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Implementation of the Active Pedagogies Paradigm and Active Learning in the Classroom. A Case Study from a University Philosophy Classroom, Based on the SoTL Research Model

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Abstract

Introduction: The implementation of a series of didactic activities aligned with the paradigm of active pedagogies and active learning in university philosophy classes has become a recent area of interest and attention for current pedagogical and methodological trends in teaching philosophy. The introduction of such didactic activities is associated with the implementation of methodological teaching strategies that facilitate student-centered meaningful learning, representing a paradigmatic shift within the tradition of teaching philosophy. Objective: This research studies, records, and communicates the experiences of university students in the philosophy classroom. Its goal is to analyze the designs and methodological practices of teaching and learning philosophy based on the paradigm of active pedagogies and active learning in the classroom. It addresses the question: Do the implemented learning activities enhance learning? Method: A quantitative questionnaire with a Likert scale was used to understand the population's perception of the learning activities based on the SoTL methodology. Results: The results verify the relevance of designing and implementing educational practices centered on the student, as it provides meaningful learning, cognitive engagement, and stimulates higher-order cognitive processes.

Keywords: Higher Education. Case Study. Education. Active Learning. Active Pedagogies. Philosophy

Introduction

Teaching methods based on the Active Pedagogies Paradigm (PPA) and Active Learning in the Classroom (AAA) provide spaces and opportunities for cognitive engagement (Smart & Csapo, 2007). Wanner (2015) found that students' cognitive engagement and active learning are related. Interaction and cognitive engagement are increasingly considered prerequisites for meaningful learning and for stimulating the use of higher-order cognitive processes (Miller et al., 2011). According to Abujreiban (2023), Masegosa et al. (2024), Nájera et al. (2020), Tasler et al. (2023), and Wang & Cai (2024), the implementation of didactic activities within PPA and AAA enables meaningful learning and higher-order cognitive processes in students.

This study analyzes the results of implementing philosophical educational didactic activities (Boekaerts, 2002; Brophy, 1999; Rosenshine, 2010; Timperley, 2008; Vosniadou, 2001; Walberg &

Paik, 2000) and student-centered methodological practices (Hughes & Acedo, 2017; Topping et al., 2020) in university philosophy classes based on PPA and AAA, according to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) model

Theoretical Framework

The conceptualization and precision of PPA and AAA are broad, but their essential characteristic is that the student engages in an activity that involves thinking about what they are doing (Brookfield, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Day, 2005; Kane et al., 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) and how it is happening.

The SoTL models have two aspects, according to Veas et al. (2023); one focuses on the continuous growth of the teacher with stages of information, reflection, teaching model, and communication (Trigwell et al., 2000), while the other focuses on the implementation of SoTL with stages of inquiry, analysis, validation, research, and communication (Richlin, 2001).

Methods

The study was conducted from a mixed, descriptive, and exploratory approach, based on a conventional content analysis of a case study. The sample consisted of 20 students from the University of Florencio del Castillo, main campus in Cartago, Costa Rica. A quantitative Likert scale questionnaire was used to assess the population's perception of the learning activities from university philosophy classes and the SoTL methodology.

The instrument developed was validated by experts in didactics, philosophy teaching, and research methodology. It was implemented at five different points during the 15week course. Questionnaires 1, 2, and 3 were structured around the following dimensions, respectively, according to the Likert scale: 1. Active participation and student autonomy (4, 3, and 4 items); 2. Teamwork and collaboration (4, 3, and 4 items); and 3. Application and relevance of philosophical and educational learning (4, 3, and 4 items). Questionnaire 3 includes a variant on Dimension 4, Motivation and participation in the philosophy class, which is open-ended. Questionnaires 4 and 5 were structured into dimensions for evaluation. The dimensions were: 1. Active Pedagogies (4 items) and 2. Teaching Characteristics and Actions (4 and 8 items, respectively), according to the Likert scale. An open-ended question addressed Dimension 3: Active Learning in the Classroom.

Results

The results show that students' level of learning and knowledge retention increases when they actively participate in the tasks and activities planned for the course. Additionally, when students are presented with situations that motivate and encourage them to share their findings and reflections, learning outcomes improve. Furthermore, it confirmed the centrality of the students in the educational process, and provided a broad spectrum of knowledge about the structure and development of learning processes, contributing to professional meta-learning.

The design and development of university philosophy classes were centered around students based on PPA and AAA. These were activities developed in the context of active learning situations to create spaces, opportunities, interaction, and cognitive engagement (Smart & Csapo, 2007). This approach emphasizes thinking about education and didactic activities, with a focus on the individual, nations, and critical thinking (Leite et al., 2022).

Discussion

The SoTL model represented an epistemic instance for reflecting on and reconsidering educational designs and professional practices (Chocarro et al., 2013). For the teacher, from this perspective, it involved reflection on classroom action, understood as one of the fundamental characteristics of teaching practice (Brookfield, 2006; DarlingHammond & Bransford, 2005; Day, 2005; Kane et al., 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

This study confirms what the literature has expressed regarding the improvement of educational practices in teaching and learning philosophy and the enhancement of methodologies used for student learning, based on PPA and AAA (Bologna Declaration, 1999; English & Kitsantas, 2013; Kozanitis & Desbiens, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2011; Llano, 2009; Nussbaum, 2010; Orón, 2018; Ríos-Muñoz & Herrera-Araya, 2017).

Conclusions

The research results demonstrate that when didactic planning is based on the PPA and AAA, the implemented learning activities enhance learning. They also show that active learning in philosophy can be fostered when attention is focused on teaching and learning processes in the classroom as the core of improvement and teacher responsibility for their students' educational outcomes (Murillo & Krichesky, 2015). The impact of activities designed within the PPA and AAA framework is that students exhibit better cognitive engagement, meaningful learning, and higher-order cognitive processes, which are also broad and relevant for all members of the philosophy classroom community (Azorín, 2022; Leicht et al., 2018; Leite et al., 2022).

This confirms the thesis of Reeve et al. (2019), Sammons et al. (2016), and Shernoff (2013), which posits that student participation, engagement, and connection depend on how teachers teach and the creation of environments conducive to student involvement (González, 2015; Pino-James, 2018), aligning with Fernández-Terol and Domingo (2021).

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitations of the study were the number of participants and the variety of their academic backgrounds. Future research should continue to explore cases of implementing university didactic activities according to PPA, AAA, and SoTL, but from other non-philosophical disciplinary fields.

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