

Active and Collaborative Methodologies to Help Improve the Learning of Future Pedagogues

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Research Background

The progressive consolidation of “European convergence” has revealed a shift from a teacher-centred conception of education to a new paradigm in which the pupil is the backbone of the teaching-learning process (Niemi, 2009, Teichler, 2010). This has a direct impact on teaching, which now focuses on learning and the acquisition of skills and abilities - giving particular value to teachers’ and students’ involvement and effort to attain these- and the quality of pupils’ learning (Río, 2004; Light, Cox, & Calkins, 2009).

The research, performed by Barcelona University’s FODIP research group, centres on determining the impact of applying different active and collaborative methodologies on the learning process of pupils in the Pedagogy Faculty. These students in the near future shall act as trainers of trainers in educational contexts. The main aims of the research were to: 1) Adapt and implement active methodologies that help students to create their own learning process, following the new directives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA); 2) Analyse the degree of impact produced by applying active methodologies¹ in the context of training future pedagogues.

¹ The strategies introduced were, among others: simultaneous dialogues, role-playing, group puzzle, four corners, case study, structure location and directed workshop. For this, we followed Brown, G. y Atkins, M. (1990). *Effective teaching in Higher Education*. London: Routledge; Cohen, E.; Brody, C.; I Sapon-Shevin, M. (2004). *Teaching Cooperative Learning*. Albany: State of University of New York and Light, G.; Cox, R. & Calkins, S. (2009), *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. The Reflective Professional*. 2nd Edition. London: Sage.

Methodology

Performing this qualitative-based research involved four basic interventions: a) in-depth study and selection of active and collaborative pupil-centred methodologies, b) internal training activities aimed at the teaching staff participating in the research, c) development and application of different active and collaborative strategies by teachers of different subjects, and d) impact and experience assessment. In order to obtain information for the last point, the tools used were: four focus groups (a total of thirty two pupils); non-participatory observation of different strategies in the classroom; in-depth analysis of the learning portfolios built up throughout the half year (total: 229 pupils).

Initial Findings

The results obtained from the research have pointed to two basic areas for future work: firstly, pupils valued very positively the first-hand experiencing of the different strategies introduced. They understood that these are at the same time both “method” and “content” for their current and future teaching practice. Secondly, these methodologies have allowed them to establish new dynamics between both the students themselves and the teaching staff involved, and always understood that they had been at the centre of the learning process. However, some difficulties were also detected: all of these strategies involve direct and greater involvement, as well as commitment by the pupils towards their learning.

At the same time they require greater time, distribution of tasks and responsibilities, independent content creation, etc. To what extent are pupils willing to perform this change and really put themselves at the centre of the learning process? What are the benefits that they obtain in terms of learning? What are the overall implications of the strategies for teaching staff? These and other questions shall emerge from the changes that both teachers and students should be willing to adopt faced with the challenges posed by the EHEA.

References

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