

## ACTIVE LEARNING

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**Active learning** is "a method of learning in which students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement."<sup>[1]</sup> Bonwell & Eison (1991) states that "students participate [in active learning] when they are doing something besides passively listening." In a report from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), authors discuss a variety of methodologies for promoting active learning. They cite literature that indicates students must do more than just listen in order to learn. They must read, write, discuss, and be engaged in solving problems. This process relates to the three learning domains referred to as knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA). This taxonomy of learning behaviors can be thought of as "the goals of the learning process."<sup>[2]</sup> In particular, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

There are a wide range of alternatives for the term *active learning*, such as: learning through play, technology-based learning, activity-based learning, group work, project method, etc. The common factors in these are some significant qualities and characteristics of active learning. Active learning is the opposite of passive learning; it is learner-centered, not teacher-centered, and requires more than just listening; the active participation of each and every student is a necessary aspect in active learning. Students must be doing things and simultaneously think about the work done and the purpose behind it so that they can enhance their higher order thinking capabilities.

Many research studies<sup>[by whom?]</sup> have proven that active learning as a strategy has promoted achievement levels and some others<sup>[who?]</sup> say that content mastery is

possible through active learning strategies. However, some students as well as teachers find it difficult to adapt to the new learning technique.<sup>[4]</sup>

There is intensive use of scientific and quantitative literacy across the curriculum, and technology-based learning is also in high demand in concern with active learning.<sup>[5]</sup>

Barnes (1989)<sup>[6][7]</sup> suggested principles of active learning:

1. Purposive: the relevance of the task to the students' concerns.
2. Reflective: students' reflection on the meaning of what is learned.
3. Negotiated: negotiation of goals and methods of learning between students and teachers.
4. Critical: students appreciate different ways and means of learning the content.
5. Complex: students compare learning tasks with complexities existing in real life and making reflective analysis.
6. Situation-driven: the need of the situation is considered in order to establish learning tasks.
7. Engaged: real life tasks are reflected in the activities conducted for learning.

Active learning requires appropriate learning environments through the implementation of correct strategy. Characteristics of learning environment are:<sup>[8][9]</sup>

1. Aligned with constructivist strategies and evolved from traditional philosophies.
2. Promoting research based learning through investigation and contains authentic scholarly content.
3. Encouraging leadership skills of the students through self-development activities.
4. Creating atmosphere suitable for collaborative learning for building knowledgeable learning communities.
5. Cultivating a dynamic environment through interdisciplinary learning and generating high-profile activities for a better learning experience.

6. Integration of prior with new knowledge to incur a rich structure of knowledge among the students.
7. Task-based performance enhancement by giving the students a realistic practical sense of the subject matter learnt in the classroom.

### **Constructivist framework[edit]**

Active learning coordinates with the principles of constructivism which are, cognitive, meta-cognitive, evolving and affective in nature. Studies have shown that immediate results in construction of knowledge is not possible through active learning, the child goes through process of knowledge construction, knowledge recording and knowledge absorption. This process of knowledge construction is dependent on previous knowledge of the learner where the learner is self-aware of the process of cognition and can control and regulate it by themselves.<sup>[10]</sup> There are several aspects of learning and some of them are:

1. Learning through meaningful reception, influenced by David Ausubel, who emphasizes the previous knowledge the learner possesses and considers it a key factor in learning.
2. Learning through discovery, influenced by Jerome Bruner, where students learn through discovery of ideas with the help of situations provided by the teacher.
3. Conceptual change: misconceptions takes place as students discover knowledge without any guidance; teachers provide knowledge keeping in mind the common misconceptions about the content and keep an evaluatory check on the knowledge constructed by the students.
4. Constructivism, influenced by researchers such as Lev Vygotsky, suggests collaborative group work within the framework of cognitive strategies like questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarizing.