



Active Learning in the Introduction to Music Pedagogy Course, Faculty of Music, Silpakorn University, Thailand

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Abstract

The important mission of higher education is to produce qualified students who show competencies relating to the requirements of employers. The management of teaching and learning activities should promote students' identities and lifelong learning skills. Active learning is an approach within student-centered learning concept that emphasizes learning by doing and acquiring knowledge through experience. As a lecturer at Silpakorn University, I am responsible for the Introduction to Music Pedagogy course (IMP), one of the subjects in the Bachelor of Music in Performance (revised curriculum A.D. 2016), the Faculty of Music, Silpakorn University, Thailand. After finishing the course, students should be able to explain music teaching principles suitable for human development. Besides, they are required to apply music teaching principles to a real situation. Due to the aim of this course to construct new knowledge through learning by doing, active learning is, therefore, employed in the class. The 4As stages were developed based on the application of active learning in Introduction to Music Pedagogy classes. The first A is called "Arousing". Its purposes are to arouse students' curiosities and motivate learning needs. Diagnosing students' prior music teaching experiences is included. The activities in this stage comprise students sharing their experiences in music teaching as well as teachers surveying students' attitudes towards music teaching. The second A stage, "Acquiring Knowledge", focuses on music teaching theory and practice. Students are assisted in discovering music teaching knowledge and skills through practice, group discussion, and class observation. Focusing on knowledge construction, the third A stage "Applying" encourages students to apply music teaching principles in a real situation. Exchanging experiences with friends and reflecting on their own music teaching skills are also important activities in this stage. The final A, "Announcing", aims to share the knowledge students discovered from their music teaching experiences with the public; students are required to create music teaching contents depending on their topics of interest.

Keywords: *Active Learning, Music Pedagogy, Silpakorn University*

1. Introduction

Producing qualified graduates that meet the requirements of stakeholders is one of the important duties of higher education. Teachers should manage learning activities to promote learning through practice and support individual competencies. Therefore, the traditional "teacher-centered approach" may not be effective because teachers are leaders while students are listeners. To enhance thinking skills and knowledge construction, teachers should provide a challenging atmosphere to motivate students' learning. Students should have the opportunities to discuss their opinions and propose the content they need to learn. Moreover, allowing students to set their own academic goals can help them achieve expected learning outcomes. Assessments can also reflect students' competencies. The concepts mentioned above clearly correspond to the active learning approach.

As a lecturer at Silpakorn University, I am in charge of the Introduction to Music Pedagogy course (IMP); one of the elective courses in the Bachelor of Music in Performance, Faculty of Music, Silpakorn University, Thailand. At the end of the course, students should be able to explain music pedagogy principles and apply them in a real situation. To achieve the outcomes, students should not only learn the theories but also practice [5]. Teachers are facilitators or mentors of learning so that students can be surrounded by an atmosphere that motivates them to be curious [4]. Importantly, practicing music pedagogy activities with peers and brainstorming can help students learn other ideas and use them to develop their own ideas.

As mentioned above, IMP improves the music pedagogy skills of classical music students in both theoretical and practical ways. This article presents the "4As stages" of teaching and learning in the IMP which I created based on my own experience from this course and the application of the active



learning approach. The article can be beneficial to anyone involved with music teacher training as guidelines on the enhancement of pedagogical skills for music.

2. Active learning

One of the important educational goals is that students are able to construct and apply knowledge. Due to the fact that human can learn well as long as they are not threatened, teachers should create a classroom environment to support learning and encourage students to learn through real experiences. Learning will occur when learned information is meaningful [1]. Group discussion and reflective thinking improve knowledge discovery [3], [6]. Active learning supports this concept. Teachers facilitate a challenging atmosphere and motivate knowledge construction. Dachakupt & Yindeesuk suggested the steps of active learning called Co5-steps as follows [2]:

2.1 Question

This step is to arouse students' curiosity. Teachers have to create an environment to challenge students' learning and encourage students to observe stimuli. Connecting prior knowledge with new information helps students engage in the lessons. If they engage in the lessons, they will be attentive and begin questioning the content about which they need to inquire.

2.2 Search

The inquiry method is vital. This step emphasizes information retrieval. Also, students are involved in the planning of data gathering and analysis.

2.3 Construct

After the data analysis in the second step, students deal with data conclusion and knowledge construction. Teachers facilitate correct information and assist students in connecting the whole information.

2.4 Communicate

Communicating data is the main point of this step. Students have to present their knowledge accompanied by suitable media. They also share their knowledge to others.

2.5 Service

For the final step, knowledge is applied in a real situation. Works or projects are evidence of students' understanding. Importantly, the created works are disseminated to service society.

It is apparent that the main point of active learning focuses on how the knowledge is constructed. Furthermore, applying the knowledge in a real situation is necessary and students have to produce works or projects for the benefit of the society. As facilitators, teachers should provide the environment that motivates learning and suggest the guidelines on how to construct knowledge which include suggesting obvious directions to a conclusion.

3. Active learning and the Introduction to Music Pedagogy course

As previously mentioned, IMP enhances students' application of music pedagogy skills and highlights the importance of the actual practice as well as the learning of theories. Therefore, the 4As stages were developed for classical music students enrolling in this course based on active learning concepts [2], [3], [6]. The stages are as follows:

3.1 Arousing

Apart from informing students of the course learning outcomes, the main purposes of this stage are to arouse students' curiosities and motivate learning needs. Diagnosing students' prior music teaching experiences is included. To inspire students, this stage stimulates them to share their experiences of music teaching with friends and teachers. Simultaneously, teachers can observe students' attitudes towards music teaching. Teachers can raise questions and allow students to predict the answers to get their attention. It can also be better if students are given the opportunities to present the topic in music teaching of their interest.

3.2 Acquiring Knowledge

This stage focuses on music teaching theory and practice. Students are assisted in discovering music teaching knowledge and skills through practice, group discussion, and class observation. Examples of music teaching activities are demonstrated by teachers followed by a discussion on the activities. To provide a variety of experiences, teachers can demonstrate music activities or music games based on music teaching principles and learning theories. Collaborative learning should be used so that students can receive a lot of examples and learn the ways to create music activities suitable for their future students' development. Developing music lesson plans is also included in this stage. Before the next stage, observing music classes in a real situation is vital. Students can learn different approaches to managing music classes from experienced music teachers.

3.3 Applying

This stage emphasizes knowledge construction. Students are enhanced to apply music teaching principles in a real situation. Practicing music teaching skills encourages students to employ music teaching theories in practical ways. At this stage, students are required to exchange their ideas during discussions to think reflectively in order to form their own understanding of the theories. Teachers now play the role of facilitator or mentor to help students connect scattered information and confirm the accuracy of their knowledge.

3.4 Announcing

This stage focuses on knowledge sharing to benefit any interested parties and to be sources for further studies. Students are required to disseminate their works at a conference, seminar or on social media. Apart from hard skills, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are involved as students have to design the project, manage public relations, and persuade people to participate.

It is apparent that the 4As stages are used to support students' completion of IMP. The 4 stages, Arousing, Acquiring Knowledge, Applying, and Announcing, hone the students in the application of music pedagogy skills in a practical situation. The students are required to not only construct knowledge of music teaching but also present their discovered knowledge to the public. The 4As stages are summarized in the figure below.



Fig.1. the 4As stages

4. Discussion

4.1 The 4As stages were developed from my experience teaching IMP. The course is an elective course for undergraduate students majoring in classical music; therefore, some of them are not familiar with music teaching and being music teachers may not be their main career path. The first stage, Arousing, is rather difficult for them as the purpose of this step is to get students' attention and motivate their learning needs. Moreover, they have to share topics in music teaching of their choice. If they feel frustrated in the first stage, they cannot continue the next. The way I used to motivate students was by asking for volunteers who had experience in teaching music to demonstrate activities they had used in front of the class. The rest became more encouraged afterward and could contribute to the activity which created a positive atmosphere for the class.

4.2 The 4As stages were developed for on-site classes. In case any unexpected circumstances such as a Coronavirus pandemic occur, some activities have to be adjusted, for example, class observing



and pedagogy practicing may need to be completed online. Therefore, teachers have to contact any involved parties and prepare for observing classes online and provide online music pedagogy practice instead. Teachers should definitely assist students in terms of software or equipment required for online classes.

4.3 It is not necessary to use all 4As stages within one class. Teachers can apply just ten minutes, half an hour, or one semester depending on students' competence, content, or situation. For example, if students are not capable of teaching music and writing music lesson plans, they cannot reach the stage of "Applying".

4.4 The 4As stages promote both hard and soft skills. Hard skills cover the discipline of music pedagogy and soft skills involve communication and cooperation. Moreover, students' generous attitudes are reinforced by providing music classes and sharing their knowledge. Therefore, the skills obtained via these stages relate to cognition, attitude, and practice.

References

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