

To what extent is
active, discussion
based learning more
beneficial than lecture

...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

From the grocery store to the workplace; negotiations and interactions with our peers happen every day. However, considering that not everyone has the same communication style or life situation, we must learn the appropriate social skills required to navigate these daily interactions and work collaboratively with our peers. Developing these social skills can be very difficult if all learning is done just from books, lectures, and absorbing only what is told to us by teachers; as theory always stays the same, but people and social situations are constantly changing. Transforming our traditional, passive learning, lecture based teaching method into an active learning, discussion based teaching method will allow more opportunities for students to learn how to work in a team effectively. These opportunities will help students to develop stronger collaboration, analytical, and critical thinking skills; learning in an environment more heavily focused on discussion with peers will help us all to learn to challenge personal beliefs and discourage conformity. This idea raises the question of “ To what extent is active, discussion based learning more beneficial than lecture based learning for students?”. Three authors help answer this question by delving into the benefits of active learning. All three authors support that there is much more to be gained from expanding our teaching methods to include active learning teaching techniques, rather than just keeping the status quo by keeping all education based on information directly from the teacher and their lecture.

Students learn not only from textbooks and lectures, but from peers as well. Author Alison King uses an example of how one particular active learning technique can be used to better prepare students for their lives after school.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-is-active-discussion-based-learning-more-beneficial-than-lecture-based-learning-for-students/>

This technique exemplified by King is a “ jigsaw” method of learning that is used as a tool for active learning and helps students to develop cooperative learning techniques. In the “ jigsaw” technique, every student receives only a certain part of the study material they have to learn and then teach to the others in their group. (King, 34) The learning objectives can only be achieved when all students work together actively through discussion, which creates an active learning environment. This method helps to teach students about individual accountability, because as they work in these groups they become responsible for both their own learning, but for the learning of their peers. Additionally, this method teaches students to become more familiar with being accountable to relay information to their peers in order to learn all that they must learn. The skills that students learn in a classroom using this active learning approach helps to better prepare them for their life after they are done with school, as we never truly know everything and must fill in gaps in our knowledge from information gained from others throughout our lives. Students learn an appreciation of the work and contributions of others through this active learning technique; which is a skill that would not be gained simply from listening to a lecture given by a singular teacher. Additionally, Alison King also emphasizes that taking this cooperative approach can have “ positive effects on self-concept, race relations, acceptance of handicapped students and enjoyment of school” (King, 35). As adults, students will have to interact with diverse groups of people in every aspect of their lives, so learning how to interact socially with various groups of individuals while still in school better prepares students for their interactions in adulthood. This experience in cooperation and acceptance

helps prepare students to be adults that contribute positively to future interactions with peers.

In addition to improving their collaboration and social skills, Active learning techniques improve student's critical thinking skills as well. Critical thinking is the ability for a student to objectively analyze information and come to a conclusion on that information that is unbiased, rather than just conforming to what those around the student think. Jiddu Krishnamurti talks about the concept of conformity in education by explaining that the traditional lecture method encourages students to "repeat what other people say, what other people do, because it is the easiest way to live - to conform to the old pattern or to a new pattern. We have to find out what it means never to conform and what it means to live without fear." (Krishnamurti, 1).

Krishnamurti believes that students have the inherent "capacity to think clearly, objectively, sanely, healthily" (Krishnamurti, 2). However, these abilities can only be fostered in active learning environments where critical thought and discussion is encouraged. The traditional lecture format is also challenged by author Aleszu Bajak, who cites "many scholars" who agree "that engaging students with questions or group activities is more effective" than giving students information in lectures (Bajak, 1). Additionally, Krishnamurti describes intelligence as "a state in which there is no personal emotion involved, no personal opinion, prejudice or inclination. Intelligence is the capacity for direct understanding" (Krishnamurti, 2). Information given in a traditional lecture format is unable to be given completely without bias, thus it is important that students are given the opportunity to discuss and deconstruct information to achieve this direct understanding. To continue,

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-is-active-discussion-based-learning-more-beneficial-than-lecture-based-learning-for-students/>

Krishnamurti introduces the concept of “ sensitivity” in education.

Krishnamurti explains that “ a human being who is aware of his environment, as well as aware of every movement of thought and feeling, who is a harmonious whole, is sensitive.” (Krishnamurti, 3) Sensitivity isn’t something that can be learned from a textbook, from being a passive learner, or other traditional lecture based methods; it can only be achieved by learning in conjunction with peer discussion, perspectives, and other active learning techniques. Once learned, sensitivity is a powerful and valuable skill that students will use to work better in teams and function more effectively as members of society. The awareness of things outside of just the student and their own understandings allows that student to better question and learn from their peers. This then creates an environment where creativity can take place. In traditional lecture formats that do not encourage students to question or challenge their surroundings, there is no creativity or innovation. This active learning technique ultimately helps society to advance as it makes us improve as an individual and work with others.

The need for improved critical thinking skills goes beyond just the benefits to the individual, as it benefits larger groups as well. Eleanor Roosevelt argues that there is a need for students to develop stronger critical thinking skills to benefit society at large. She emphasizes the importance of accuracy in understanding and strong analytical skills in students. Roosevelt explains that teaching should be done in a way that sparks interest and thought in every student, and this can’t be achieved solely in the traditional lecture style class, saying “ The best teaching is often done outside of the classroom.” (Roosevelt, 4). Teaching must be focused on the student’s ability

to think critically and come to conclusions on their own, not just their ability to repeat their teacher's opinion. Strong analytical skills are required to resolve complicated problems that arise in student's lives past their days in the classroom, so it is important that students are able to develop these skills while still in school. Roosevelt's idea is supported by the work of Eric Mazur, who explains that traditional lecture encourages students to "memorize what the professor tells them and "parrot it back" on the exam but they never really connect what they are learning to what they already think about how the physical world works." (Mazur, Hanford, 4). These "parroting" skills are not as easily transferable to life outside of school as the skills that can be gained from active learning teaching techniques. Roosevelt supports the idea that it is active learning teaching techniques will create students who are better equipped for the challenges of life past the classroom, she explains that "The power of concentration and accuracy which these studies develop will later mean a man or woman able to understand and analyze a difficult situation." (Roosevelt, 3). Analytical skills gained from active learning allows students to become adults that work productively and effectively in groups, leading to a more efficient society overall.

While in a perfect world, active learning is more beneficial to students than passive learning, there are many factors that make the classroom less than perfect. Some challenges of teaching with active learning techniques are addressed by author Adam Kotsko. Kotsko explains that for discussions to be effective for learning, students must first be good readers, which they often are not (Kotsko, 1). He describes that students must first be given a baseline


knowledge to become good readers who lead rich discussions: a point not often addressed by proponents of active learning teaching styles. It is difficult for educators to measure student's knowledge of material based purely on discussion if these students are not prepared with the tools to articulate this knowledge appropriately for the discipline. In this sense, Kotsko argues that passive learning methods "such as lectures and information-heavy exams, have an essential role, as long as they're used in a conscious way." (Kotsko, 2). However, Kotsko does not go into detail about what a "conscious" use of these traditional methods would look like. Alison King brings about an idea to bridge the transition between lecture based learning and more active learning techniques. King advocates for the use of student focused discussion as a precursor to the lecturing of baseline knowledge referred to by Kotsko. By using discussion before being given large chunks of information in lecture, King argues that this leads to "an understanding among the professor and all the students about what the students want to learn and experience during the unit. The importance of this initial discussion cannot be underestimated because [this] will not be successful for any students who are not actively interested in a topic related to the unit" (King 34-35). King brings in a middle ground that displays how to bridge the gap between the necessity of our traditional lecture-focused educational practices argued for by Kotsko, and the idealistic active learning practices advocated for by King, Krishnamurti, and Roosevelt.


The transition of educational practices from passive to active is something that requires work and time. However, the benefits to students are worth the work that needs to be put into introducing these active learning techniques.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-is-active-discussion-based-learning-more-beneficial-than-lecture-based-learning-for-students/>

The ease of information transferring found in traditional lectures is heavily outweighed by the benefits to student's social and critical thinking skills gained from more active learning practices. Implementing active learning practices in classrooms will develop students into critical and diverse thinkers who are more well prepared to tackle the challenges and problems of the world than those who have been educated to just listen and accept what they are being told. To this extent, it is beneficial to everyone in society, even those who are no longer in school, that we make the transition to utilizing more active learning techniques.

Citation

 **Bajak, Aleszu. “ Lectures Aren’t Just Boring, They’re Ineffective, Too, Study Finds.” *Science*, 12 May 2014, www.sciencemag.org/news/2014/05/lectures-arent-just-boring-theyre-ineffective-too-study-finds.**

 **Hanford, Emily. “ The Problem with Lecturing.” *American Public Media* . americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/tomorrows-college/lectures/problem-with-lecturing.html.**

- King, Alison. “ Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side.” *College Teaching*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1993, pp. 30-35, faculty.washington.edu/kate1/ewExternalFiles/SageOnTheStage.pdf.
- Kotsko, Adam. “ A Defense of the Lecture.” *Inside Higher Ed*, 20 Nov. 2009, www.insidehighered.com/views/2009/11/20/defense-lecture.
- Krishnamurti, Jiddu. “ On Education.” *J. Krishnamurti Online*, www.jkrishnamurti.org/krishnamurti-teachings/view-text.php?tid=43&id=297&w.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-is-active-discussion-based-learning-more-beneficial-than-lecture-based-learning-for-students/>

- Roosevelt, Eleanor. " Good Citizenship: The Purpose of Education." Pictorial Review, 31 Apr. 1930: 4, 94, 97. Rpt. in The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project. The George Washington U, www2. gwu. edu/~erpapers/documents/articles/goodcitizenship. cfm.