Increasing Student Engagement and Participation Through Course Methodology

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INTRODUCTION

Educators have been criticized for limited resources in building capacity for continued growth through reflective learning (Demirbulak, 2012). A large number of educational institutions concentrate on acquiring formal knowledge of the subject matter excessively, with theory being overstated and the practical realities of the classroom not being effectively addressed. This is a formidable challenge that educators face and has led to research in trying to develop lifelong learning by being reflective. Reflective education is observing one's own educational practices and thinking about what works and evaluating the approach to see if it is effective or not (Demirbulak, 2012).

Reflection bridges the chasm between theory and practice enabling educators to apply their knowledge for effective learning that is vital for success. This chasm could be the cause of educators avoiding uncertain, possibly rewarding, activities and ignoring cognitive activities (Edwards & Protheroe, 2003). Educators tend to prefer the more traditional teaching methods that are teacher-centered and express anxiety with the perception of student-centered learning (Ozgun-Koca & Sen, 2006). Concurrently, other factors (e.g., poor classroom management, limited knowledge of correlated subjects, insecurity) limit the opportunity for a more rich educational experi-

ence (Demirbulak, 2012). Even with these factors considered, it is the educator's responsibility to design courses that utilize reflective educational practices that are effective (Demirbulak, 2012). Therefore, dynamic educational approaches are necessary and should be integrated in a well-balanced manner. Practices that are learner-focused increase the probability of success by increasing student engagement in the classroom.

According to Günüç and Kuzu (2014a), the increase use of technology is facilitating greater learner participation and is a boon to the academic environment. Günüç and Kuzu posit that it is essential to take technology into consideration in the classroom due to the near universal acceptance of technology into every aspects of life. Digital natives, individuals surnamed because they were born in an era immersed in the technology, see this technology (e.g., IPads, Surface Pros, Smart Phones…etc.) as normal. This particular demographic of learner differ from other generations in this respect (Günüç & Kuzu, 2014a). For the adult learner (historically referred to as non-traditional learner), likes the convenience the technology provides (e.g., access to education and coursework virtually 24 hours a day, from any location). However, all adult learners are not the same, do not learn the same, and desire a more dynamic educational approach. Despite this perspective, a singular approach to the learning process tends

to dominate educational practices—lecture. This myopic approach is based on principles, theories, and teaching methodologies that have existed for centuries that do not take into account the diversity and cultural differences of learners. Concomitantly, educators and educational systems are responding to the needs of learners with a combination of educational methodological approaches—pedagogy and andragogy.

Pedagogy uses prescribed subject matter with little room for deviation, it is supported by external motivation factors such as grades to promote engagement and learners are dependent upon the instructor to determine how much and how well they learn (Educational Technology and Mobile Learning, 2015). Andragogy, uses technological tools to enhance learning for adults, encourages self-directedness, and incorporates personal experiences into the learning process (Educational Technology and Mobile Learning, 2015). This chapter investigates the aforementioned methodologies found to be effective for adult learners. The chapter will consist of the following sections: background; issues controversies and problems; solutions and recommendations; future research directions; and the conclusion. The information contained herein will enhance the field of education and course methodology and influence modern educational institutions and society in general.

BACKGROUND

Foundational theorist such Immanuel Kant explored education in, *On Pedagogy* (Über Pädagogik). Here, the image of Greek pedagogues walking alongside their charges, or sitting with them in classrooms, represents the quintessential picture of exemplary education. Eisner (1979, 1985, 1994) argued that the ability to reflect, imagine, and respond involves developing "the ideas, the awareness, the skills, and the mind to create work that is well balanced, adeptly accomplished, and inventive, regardless of the domain in which an individual works" (this needs a page reference).

Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice and his critique of the sort of "technical rationality" crudely employed within more "scientific" approaches to practice has been influential (where and/or how?).

This approach to education and thinking is consistent with pedagogues and their ability to reflect, make judgements, and respond (Smith and Smith, 2008). Alegria (2014) found that critical pedagogy literature emphasized the following themes:

- Teaching that focuses on the students 'culture, socioeconomic status, familial connections, and identity (who are they, identity/personal growth).
- Teaching that emphasizes academic skills and knowledge of the student as well as his or her development of critical thinking (academic/cognitive).
- Teaching that develops students' critical understanding of society, power, the inequality embedded in activities to make the student ware of their role in society, their understanding of inequality (who is in power and why and their own personal power to change their status or role).

Andragogy was first coined in Europe of 1833 by Alexander Kapp. However, many credit Malcom Knowles with the patriarchal role of the evolution and sculpting of andragogy in the United States ("Culture and process of adult learning", 2013). Malcolm Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn". Knowles was convinced that adults and children learned differently. This provided the basis for a distinctive field of investigation. Knowles identified the six principles of adult learning as:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences.

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