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**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE ACTIVE
LEARNING**

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Abstract

Active learning is a method of designing instruction so that students can actively engage in class activities not only to explore concepts and knowledge but also to practice skills. In this paper, the author implements a detailed analysis on the role of a teacher in the modern educational environment and the proposal of 11 instructional methods to shift from a traditional approach: teacher-centered class to a modern approach: student-centered class. Firstly, The Bloom's taxonomy and the 5E Instructional model are mainly mentioned as the theory frameworks to point out the role of the instructors as well as teaching and learning activities given to help students achieve the learning outcomes. Specifically, IBSTPI instructional methods implemented successfully in a Public Relations (PR) class at FPT University will be described in details within the paper. Secondly, the author used the survey research as the methodology in this paper. These survey results of PR class indicate that PR students not only actively engaged in class activities but also strongly give constructive feedback on these instructional methods utilized on that course. These results reflect that IBSTPI instructional methods are effective in facilitating active learning in teaching an introductory course in the PR program. Thus, the author suggests that lecturers make use of IBSTPI instructional methods in teaching other ones in PR program. Finally, similar studies could be implemented by conducting the surveys on other PR courses and other programs in the next stages in order to verify the effectiveness of IBSTPI instructional methods on student's active learning.

Keywords: Active learning, IBSTPI, instructional methods, public relations (*PR*)

Introduction

Many studies show that learning is fostered when students become actively engaged in the teaching and learning activities. Instructional methods that engage students in the learning process stimulate students to explore knowledge as well as develop their skills. Therefore, Blair commented that the best way to think of active learning in the classroom is to focus on learning processes rather than on learning products. Furthermore, the constructivist theory says that the concepts follow the action rather than precede it and that new experience builds on an already existing knowledge (Brainerd and Piaget 2003). The ideas of constructivists led to four important principles of active learning:

1. Learners construct their own meaning;
2. New learning builds on prior knowledge;
3. Learning is enhanced by social;
4. Learning develops through "authentic" tasks (Cooperstein and Koccevar-Weidinger 2004).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

This paper aims to describe how instructional methods can facilitate active learning in a Public Relations (PR) class. Besides, in this paper, student feedback demonstrates that active learning significantly improves student engagement with the course.

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains

Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, & Krathwohl, 1956) is one of the most recognized learning theories in the field of education. It consists of 6 cognitive levels as following: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.



Figure 1. This is the Bloom's Taxonomy (1956)

Educators often use Bloom's Taxonomy to create learning outcomes that target not only subject matter but also the depth of learning they want students to achieve, and to then create assessments that accurately report on students' progress towards these outcomes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In 2001, David Krathwohl (one of Bloom's original collaborators) and co-editor Lorin Anderson published a revision to the 1956 hierarchy. This new revised version introduced a key change to the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy: it shifted the language used from nouns to verbs (see Figure 2) and thereby focused the attention away from acquisition and toward the active performance of the types of learning involved in each stage of the hierarchy. "Synthesis" was also dropped and "create" was moved to the highest level of the domain.

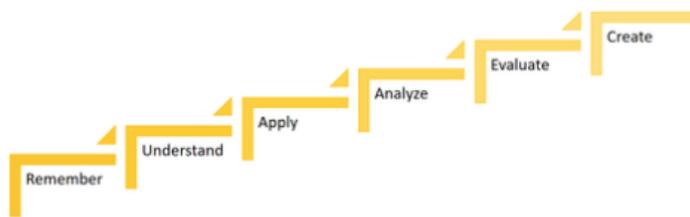


Figure 2. This is Bloom's Taxonomy Revised (2001)

5E Instructional Model

The 5 E's is an instructional model mentions that learners build or construct new ideas on top of their old ideas. Each of the 5 E's describes a phase of learning, and each phase begins with the letter "E": *Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate*. The 5 E's allows students to experience common activities, to use and build on prior knowledge and experience, to construct meaning, and to continually assess their understanding of a concept.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

Table 1
Instructional Model

Phase	Description
Engage	Pique student interest and get them personally involved in the lesson, while pre-assessing prior understanding
Explore	Get students involved in the topic; providing them with a chance to build their own understanding.
Explain	Provide students with an opportunity to communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means
Extend	Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications
Evaluate	Determine how much learning and understanding has taken place.

Instructional Methods

In the past, the teacher-centered class was popular. The teacher often shared knowledge through lectures while the student listened to, took note and absorbed the knowledge passively. However, such traditional class was out of date and gradually disappeared. The teacher-centered class has been shifted to student-centered class in which teachers actively involve their students in the learning process and teachers just play a role as facilitators. Furthermore, the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI) mentions about the one of the instructor 's competencies such as *Demonstrate effective facilitation skills*. Thus, this paper will guide instructors to apply instructional methods appropriately to facilitate in the student-centered classes.

Table 2
Instructional Methods to Facilitate Active Learning

Instructional methods	Guidance on effective applications
1. Lecture	Keep your lecture short and interactive. Consider the timing of the lecture. Use lectures to introduce/summarize information.
2. Demonstration	Make your demonstration as hands-on as possible.
3. Guided learning	Must master effective questioning skills. Must allow students to go through a problem without immediately giving them answered.
4. Student teaching	Must prepare adequate time for preparation and presentations. Create a safe and positive environment for student teaching. Ensure to cover all appropriate information during the lessons. Ensure students to be responsible for all the material covered.
5. Group work	To prevent students straying from the task, the instructor should clarify the purpose of activities and monitor each group's progress.
6. Role play	The instructor must create a positive environment. The instructor wants students to experience a situation or need them to respond to emergency situation.
7. Simulation	Use simulation whenever students need to learn a skill or experience a situation that the instructor cannot reproduce in class.
8. Case studies	Use case studies to connect materials to real world situations. Include a list of questions to assist students with evaluating case studies.
9. Games	Evaluate the audience and incorporate games into the class where appropriate to reduce stress and create a positive learning environment.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

Instructional methods	Guidance on effective applications
10. Independent practice	Create exercises/assignments that specially test the course learning outcomes.
11. Reflection	Use whenever the instructor wants students to stop and think about the material in the course, or think about the information to properly synthesize their experiences.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to verify the effectiveness of active learning approach in teaching the course of Introduction to Public Relations. Specifically, the study aims to survey the student's feedback on both the overall course and the instructional methods and get recommendations for implementing that course in the next semesters as well.

Research Questions

- How do IBSTPI instructional methods facilitate active learning?
- What are students' feedback and recommendations towards improving active learning?

Literature Review

Alexandra and et al (2015) mentioned the need to shift from teaching to learning and considered the new role of a teacher in the modern educational environment, which is student-centered and promotes active learning. Furthermore, Alexandra stated that modern instructors have to change their vision of a teacher's role from being transmitters of knowledge to becoming multi-role educators who are able to involve students in the process of gaining knowledge and independent development of skills [1]

Vivian L.Moya (2014) concluded that The use of the active learning approach in teaching Chemistry showed a positive response from the experimental group as evidenced by the evaluation of the active learning approach administered after the instruction. This paper also recommended that teachers should make use of active learning strategies in teaching college Chemistry besides the traditional lecture-discussion method to break the monotonous mode in the classroom. Training of teachers in the effective use of active learning materials and other innovative strategies, techniques, and methods of teaching appropriate to the level of their students should be conducted. [10]

Methodology

This paper employed a questionnaire survey to study how students gave the feedback on the course of Introduction to Public Relation in general and how students gave the feedback on instructional methods in this course in particular. There are twenty-nine students as respondents in this survey. The instructor had delivered hard copies of survey forms in class before the course finished. Questions on the survey form are organized in three main categories: (A) *Overall information of the course* (8 questions), (B) *Instructional methods* (6 questions) and (C) *Other feedback/expectation* (1 question). For each question, students are required to circle the answer that they think most suitable. ①= *Totally disagree* ②=*Disagree* ③=*Neutral* ④=*Agree* ⑤=*Totally agree*

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

Table 3
Student Survey Form

A. Overall information about the course		Mark the most appropriate answer				
1	At the beginning of the course, students are provided course syllabus and courseware .	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	At the beginning of the course, the course objectives and course learning outcomes are well explained.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	The assessment methods and the grading criteria in detail are well communicated to you at the start of the course.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	Students are provided updated learning materials (<i>textbook, reference material, website...</i>).	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	The course structures and topics are arranged appropriately and logically.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	The course length is adequate for achieving the course objectives.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7	Tests, projects, etc. covers the most important points of the course.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8	The tests and assignments are evaluated in a fair manner.	①	②	③	④	⑤
B. Instructional methods						
1	The instructor delivers the course contents in an easy and clear way.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	The instructor teaches with enthusiasm .	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	Various active teaching methods have been used (group work, discussion, presentation, role-play etc.,)	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	The instructor's teaching techniques help you link the lesson to real-life problems.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	The instructor uses official courseware .	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	The instructor recommends other documents for you to understand better or get more knowledge of the course.	①	②	③	④	⑤
C. Do you have other feedback/recommendation for the course?						

Findings and Discussion

The 5E Instructional Model was developed to assist teachers in identifying appropriate teacher's roles at different stages of the educational process and is applicable to programs, individual modules or even specific topic built on the basis of active learning approaches. More than that, the paper also verified the effective of making use of IBSTBI's instructional methods to facilitate active learning.

The key results of the student survey have been combined and demonstrated on Table 4 and 5 below for two main categories A and B.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

Table 4

Results of a Student Survey on the Category A: Overall Information of the Course

A. Overall information about the course	Totally agree on answer (%)	Agree on answer (%)	Neutral answer (%)	Disagree answer (%)	Totally disagree answer (%)	Average Rating
#1	51.72%	24.14%	13.79%	6.90%	3.45%	4.14
#2	44.83%	41.38%	10.34%	0.00%	3.45%	4.24
#3	62.07%	27.59%	6.90%	0.00%	3.44%	4.45
#4	55.17%	34.48%	6.90%	0.00%	3.45%	4.38
#5	48.28%	44.82%	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%	4.41
#6	51.72%	27.59%	17.24%	0.00%	3.45%	4.24
#7	53.57%	35.71%	7.14%	0.00%	3.58%	4.36
#8	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.57

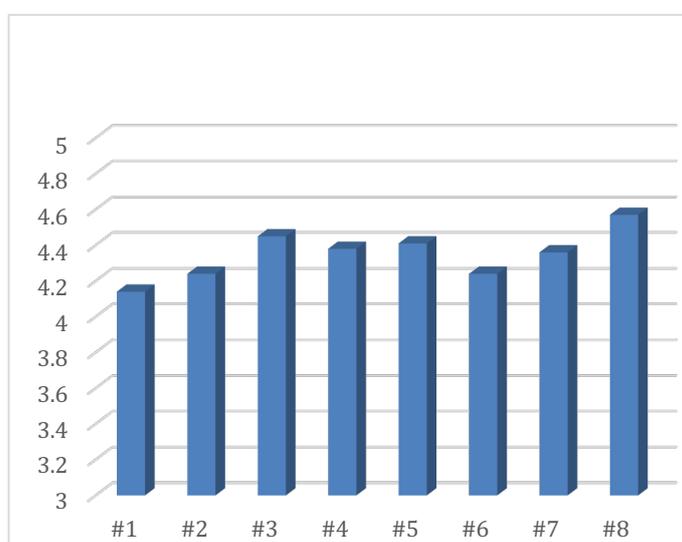


Figure 3. Feedback on overall information of the course

According to table 4 and figure 3, in general, students give a good rating to all criteria of the **overall information of the course** category, with average rating ranging from 4.14 to 4.58. The lowest average rating, 4.14, goes for the criterion #1 (*At the beginning of the course, students are provided course syllabus and courseware*), partly due to a small number of students, around 10.35% giving a negative rating to criterion 1.

Table 5

Results of a student survey on category B: Instructional methods

A. Overall information of the course	Totally agree answer (%)	Agree answer (%)	Neutral answer (%)	Disagree answer (%)	Totally disagree answer (%)	Average Rating
#1	58.62%	31.03%	10.25%	0.00%	0.00%	4.48
#2	79.31%	20.69%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.79
#3	72.41%	27.59%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.72
#4	68.97%	24.14%	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%	4.62
#5	62.07%	31.03%	3.45%	3.45%	0.00%	4.52
#6	68.97%	31.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.69

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

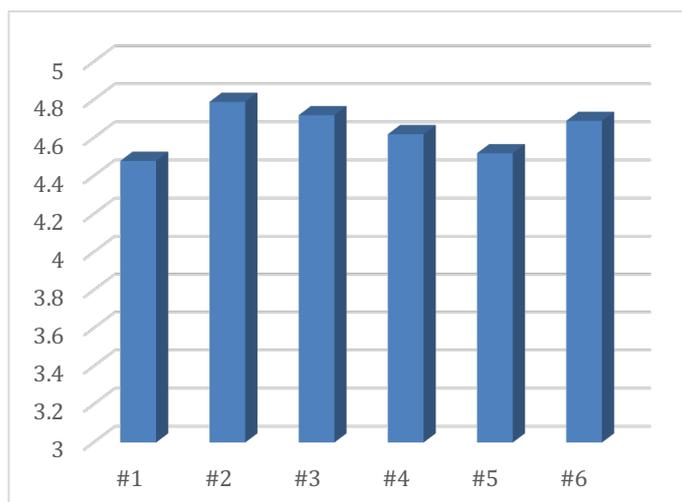


Figure 4. Feedback on instructional methods

According to table 5 and Figure 4, All criteria of **instructional methods** category receive high ratings too, with average rating ranging from 4.48 to 4.799. The only criterion in this category receives negative ratings is the criterion #5 (*The instructor uses official courseware*), with 3.45% of students surveyed says *Disagree* to this criterion. Besides, the average rating for Criterion 3: Various **active teaching methods** have been used (for example: group work, discussion, presentation, role-play etc.,) is really high (4.72). It means that students not only enjoy the active learning environment but also strongly evaluate the effectiveness of these methods applied in the course: Introduction to Public Relations (PR).

Last but not least, on the category C, students gave other feedback and recommendation for the course: (1) *more field trips at various places to further understand communication tools in a real work setting* and (2) *more opportunities of off-campus practices in order to acquire deeper profession knowledge and skills, beyond studying learning materials or engaging in class*. These constructive feedbacks could be motivational factors for the instructor to improve the course as well as explore more updated instructional methods to support active learning in the next semesters.

Previous research also had similar results. For example, Alexandra and et al (2015)'s results also showed that all the teachers (100%) used active learning methods and recognized various learning and instructional phases in the educational process (100%). Some of them were also acquainted with the 5E Instructional Model to a various degree and even apply it for modeling their courses (30%) [1]. Moreover, according to Vivian L.Moya (2014), the results of the t-test analyses of the post-test scores of the treatment group ($X=22.10$, $SD=4.07$) and control group ($X=17.60$, $SD=2.84$) showed that the use of active learning approach was effective [10].

Conclusion

The paper has mentioned that the current trend shifting from teacher-centered class to student-centered class. Thus, to keep with up the trend, the instructors need to renovate the teaching and learning activities appropriately and promote the open environment for the active learning. In that environment, the teacher works as a facilitator while students are active in constructing knowledge, practicing skills and developing professional attitudes. Moreover, the study on active learning has been implemented based on the frameworks of Revised Bloom's taxonomy, 5 E 's Instructional model. Specifically, 11 IBSTPI instructional methods have been presented and guided fully so that instructors can

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO FACILITATE

understand and apply to facilitate active learning in any class in general and in PR class in particular. From the positive results, the author suggests that instructors continue utilizing IBSTPI instructional methods for other courses in PR program. Last not but least, the author will also conduct the studies to verify of effectiveness of these methods to facilitate active learning in Introduction to Public Relations Module and other modules in the next semesters.

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