudes. **Debating perfects the attitude of openness of the intellect to knowledge-based arguments, strengthening emotional control and the imperative to take care of the methodological-logical as well as cultural aspect of the conversational exchange.** It is worth noting that even at the most basic level, the use of vulgarisms and eristic tricks is categorically excluded, while resorting to *argumentum ad personam* must be condemned. Undoubtedly, such rules build attitudes containing elevated expectations of social discourse.

3.3.

Practical remarks on the application of the debate method

Introducing debate to an academic class needs, first, to be preceded by the appropriate formulation of the topic (thesis). It is therefore primarily conditioned by the field of study and the problems addressed in the given class. Let us remember that the debate is not directed at deepening the students' knowledge of specific theoretical knowledge, but constitutes a method of solving problems in a given subject area. Debate is not a substitute for lectures or classes. Rather, its task is to improve the methods of arranging, clarifying and processing the knowledge acquired. This fact must be confirmed by how the topic is formulated. In the most general terms, it should be stated that **the setting of a topic for a debatable issue is done for the sake of the skills of two-sided argumentation: confirming and justifying; challenging and refuting.** Therefore, the starting point for the topic is the resolution question,

i.e. a correctly formulated statement starting with the question particle "if/whether." Then, an affirmative or negative sentence is formed, which constitutes the actual topic of the debate. The characteristic elements of the topic are the reference points of the disputable issue, among which the dominant role is played by:

- probability-improbability,
- possibility-impossibility,
- appropriateness-inappropriateness,
- usefulness (benefit) – unusefulness (lack of benefit).

The thematic scope of debates is virtually unlimited. In natural sciences, we can find areas for discussion such the validity of scientific assertions or on the value of experiments carried out. There are successful ecological and climate-change debate tournaments,

co-organised by the Polish Academy of Sciences, which are often also attended by academics. Historical, legal, biotechnological or philosophical tournaments are held as well. Debating does not impose restrictions, but it does require preconditions concerning case formulation: special attention should be paid to the technical conditions for expressing the issue in dispute. Therefore, it is important to avoid errors usually resulting from faulty use of language (e.g. terms with a vague scope and unclear content or emotionally tinged words). A precisely formulated topic allows focusing on the substance of the argument, avoiding peripheral problems accompanying the thesis. In addition, the argumentative equivalence of the positions for and against is important. A parallel arrangement of argumentation, in which the interdependent, the options for argument refutation and confirmation coexist, leading to the final agreement as for a justified solution, is at the heart of debating.

Understandably, no academic wants to waste time preparing something unfamiliar or untested. Especially when they need to spend it explaining to students the essence and rules of debating and how argumentation works. In this respect, solutions are needed to help each student learn the basics of debating. This does not require introducing additional classes. Such training in the basics of debating can be carried out quickly and efficiently as part of the activities of student academic clubs, which nowadays often function as debating circles and participate in increasing numbers in the Polish Academic Oxford Debate Championships and other debating tournaments. The popularity for debating is even more prevalent at secondary schools. Debate leagues are being organised (especially in larger academic cities), whose participants then enrol at universities as a natural continuation of the process of developing debating skills. This not only develops the idea of debating schools and universities, but also expands the knowledge of debating principles. From the perspective of

IMPORTANT

Precision in expressing the issue

Lack of emotionally tinged words

Clear content

Argumentative equivalence

using debate as a teaching method, it is not necessary to standardise these rules. **What is important is a general knowledge of the rules and the experience of actively or passively participating in a debate.**

From the didactic perspective, it is important to give debates the status of an academic dispute, the resolution of which is a foretaste of discoveries of a scientific nature. Therefore, the possibilities for using debate in higher education in diverse types of classes are many. It can be a discussion of a chosen problem issue, in which workable solutions are negotiated through debate. A valuable use of debate is when it focuses on the very forms of justification applied, in which critical and creative thinking factors play an crucial role. In this situation, it is important to methodologically orient students to recognise the necessary criteria for the engaging into scientific discourse. Elements of the debate method can also be applied in diploma seminar classes, especially when analysing the thesis topics proposed by students. This is because the scope of the topic must take into account how the topic relates to the content, and how the particular arguments of the thesis follow from its topic. It is also important pinpoint the leading axis of the thesis argument, to indicate possible starting points for the process of confirming or refuting the debatable case.

Debating helps enhance students' skills of participating in social discourse. This is why debating should be practiced also outside the



curricular arrangements like the aforementioned student research circles, where different competition formats and competitive elements are used. The competitive element empowers the affective factor that supports the process of active participation in the debate. Therefore, the debate gains even more value in integrating the academic community.

However, at an advanced level, debate is significantly a prototype of a method for discovering and solving scientific problems. In this case, it is not necessary to stick rigidly to the organisational patterns of debate, but to use its elements independently and creatively for the research work. This can take place according to the following plan:

- to begin with, setting up the problem in question as a case (thesis) that we want to investigate
- then - defining the terms used in the thesis and pointing out the axis of the argument, which clarifies its understanding and indicates what we are arguing for
- then - finding arguments for and against the thesis
- and - to formulate appropriate counter-arguments in their context
- and finally, the presentation of the results of the argumentative research procedure and the drawing of conclusions.

This research procedure can be extended over several classes and serve as a method to help discuss detailed research questions. It can function as a procedure for preparing a student to write a thesis. It is a reference to the classical tradition, still functioning in medieval universities, where the dispute was a method for the written formulation of scientific findings.

Academics working with the debate method emphasise that it is only through its use that they can effectively introduce students to advanced research problems. The debate formula and the involvement of the participants allow them to reach for the kind of arguments that very rarely appear in the routine, curricular functioning of academic education. Repeating established claims after academic textbooks is useless in the debate method, as it does not provide the ability to formulate justifications. Debates are driven by discussions serving to solve a problem marked in the topic. Solving the problem is a paramount educational goal, while debate serves as its tool. This does not mean, of course, that all methods in academic didactics should be reduced to debate. However, it is certainly worth giving young researchers a chance to try this way of expanding knowledge. Such research experience, enriched by public speaking skills, will pay off in the future.

3.4.

Debate formats

Debates can be delivered in a variety of formats, allowing the method to be tailored to the group. Differentiation relates to the many elements that make up the debating process itself. In this context, we mainly take into account the rules and conduct of the debate, the role of the judges and the evaluation criteria they adopt, which are conditioned by the assumptions inherent in the purpose of a given format. Formats are also differentiated by the number of participants, the ways in which participants speak

and organisational issues (e.g. speaking time or rules for asking questions). The different formats also have different terminology to describe the parties or the chairperson. Thus, each format reveals differences in purposes and educational potential. The most popular debating formats that can be used in the teaching process are presented below.

3.4.1. Oxford-style debate

One of the most widespread in Poland is the Oxford-style debate. The name refers us to the tradition of debating at the University of Oxford, i.e. in the English tradition. Meanwhile, it is a format developed by Polish debating milieus, primarily for the Polish Academic Championships in Oxford-style Debates (AMPDO). This format has also been disseminated in debating circles at secondary school level, which has had a significant impact on its popularity. Debate leagues or IPN Historical Debate tournaments are run using this format.

The Oxford debate format is realised through the activity of two opposing parties, called the Affirmative and the Negative. The essential task of the Affirmative is to justify the thesis, while that of the Negative is to refute it. The thesis is formulated in the form of an affirmative or negative sentence and takes the form of an assertion conveying a specific meaning (e.g. *man should educate for life/man should not educate for life*). The rules of the Oxford-style debate presuppose that the participants have prior knowledge of the thesis, which enables them to prepare in advance, which has an obvious positive effect on the level of the discussion. At the same time, the participants in the debate do not know in advance whether they will play the role of opposition or proposition (most often, as a rule, they find this out 15 minutes before the debate starts), and the decision is made by drawing lots. This practice reveals the training potential of the debate, the purpose of which is to hone the intellectual skills of the debaters. These essentially concern the correct and effective justification of the claims made, using supporting and rebuttal arguments, and the consistent conduct of the course of the discussion, directed towards a substantive solution of the problem.

The Oxford-style debate is **characterised by a considerable degree of formality**. This particularly applies to the way in which participants take the floor. An Oxford-style debate involves the Speaker, the Affirmative and the Negative which include four speakers each. The debate is formally assessed by the judges, while it is also observed and informally judged by the audience. It is the responsibility of the Speaker to start the debate, to present the thesis and to ensure that the debate proceeds in accordance with the rules. The Speaker, who may be assisted by a secretary in managing technical matters (e.g. timing of speakers, ordering questions), controls all questions relating to the order of the debate.

As regards the statements by the parties, the accepted rule is that the Affirmative speak first, followed by alternating voices from both sides, with the tasks of defending or challenging the thesis. It is most



often assumed that participants speak for five minutes. The task of the initial speakers (of both parties) is to define the understanding of the concepts contained in the thesis in order to establish the basic framework for the discussion and to indicate the essential lines of justification of the thesis (outlining argumentation areas). It is the task of the second speakers to present specific arguments within the lines of justification of the thesis outlined by the first speakers. The arguments cited at this stage should be substantiated by relevant examples and have the structure of an argumentative statement (premises – conclusion). The tasks of the third speakers include counter-argumentation, i.e. refuting the arguments previously indicated by the opposing sides (cited by the second speakers). The fourth speakers' task is to summarise the debate, including the presentation of their own arguments and those of the opposing side. At this stage, speakers may not introduce new arguments.

It should be noted that there is an opportunity to ask questions of the opposing party during the individual statements, even though this practice is subject to a number of restrictions. Questions may not be asked during the last 30 seconds of a participants' speech; they are signalled by a show of hands. The speaker should take two questions. The question asked must take the form of a single interrogative sentence lasting up to 10 seconds, and the time taken to ask and answer the question is included in one's speaking time. It is also possible to use 'ad vocem', which is a one-minute statement referring directly to the assertions made by the opposing party. It is also possible to apply "ad vocem" to "ad vocem". However, each party may only use this option once during the debate.

The judges evaluate the debate and identify the winner. They rely on dedicated evaluation criteria. The judge's attitude as a critical observer is key to the impartial resolution of the debate.

A prerequisite supporting a fair evaluation of a debate is clear rules of conduct for the particular debate formats that are binding to all the debaters. Therefore, the grading system most often involves a grading sheet (grid) and concerns both individual debaters and teams. Individual assessment focuses on speech structure, verbal and non-verbal communication and the overall performance in the debate. The team evaluation, on the other hand, looks at how the line of argument was established, the argumentation and counter-argumentation presented and the overall coherence of the team members' speeches. An additional element that receives attention in the debate is the debaters' speech and presentation skills, as well as their recognition of the etiquette associated with public speaking.

The Oxford-style debate is a well-known tool for the exposition and public presentation of important and innovative topics. It is used when specific solutions to vital social problems are to be publicised. Thus, its potential undoubtedly includes educating students to participate in social discourse in an informed and creative way. At the same time, its educational role of improving the universal intellectual potential of debaters is particularly important.

In addition, it equips students with the necessary logical and rhetorical culture, as it methodically touches upon the most important points of public speaking. In particular, in addition to the ability to plan speech strategies and arguments, competence in speech composition should be emphasised. These concern paraphrasing, the use of mini-stories, the introduction of transitions between parts of speech (transitions) and divisions, the construction of arguments and counter-arguments using deductive and inductive reasoning. It also develops the ability to introduce an introduction and conclusion to a speech, to ask properly formed questions and to retort accurately and quickly.



3.4.2. Cross-Examination Debate

The Cross-Examination debate format, by its name, indicates that **the debate is conducted in the manner of cross-questioning, the purpose of which is to expose the substantive shortcomings of the opposing party's argument.** It is also referred to as Policy Debate, emphasising that the debated subject matters concern topical social issues (involving politics in the broadest sense). In this form of debate, the topic (thesis) is called a resolution. It is usually of a normative character and involves the introduction or modification of a law. The debate involves two parties: the debaters supporting the resolution and the ones negating the resolution. Each party consists of two debaters. It therefore involves four speakers whose speeches are evaluated by the judges and observed by the audience. The parties prepare a diagnosis of the resolution (the case) prior to the debate, as well as other source materials (quotations referring to the Authors and their works, information on the factual details of the case, comments etc.) related to the resolution that indicate the concrete and real context of the arguments cited. Evaluating judges may require debaters to disclose source

material, e.g. a pre-prepared bibliographic description, related to the cited quotation or comment. As in the Oxford-style debate, the parties should be prepared to affirm as well as negate the resolution, which constitutes an exercise in critical thinking (in terms of argumentative skills).

The Cross-Examination debate has an elaborate course, consisting of 12 speeches (orations), lasting between 3 and 8 minutes, including: the first constructive speech of the party supporting the resolution, the first question of the party negating the resolution and the reply of the first speaker of the party supporting the resolution. This is followed by the first constructive speech of the party negating the resolution and, similarly, the first question of the party supporting the resolution, and then the reply of the first speaker of the party supporting the resolution. The second constructive speech and the second series of questions from the parties follow. In turn, the debaters representing the parties present alternating first and second rebuttals. The debate is thus formed by three distinct types of speeches: constructive speeches, inquires (which consist of cross-questions from both sides) and rebuttals. **Constructive speeches are designed to present the party's main line of argument.** When need be, the first debaters of the affirmative party indicates a model for the application of the resolution to social life. Subsequent speakers complete the course of argument presentation and cross-analysis.

Inquiry involves questions to which the other party merely answers yes or no, without developing the issue or introducing a new argument. **Inquiry is thus reminiscent of the Socratic way of asking**

PARTICIPANTS

Affirmative Team (2)

Negative team (2)

Judges

Audience

questions, eliciting from the interlocutor the premises of their assertions, thus revealing the deficiencies of the argument. The rebuttal, on the other hand, aims to refute the resolution with the use of counter-argumentation, consisting in the accurate and effective refutation of the opposing party's arguments submitted in the debate (without introducing new arguments).

PARTS OF THE DEBATE

Constructive speech

Inquiry (Interpellation)

Rebuttal

The criteria for evaluating the debate relate to the relevance, i.e. the relation to the actual social context of the claims made, the identification of the stakeholders of the resolution, the validity of the arguments, the reference to the effectiveness of the current system (i.e. the system in place without the resolution in place) or the identification of potential ways of solving the problem (harm) within the resources currently available. The assessment also includes the holistic aspect of the parties' submissions, which is

important for this format, indicating whether the parties have exhausted the issue holistically, having analysed it in all key aspects. The evaluation also addresses the additional costs, thus indicating whether and how introducing of a resolution engages financial resources.

The criteria described above demonstrate the potential of debate as an academic method to foster the development of the ability to collect and argue with a large amount of source material, in particular the efficient and reliable handling of the argument to authority (*argumentum ad auctoritatem*) without involving the eristic context of the *ad verecundiam* strategy. At the same time, it trains one's ability to verify assertions by demonstrating the logical consequences of sustained assumptions. The Cross-Examination debate is a formula that takes place at an extremely fast pace, hence the instantaneous work of the intellect – characteristic of inquiry and rebuttal – is important, to some extent also engaging the capacity for intuitive perception of complex relations. **An important didactic factor is the formation in the debaters of an attitude of responsibility for the assertions they maintain or an approval of objective reasons for decisively negating statements aimed at subjectivising the argumentation.** An vital element in the training of attitudes in the debate is the preparation to take on the creative role of a leader of social processes.

3.4.3. Deliberative debate

The Deliberative debate is based on participants holding opposing views and, ultimately, seeking to agree on a common position.

Participants in a debate may form two or more groups (e.g. three or four), consisting of any number of people. There is no formal limit to both the number of groups and the number of people. Due to the complications owing to the initial opposing positions, the debate does not impose time constraints. **The task of the debaters is to find a common solution to a complex problem on which they disagree. The debate involves a facilitator, i.e. a person who impartially supports the deliberative nature of the debate and sees to it that the process of working out consent proceeds properly.** The facilitator is supposed to direct the course of the debate, the goal of which is to find common solutions by the parties, which also implies the task of building the right atmosphere for consent and encouraging active participation in the debate.

A characteristic feature of the deliberative debate, therefore, is the focus on finding points of convergence between the debaters, searching for premises that have the potential to synergise views. In the deliberative debate format, it is not only possible, but also desirable (and commonly implemented) to change the position of the debaters. Such swaps are supposed to refine accepted solutions and introduce new benefits for a particular community. There are no clearly defined positions or sides to the debate.

A deliberative debate proceeds according to the following stages:

- establishing a position on the initial state of the issue,
- identifying commonly accepted norms and definitions,

- defining relations between debaters,
- diagnosing similarities in accepted views.

The task is to find an organisational solution that is acceptable to the participants, despite discrepancies (e.g. in worldviews). In a deliberative debate, participants aim to identify the strengths and not the weaknesses of the opposition, emphasise points of contact rather than disparities, focus on actively listening to the opposing side in order to diagnose the possibilities of a common solution. Thus, they do not focus solely on convincing their own case. At the same time, debaters are supposed to adopt an attitude that is open to ideas about finding better solutions, rather than being focused on defending their own position. In this context, **in deliberative debate, judgements are not made to judge and criticise the solutions adopted by the adversaries, but mutual agreement is sought.**

Undoubtedly, this form of debate, requiring time, patience and consistency, directed towards the search for an acceptable solution, can be helpful in training the social attitudes of the participants. The deliberative debate is linked to the functioning of a society made of active citizens and aims at the improvement of the democratic system. This format reveals an enormous potential for relationship-building skills, community, negotiation and diplomatic search for solutions, which constitutes preparation for entering into dialogue with adversaries. Such potential is also relevant for learning to be active in public institutions and various forms of dynamically developing spheres of socio-political life.

3.4.4. Karl Popper debate

Another format that can be used in academic education is the Karl Popper debate. It involves the participation of two teams, called affirmation and negation. Each team is made up of three debaters who, in preparation for the debate, collect arguments both in support and negation of a given thesis. The need for two-sided preparation for the debate is related to the fact that the sides are drawn before the debate begins. During the debate (before each speech or series of questions) it is possible for the debaters to confer together within their teams, during what is known as a demand break. Each side may use the eight minutes of the break allotted for deliberation, and the desire to deliberate is to be signalled at the end of the speech.



The course of the debate follows a pattern fairly analogous to the other formats. The debate begins with an opening constructive speech in which the affirmative speaker (the proposition) affirms the truth of the thesis, provides definitions of key terms, outlines the main line of argument, and formulates the most relevant arguments to be developed by the second speaker. The third

debater representing the negative party formulates questions to be answered by the first affirmative speaker. The responding speaker must stick to the content of the question and the questioner is obliged to formulate a question, not a speech. The first negative speaker takes the floor next and presents an opening negative, rebuttal speech. In it, he responds to the definitions given by the opposing party and indicates which definitions he accepts and which he rejects. They also propose alternative definitions and clarify the understanding of terms that have not yet been defined. At the same time, the speaker indicates the criteria that the negative party will use and formulates their arguments. The speaker may also refer critically to the already introduced affirmative arguments. After this speech, the third affirmative speaker asks questions of the first negative speaker.

The course of the debate then moves to a second affirmation speech, in which the arguments introduced by the first affirmative speaker are developed and the arguments of the first negative speaker are rebutted. At this stage, one new argument may be introduced, and a response formulated to any criticism introduced by the negative speaker. This speech is followed by a series of questions formulated by the first negative speaker. The second negative speaker then develops the argumentation of the first negative speaker, introduces counter-arguments to the affirmative argumentation and addresses the criticisms of the main line of argumentation made by the adversaries. The speech is followed by a series of questions formulated by the first affirmative speaker. The course of the debate then provides for an affirmative closing speech and a negative closing speech.

The speakers accentuate the fields of conflict, juxtapose the lines of argumentation comparatively, point out the advantages of their position and the disadvantages of the views of the adversaries. No new arguments may be introduced at this stage, but polemical reference to the criticisms made by the previous speakers is permitted.

It is important to highlight the different tasks of the judges in the Karl Popper debate compared to their role in other formats. The judges not only evaluate the debate, but also make sure that the debate is properly organised (including respecting time limits) as there is no provision for a Speaker in this format. In assessing the debate, the judges are guided by considerations of substance, relating to the line taken and the content of the arguments, as well as the justifications introduced by the debaters, the clarity of the arguments submitted and the relevance of the choice of arguments. They shall also have regard to formal and technical

matters, as well as the use of language, the debating culture and the presentation by the speakers.

The reference in the name of the debate to Karl Popper, the founder of critical rationalism and the concept of an open society, has a reflection of these theories in the rules and purpose of this format. **Debate contains the potential to exercise the skills of a problem-solving method based on sound argumentation, shaping critical thinking.** In addition, any argument introduced can be immediately confronted in a series of questions asked by the adversaries. For this reason, attention is paid to practising active listening skills and responding in a factual manner to the question posed, in which it is important to separate opinion from fact. At the same time, as part of the consultative nature of reflection on the opposing parties' arguments, the debate hones teamwork skills and develops in the debaters an attitude of responsibility for the judgements they make.

3.4.5. Lincoln–Douglas debate

The Lincoln–Douglas debate is a debate between two speakers, one of whom supports a particular thesis, taking the propositional side, and the other opposes it, positioning himself as the opposition. Significantly, the Lincoln–Douglas debate is also referred to as the *values debate* because the subject matter touches on axiological issues usually involving social ethics.

Central to the Lincoln–Douglas debate is that the thesis refers to some conflict in the realm of values. Speakers should constantly remind themselves of this when formulating arguments and counterarguments. Speakers address their statements to the judges and the audience, seeking to demonstrate the superiority of their own rationale over that put forward by the opposing side. In the Lincoln – Douglas debate, the burden of proof is primarily on the propositional side. However, the task of the speaker refuting the proposition is to point out the opposing rationale. Thus, neither party is privileged in its reference to the thesis. The speaker of the proposition and the speaker of the opposition must make

strenuous efforts to demonstrate, using appropriate rhetorical and logical tools, that their claims are situated within the field of values recognised by the audience as socially beneficial.

The Lincoln–Douglas debate begins with the proposition speaker presenting his own interpretation of the thesis and arguments supporting the thesis. This is followed by a series of cross-questions from the opposition side, during which the questioner can interrupt the answer and submit another question. The opposition speaks next, making its own interpretation of the thesis and refuting the arguments brought earlier by the adversary. In a manner analogous (in terms of the formal rules applicable) to the previous series of cross-questions, questions are asked by the proposition side. The proposition then refutes the arguments of the opposition, deepening and substantiating its own argumentation through exemplification procedures. Exemplification plays an important argumentative role, and references to authorities are also introduced into the field of justification. In the following speech, the opposition refutes the arguments of the proposition and summarises the position it has adopted, emphasising the most relevant arguments. The course of the debate closes with the speech of the proposition speaker, who, like the previous speaker, summarises their position and points out the main arguments.

The judges assess the substantive and formal quality of the argumentation, the skills of the argumentation, as well as the polemical addresses to the rationale put forward by the opposing party. Under evaluation are the coherence of the argumentation and the thesis and the reference of the argumentation and counter-argumentation

PARTICIPANTS

Speaker of proposition (1)

Speaker of the opposition (1)

Judges



to socially upheld values, relevant to social relations. Other proposed criteria are the support of the argument with source references to recognised thinkers in philosophy, sociology or political science, as well as the citation of validated statistical data.

The oratorical art of the debaters in terms of their verbal and non-verbal activity is also a criterion for assessing the debate. The manner in which questions are asked and answered is assessed. This particularly concerns the relevance and reasonableness of the questions asked, the timing aspects and the very activity of the party in formulating the questions.

When reflecting on the educational potential of the Lincoln–Douglas debate, it is important to point out its dimension of individual

student improvement. **The focus is on the speeches of individuals who possess certain charismatic personality elements.** However, the assessment possibilities of the debate make it possible to involve a large number of observers who, by referring to the successive points of the debate, acquire an important awareness of debating methodology, which can be translated into the possibility of shaping their own participation in this form of discourse. The skills exercised in the Lincoln–Douglas debate relate to the construction of logically correct reasoning, retorting with accurate and rapid counter-argumentation under conditions of verbal confrontation and time pressure. **An important skill specific to the debate is to have a rhetorical culture typical of persuasive public speaking.**

3.4.6. Public Forum Debate

The Public Forum debate is dynamic and is characterised by a relatively low degree of formalisation of the evaluation criteria made by the judges (who do not have to be experts). An essential element of the debate is the emphasis on persuasive factors in debating.

At the same time, the style of the debate is formal and ceremonial, requiring strict adherence to the rules of public speaking etiquette. The format involves four speakers, situated (two each) within the opposition and proposition. Their task is to gain conviction with the judges on the truth or falsity of the thesis put forward. The organisation of the sides of the debate is determined by a draw, with the winner deciding the choice of side and the order of speakers. It is a feasible option in this format that the opposition party begins the debate.

PARTICIPANTS

Speakers of proposition (2)

Speakers of the opposition (2)

Judges

The course of the debate comprises eight individual speeches, including constructive speeches, rebuttals, summaries and conclusions, as well as three series of dynamic and confrontational questions, known as cross-questions, including the so-called great cross-questions. They involve all the debaters. The debate begins

with constructive speeches, explaining key concepts and providing definitions of terms showing relevance to the thesis. Constructive speeches also present their own arguments (two to four). It is also possible to refer to the context of the debate, involving the axiological plane, and to anticipatively announce (as valid) the criteria for selecting the winner of the debate (e.g. the winner *should be the one who proposes an effective solution to the problem....*). The debate also provides for cross-questions, which may be asked alternately. The purpose of the questions is to clarify and disambiguate the positions taken by the parties, to demonstrate gaps in reasoning, possible contradictions and logical inconsistencies in arguments, or to accentuate the factual inaccuracy of the arguments of the opponents. The task of the reply, on the other hand, is to refute the arguments of the opposing party and to show the merits of one's own argumentation, especially in view of the deficiencies of the opposition in this respect. Concluding speeches have the task of restating the arguments and highlighting the most relevant, groundbreaking conclusions of the discussion. The great cross-questions are the most dynamic stage in the course of the debate, during which speakers should formulate questions brilliantly and respond quickly and convincingly. Closing speeches are short speeches closing earlier speeches, submitted to convince the judges why a particular side should win the argument. They involve a restatement of the key conclusions and most relevant arguments, as well as a comparative reference to the opposing side's position and conclusions.

The Public Forum debate, characterised by a simple and appropriately structured process, is a debate that introduces beginners



well to the rules of debating. Its didactic potential is related to the acquisition of rhetorical skills, related to the art of speaking to an audience and effectively persuading an audience. Persuasiveness as an objective of communication involves avoiding over-formalisation

of the debate itself and the technical treatment only of the arguments submitted by the parties. **Debate trains social attitudes in terms of accepting the need to use intelligible communication that enables a wide audience to participate in the discourse.**



3.4.7. Concluding remarks

The presented invitation to use debate as a didactic academic method focuses mainly on the basic tools and conditions for debate. However, it is worth pointing out that the diverse, modern debating formats with their dynamic and attractive course can effectively attract and shape research attitudes in young people. Debate offers them effective ways, rooted in the logico-rhetorical tradition, to improve their reasoning processes. Students can benefit hugely from learning to think critically, become autonomous people and researchers. The dialectical-rhetorical forms of debate used in considering a disputed issue, given in the form of a case (thesis), which has to be resolved or justified in the light of arguments for and against, are highly instrumental in preparing student intellectual resources for research. In addition to critical thinking, training creative thinking is a principal element of the student's professional activity. It is important to construct content that is distinguished by finding innovative ways of grasping systems of sign relations, which is supported by the individual decisions of the debaters. It is also noteworthy that the didactic potential of debate is not only about the intellectual sphere, but also affects the volition, which is responsible for the formation of attitudes.

This is particularly true of the attitude of openness to substantive arguments and the responsible influence on the emotional sphere.

The selected debate formats presented in the second part of the article are a proposal for direct academic application. However, due to the specificity of the fields of study and methodological needs, they can be modified and adapted to the subject demands. The boundary conditions of this method are two: each debate is a factual discussion of a thesis and each position in the debate must be justified through argumentation and counter-argumentation. Corresponding to these conditions, the forms of conducting the didactic process allow for a rich array of possibilities to apply debates or its elements in academic didactics. Therefore, debate can be regarded as a method that effectively implements a proper prototype of academic activity in didactics. In this context, it is important to note once again the methodological convergence that occurs between critical thinking processes and debate as a form of improving them. This makes it possible to develop not only the basic tools to undertake scientific work, but also to participate consciously in public debate.



Closing remarks



Competent use of active learning and teaching methods is of significant value in enriching students' learning experience. Including these methods in teachers' repertoire can wield a considerable impact on students' engagement in the learning process, and hence, positively influence the degree of material memorisation with an advanced level of class content comprehension. Active learning and teaching methods empower critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The interactive nature of these methods encourages peer learning, creating a dynamic classroom environment that goes beyond the traditional lecture-based approach. Last but not least, active learning and teaching methods are supportive of a variety of student learning styles.

Despite the unquestionable benefits that come from the use of active learning and teaching methods, it is important that their implementation is approached thoughtfully. Successful integration of the methods within the general teaching repertoire requires careful planning, adjustment and continuous evaluation of their usefulness on the basis of observed effects and the feedback for the students.

It needs to be highlighted that successful implementation of active learning and teaching methods can be facilitated by teachers' developmental engagement as well as by creating a support framework by the university at all its levels.

The shift of interest towards active learning and teaching methods is a long-term, positive trend in academic education. Fostering a student-centred approach enables students' active role in their own education, while improving the use of active learning and teaching methods by the academic staff enables them to empower students to realise their potential. This, in turn, can be a viable premise for predicting students' future career success and professional satisfaction after graduation.



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