

Engaging Synergetic Pedagogical Approaches for Higher Education: An Innovative Teaching Plan for Educators

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Abstract

The module titled 'Engaging Synergistic Pedagogical Approaches for Higher Education: A Teaching Plan for Educators' presents a pioneering framework for educators aimed at revolutionising higher education through interactive and student-centred teaching methods. In response to the fast-paced technological advancements and evolving educational requirements of our time, this initiative strives to bridge traditional teaching methods with contemporary demands. Its goal is to cultivate innovation within higher education, enabling students to develop crucial skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability necessary for success in the 21st century. Drawing insights from small-scale research involving students, this initiative explores and implements pedagogical strategies that actively involve students in their learning process. The findings underscore the necessity for interactive teaching and learning experiences, which this innovative approach aims to address by leveraging technology, experiential learning, and collaborative projects to create a dynamic and immersive educational setting. Ultimately, 'Engaging Synergistic Pedagogical Approaches for Higher Education: A Teaching Plan for Educators' envisions a higher education landscape where innovation serves as a fundamental aspect of the learning journey rather than just a buzzword. By fostering creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability, this initiative aims to empower the future generation of leaders and problem solvers.

Keywords: Pedagogical approaches, Student, Educator, Teaching and Learning

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, there is a palpable shift in student preferences towards engaging and captivating learning activities and modules. Traditional methods of instruction, characterised by a one-way flow of information from teacher to student, are increasingly perceived as less effective and engaging by today's learners (Chen et al., 2003; Bremner et al., 2022). As a result, students often find themselves disengaged from these conventional approaches, seeking alternative means to grasp concepts and content more effectively. One of the key factors driving this shift is the recognition that active engagement and interaction play crucial roles in the learning process (Hurst et al., 2013; Saunders & Wong, 2020; Munna & Kalam, 2021). Therefore, student engagement requires the

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desire, willingness, or compulsion of students to participate in a learning process and successfully absorb information to develop their critical thinking capabilities. When students are actively involved in their learning through participatory activities and hands-on experiences, they are better able to grasp complex concepts and retain information (Miller et al., 2011; Official Website of the Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012; Kong, 2021). Visualizing concepts through interactive activities not only enhances understanding but also fosters deeper engagement with the subject matter.

Moreover, modern students are accustomed to a digital, interconnected world where information is readily accessible, and communication is bidirectional. Traditional teaching methods, which rely heavily on lectures and passive learning, often fail to capitalise on the interactive nature of contemporary communication channels (Raja, 2018; Wang, 2022; Singh, 2023). As a result, students may feel disconnected from the learning process and disengaged from the material being presented. In response to these changing dynamics, educators are increasingly exploring innovative pedagogical approaches that prioritise student engagement and interaction (Zyngier, 2008; Official Website of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016). These approaches aim to create learning experiences that are not only informative but also enjoyable and meaningful for students. By incorporating elements of active learning, collaborative problem-solving, and multimedia resources, educators can create a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment (Pooja, 2023; Smith, 2024).

Among the effective strategies for enhancing student engagement is the use of multimedia resources such as videos, simulations, and interactive multimedia presentations. These resources can help bring abstract concepts to life, making them more accessible and understandable for students (Bledsoe, 2013; Abdulrahaman et al., 2020; Samat & Aziz, 2020). Additionally, multimedia resources can cater to different learning styles and preferences, allowing students to engage with course material in ways that are most effective for them. Furthermore, incorporating opportunities for active participation and feedback can further enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Gray & DiLoreto, 2016; Guan et al., 2018). For example, interactive quizzes, polls, and discussions can encourage students to actively participate in class, providing valuable insights into their understanding of the material. Additionally, providing timely and constructive feedback on student work can help guide their learning and improve their performance.

In addition to enhancing student engagement, innovative pedagogical approaches can also promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and other essential skills that are increasingly valued in today's rapidly changing world. By providing opportunities for students to explore complex issues, analyse information, and collaborate with their peers, these approaches help prepare students for success in the 21st-century workforce. Moreover, by embracing innovative pedagogical approaches, educators can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments that cater to diverse student needs and backgrounds. For example, incorporating diverse perspectives and cultural references into course materials can help make learning more relevant and relatable for all students. Additionally, providing multiple pathways for learning and assessment can accommodate different learning styles and abilities, ensuring that all students can succeed. In today's teaching and learning landscape, innovative pedagogical approaches that prioritise student engagement and interaction are essential for fostering meaningful learning experiences. By incorporating elements of active learning, collaboration, and multimedia resources, educators can create dynamic and stimulating learning environments that promote deeper understanding and retention of course material. Moreover, by embracing innovative pedagogical approaches, educators can help prepare students for success in the 21st-century workforce and create more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING PLAN

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the traditional methods of teaching are being re-examined and reshaped to meet the dynamic needs of students. This essay explores the design and development of a teaching plan aimed at enhancing student engagement through interactive and student-centred learning activities. Drawing upon findings from a survey conducted among 94 students, as well as an analysis of their feedback, this paper discusses: (1) the process of creating a Google Form to explore student perspectives; (2) highlights key findings; and (3) presents a potential module consisting of 10 21st-century learning activities.

The first step in designing the teaching plan involved creating a Google Form survey to gather insights from students regarding their preferences and perspectives on classroom learning. The survey involved 94 students, aiming to gauge their opinions on various aspects of teaching and learning. The findings from the survey provided

valuable insights into students' preferences and highlighted the importance of interactive teaching methods. According to the survey results, a significant majority of students expressed a desire for more opportunities to share their perspectives in the classroom, with 63.8% indicating a preference for this type of interaction (see Diagram 1). Additionally, 72.4% of students preferred a two-way transfer of knowledge in the classroom, emphasising the importance of fostering dialogue and exchange between students and teachers (see Diagram 2). Moreover, an overwhelming 79.8% of students felt the need for more interactive teaching and learning sessions in the classroom, indicating a strong demand for engaging and participatory activities (see Diagram 3).

Furthermore, the survey revealed that interactive teaching and learning sessions had a positive impact on students' motivation and focus in the classroom. Specifically, 67.0% of students reported being motivated to engage in the classroom when interactive sessions were incorporated (see Diagram 4), while 77.6% felt that these sessions positively influenced their focus (see Diagram 5). Additionally, a majority of students (78.8%) indicated that interactive teaching and learning sessions stimulated their critical thinking skills, highlighting the cognitive benefits of such approaches (see Diagram 6). Based on the feedback received from the survey, an analysis was conducted to identify common themes and preferences among students. This analysis informed the design and development of a potential teaching module aimed at enhancing student engagement through a series of 21st-century learning activities.

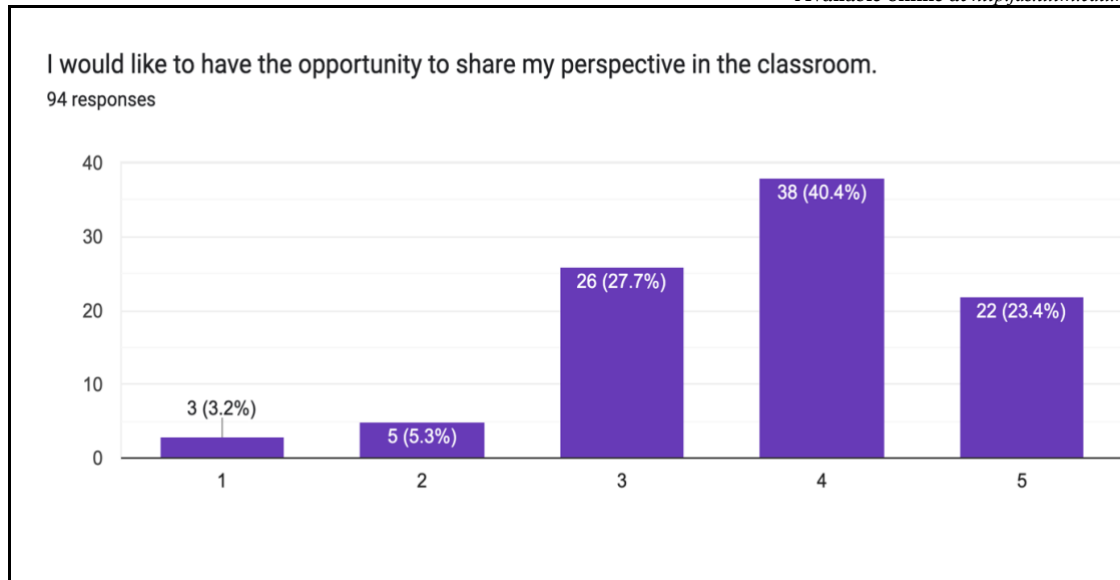


Diagram 1: I would like to have the opportunity to share perspective in the classroom

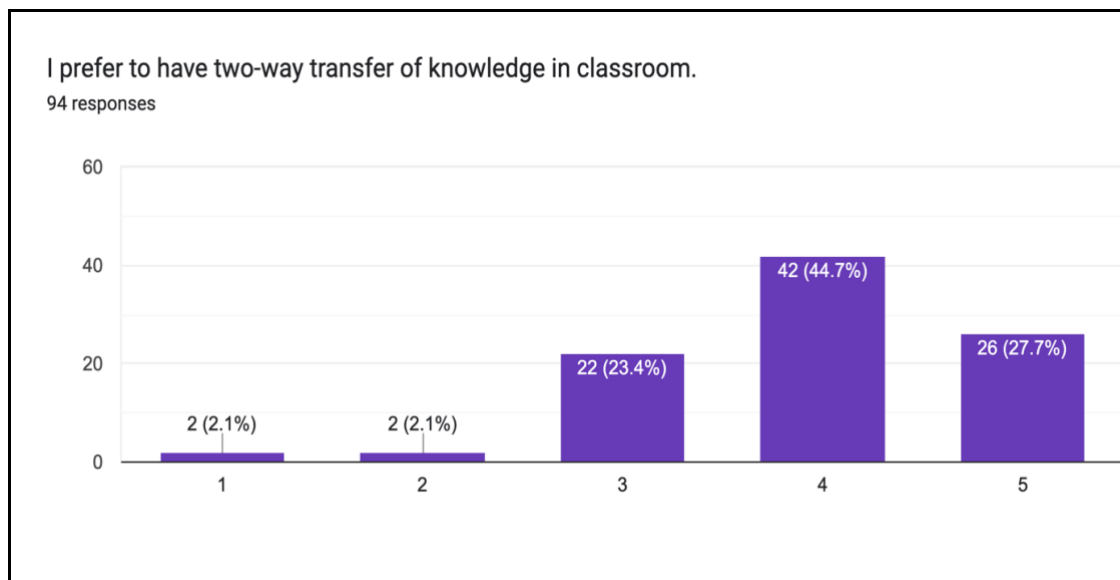


Diagram 2: I prefer to have two-way transfer of knowledge in classroom

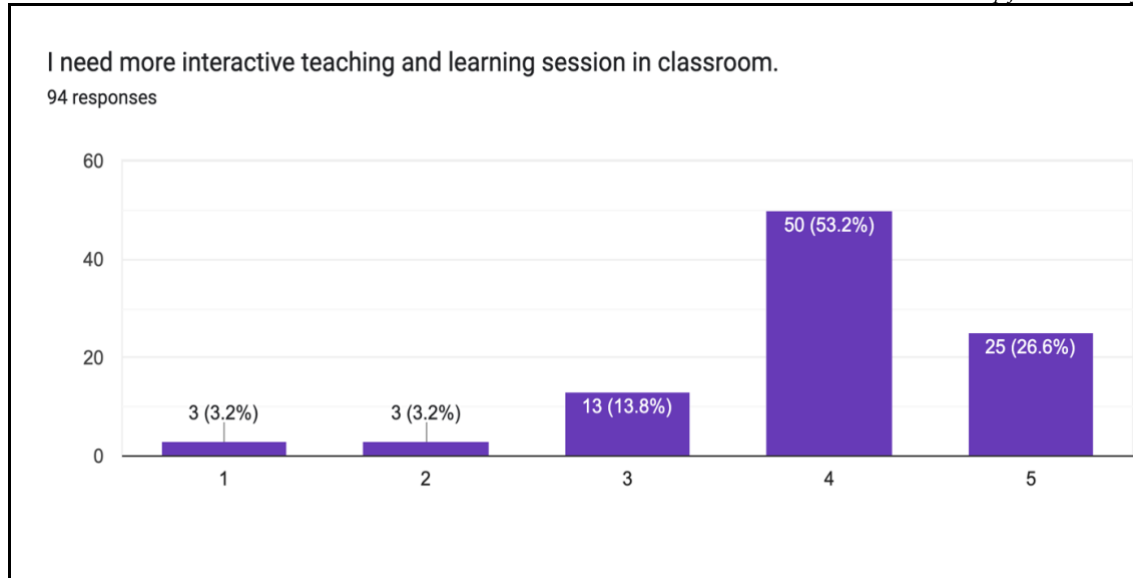


Diagram 3: I need more interactive teaching and learning session in classroom

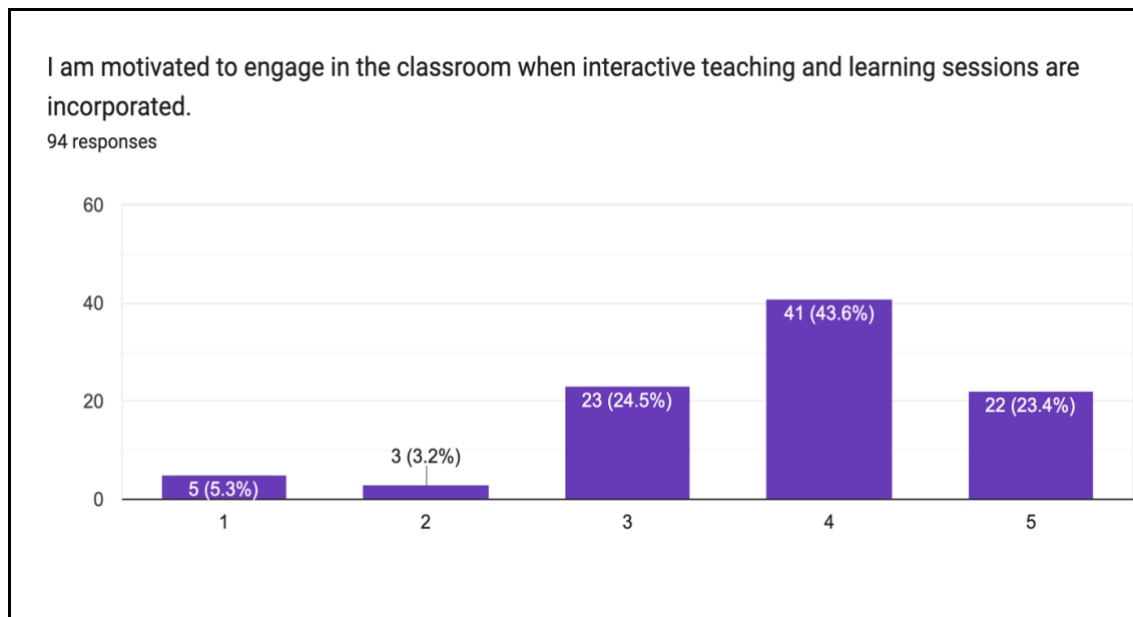


Diagram 4: I am motivated to engage in the classroom when interactive teaching and learning sessions are incorporated

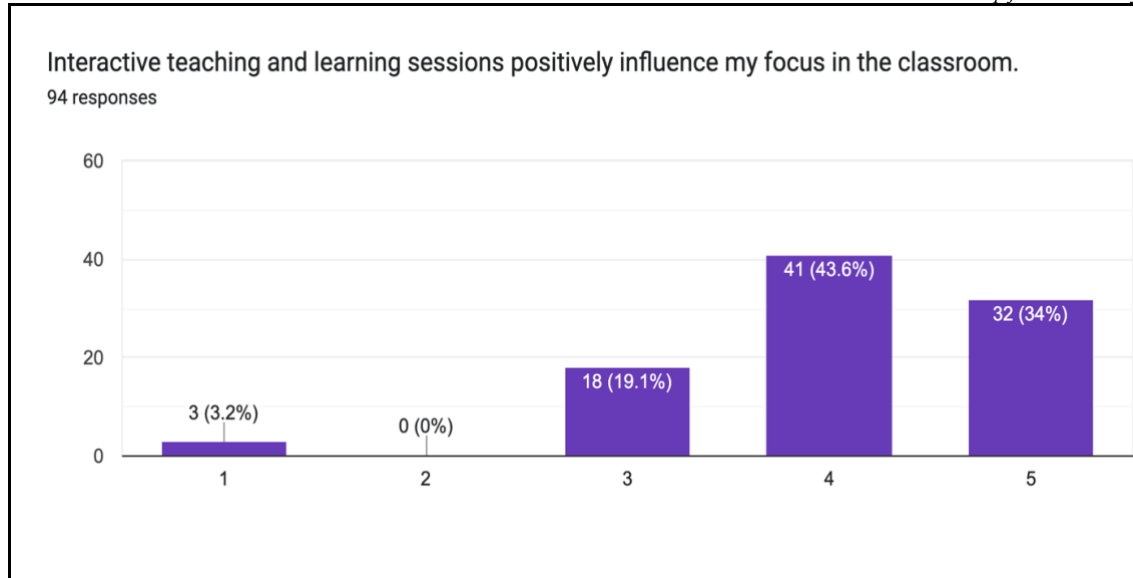


Diagram 5: Interactive teaching and learning sessions positively influence my focus in the classroom

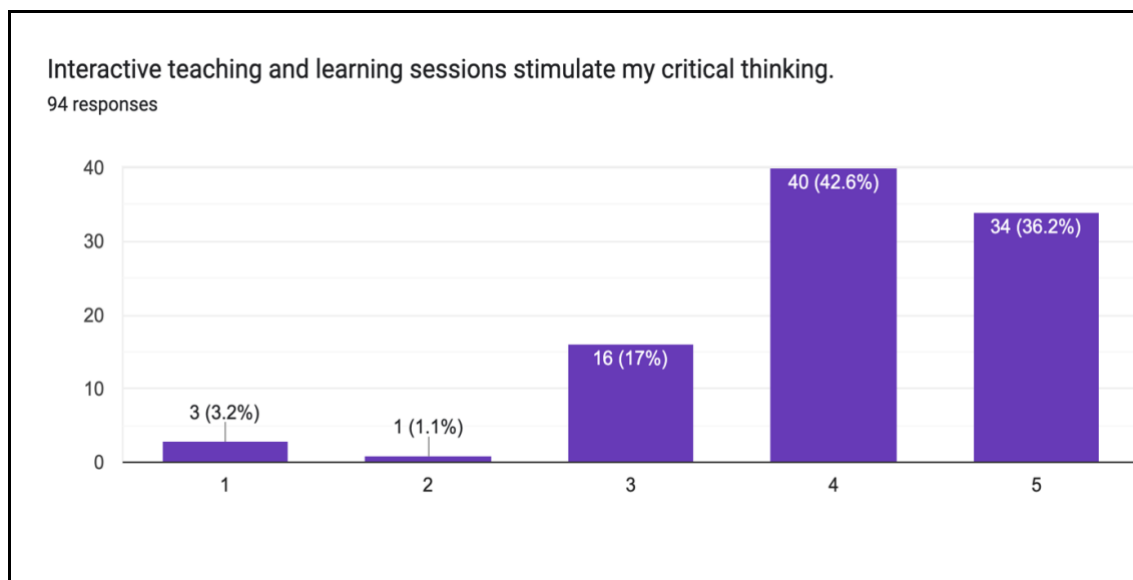


Diagram 6: Interactive teaching and learning sessions stimulate my critical thinking

The proposed module consists of 10 activities designed to foster active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration among students (see Table 1). These activities encompass a range of interactive and hands-on tasks, including group discussions, problem-solving exercises, role-playing scenarios, and multimedia presentations. Each activity is aligned with specific learning objectives and aims to promote a deeper understanding of course material while encouraging student autonomy and creativity. For example, one activity involves a group brainstorming session where students work together to generate innovative solutions to real-world challenges. Another activity focuses on peer teaching, where students take turns leading discussions and sharing their expertise on a given topic. Additionally, interactive quizzes and debates are incorporated to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and engage in meaningful dialogue with their peers.

Table 1: *21st Century Learning Activities in the Teaching Plan*

No.	Activities	Description
1.	Win, Lose or Draw	Objectives of the Activity: - To stimulate understanding of the subject matter among students through visualising the concepts, keywords and relevant theories. - To create teamwork among students in completing the activity. - To build the confidence among students through creativity and critical thinking. Instructions to Educator: - Prepare individual slips of paper containing concise sentences or keywords pertinent to the subject matter. - Roll each of these slips and deposit them into a receptacle, such as a bowl or a similar container. - Organise the students into groups, each comprising four members. - Instruct the students to collaboratively devise a group name. - Designate one member within each group to assume the role of the drawer, ensuring that this responsibility rotates among group members in each successive round. - Task the designated drawer with randomly selecting a slip from the container and illustrating its corresponding sentence or keywords. - Challenge the remaining group members to guess the sentence or keywords depicted by the drawer. - Replicate this process for several rounds, preferably no fewer than five rounds. - Encourage the educator to provide constructive feedback after each round, with a particular focus on enhancing the students' comprehension of the subject matter associated with the drawn

sentences or keywords.

- Prepare modest incentives or prizes to incentivise and elevate the quality of interactive teaching and learning experiences among the students.

2. Speak as You Wish

Objectives of the Activity:

- To overcome the students' fear of public speaking and gain self-assurance in their abilities
- To improve the ability to articulate thoughts clearly, engage effectively with an audience, and convey ideas with precision and persuasiveness
- To share their knowledge and perspectives on specific subject matters.

Instructions to Educator:

- Prepare individual slips of paper containing concise sentences or keywords pertinent to the subject matter.
- Roll each of these slips and deposit them into a receptacle, such as a bowl or a similar container.
- Utilise the class attendance list or roster, containing the names of students in the particular class.
- Randomly select a student's name from the class attendance.
- Instruct the chosen student to toss the container holding the content slips before picking one piece of paper.
- The selected student is required to deliver an impromptu speech lasting a minimum of 2 minutes on the keyword they have chosen.
- Continue this process, selecting names from the class roster one by one, until each student in the class has had an opportunity to speak.
- To enhance the quality of interactive teaching and learning experiences, consider preparing modest incentives or prizes as rewards for participation and exemplary speech delivery. These incentives serve to motivate and engage students in the activity.

3. Poster Palooza

Objectives of the Activity:

- To reinforce knowledge by allowing students to revisit and consolidate the information that have learned, reinforcing their understanding of the subject matter
- To stimulate critical thinking the students will need to analyse, synthesize and prioritize information, fostering critical thinking skills essential for academic success.
- To apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject.

Instructions to Educator:

- Clearly outline the purpose of the poster-making assignment and explain how it aligns with the course objectives and benefits

students' learning.

- Provide guidelines for selecting a suitable topic related to the course content and encourage creativity and originality within the given subject matter.
- Organise the students into groups, each consisting of six members, and designate a leader for each group.
- Clearly outline the dimensions, format, and layout expectations for the posters.
- Provide a breakdown of the key components the poster should include, such as title, introduction, main points, visuals, and conclusion.
- Encourage the use of visuals (charts, graphs, images) to enhance understanding.
- Guide how to integrate visuals effectively into the poster.
- Communicate the criteria by which the posters and presentations will be assessed and include aspects such as content accuracy, creativity, visual appeal, and presentation skills.
- Outline the process for providing feedback, whether it's peer review, instructor evaluation, or a combination of both.

4. Mind Mingle

Objectives of the Activity:

- To promote a deeper understanding of complex concepts by visually representing the relationships between ideas and subtopics.
- To develop concise and meaningful summaries the students will condense information into key points and relationships.
- To promote metacognition by requiring students to reflect on their thinking processes and how they organise the information.

Instructions to Educator:

- Provide a clear explanation of what mind mapping is and its benefits in enhancing learning and understanding of complex topics.
- Clearly outline the objectives of the mind-mapping activity, such as improving conceptual clarity, organising information, and enhancing critical thinking skills.
- Organise the students into groups, each consisting of six members, and designate a leader for each group.
- Specify whether students can choose their topics or if there's a specific theme or subject matter for the mind map.
- Offer guidance on selecting a suitable and challenging topic.
- Recommend or provide information on digital or physical tools for mind mapping. If they are using digital tools, ensure students have access to the necessary software or apps.
- Explain the basic structure of a mind map, including the central idea, main branches, and sub-branches.
- Outline the key components that each mind map should include, such as concepts, relationships, and key terms.

- Encourage the use of visual elements such as colours, symbols, and images to enhance the visual appeal and effectiveness of the mind map.
- Provide examples of well-constructed mind maps to serve as models for students.
- Highlight different styles and approaches to mind mapping.

5. Scene Crafter

Objectives of the Activity:

- To encourage students to apply theoretical concepts learned in class to practical, real-world situations through role-play scenarios.
- To embrace a multimodal approach to learning by incorporating visual, auditory and kinesthetic elements into the role-play videos, catering to diverse learning styles.
- To reinforce learning and information retention by actively involving students in the creation of educational content through role play.

Instructions to Educator:

- Clearly outline the purpose of the role-play video-making assignment and explain how it aligns with the course objectives and benefits students' learning.
- Specify whether students can choose their role-play scenarios or if there are specific topics/themes to be addressed.
- Organise the students into groups, each consisting of six members, and designate a leader for each group.
- Provide instructions on how to create a script for the role-playing video, including key dialogue, actions, and important educational content to be conveyed.
- Offer guidance on the use of technology for recording and editing role-play videos and ensure that students have access to the necessary equipment or software.
- Incorporate a peer review component, where students provide constructive feedback on each other's role-play videos.
- Communicate the criteria by which the role-play videos will be assessed, including elements such as content accuracy, creativity, presentation skills, and educational value.
- Include a reflective component where students discuss the challenges faced, lessons learned, and insights gained from the role-play video-making process.

6. Shape Me

Objectives of the Activity:

- To test students understanding related to the topic.
- To serve as a more structured and organised form of note-taking and allow students to capture key points and ideas from lectures.
- To allow students to work together to create and share their knowledge, insights and perspectives through a collaborative activity.

Instructions to Educator:

- Organise the students into groups, each consisting of six members, and designate a leader for each group.
- Instruct the appointed group leader to activate a random topic selection mechanism, such as a spinning wheel.
- Upon the selection of a topic, task the students with generating a comprehensive mind map that reflects their creative interpretations and associations with the chosen topic.
- Allocate a time frame of 15 minutes to each group for the creation and completion of their respective mind maps.
- Upon the completion of the mind maps, request each group to deliver a formal presentation of their mind map to the entire class, offering insights into their thought process and visual representation.
- Facilitate a thorough assessment of the mind maps, with a specific focus on the accuracy and relevance of the content. Identify any potential gaps in information that may require clarification or expansion.
- Incentivize participation and excellence by offering a prestigious prize to the group that demonstrates the most outstanding mind map during their presentation. This will serve as a means of motivation and engagement for the students throughout the mind-mapping activity.

**7. The World
Your Oyster**

Objectives of the Activity:

- To teach students how to effectively search for information using appropriate terms. This activity can enhance students skill on finding relevant academic sources.
- To promote critical thinking by challenging students to analyse the definitions for each terms.
- To foster self-reliance in information retrieval, enabling students to become lifelong learners who can independently seek out information and resources as needed.

Instructions to Educator:

- Organise students into groups, with each group consisting of six members.
 - The educator will provide a set of terminology related to the subject matter to each group.
 - Each group will be tasked with defining ten specified terms within a designated timeframe of 20 minutes.
 - All groups are permitted to utilise available academic resources, including online search engines like Google, to expedite the process of researching and defining the provided terms.
 - As an incentive for diligent and efficient research, a prize will be awarded to the group that demonstrates the most successful and comprehensive search for definitions among all the categories of terms. This is intended to encourage thorough research and
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effective utilisation of available resources within the student body.

8. Jigsaw Method

Objectives of the Activity:

- To foster collaboration among students.
- To encourages students to take ownership of their learning, delve deeply into their assigned topic, and develop a comprehensive understanding of it.
- To promotes a sense of responsibility for one's own learning.
- To reduce competition and promote inclusivity in the classroom.

Instructions to Educator:

- Divide the class into smaller expert groups.
- Then reassembling them into jigsaw groups, students are encouraged to work together to achieve a common goal, which is to understand and master the entire course material. This promotes teamwork and interpersonal skills.

9. Socratic Questioning

Objectives of the Activity:

- To explore ideas, clarify understanding, and stimulate critical thinking rather than a traditional lecture or debate.
- To think broadly and deeply about a topic.
- To provide their own definitions or explanations of the concept being discussed. Encourage them to draw upon their prior knowledge and experiences.

Instructions to Educator:

- Choose a topic or text that is relevant to your curriculum and suitable for discussion.
 - Develop a series of open-ended questions related to the chosen topic.
 - Explain its purpose and the goal of promoting critical thinking and thoughtful discussion.
 - Begin the discussion by asking an open-ended, thought-provoking question related to the topic. For example, if you're discussing a historical event, you might start with a question like, "What were the key factors that led to this event?"
 - Allow students to respond to the initial question one at a time.
 - After a student responds, ask follow-up questions to probe deeper into their thinking.
 - Encourage students to engage with each other's responses. Encourage respectful debate and dialogue. If one student disagrees with another, ask them to explain their reasoning and evidence.
 - Summarise the key points made by students and synthesize the discussion.
 - As the facilitator, maintain an inquiring stance rather than providing answers or solutions.
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- Don't rush the discussion.

10. Storytelling

Objectives of the Activity:

- To enhance engagement of the students in classroom.
- To help students relate to and understand complex concepts by placing them in a relatable context.
- To analysing these elements within a story can stimulate critical thinking and encourage students to consider multiple perspectives.
- To develop greater empathy and a deeper understanding of human experiences.
- To retain and recall information presented in a narrative format.

Instructions to Educator:

- Choose a story that is relevant to the course material and learning objectives.
- Define the specific learning objectives you aim to achieve through the storytelling activity.
- Provide context, background information, and the purpose of the story within the course.
- Capture students' attention by posing a thought-provoking question, a relevant quote, or a teaser related to the story.
- Use visuals, props, or multimedia elements when appropriate to enhance the storytelling experience.
- Periodically pause during the story to ask open-ended questions or encourage students to reflect on the narrative.
- Encourage active listening by asking students to jot down key points, questions, or reflections as they listen to the story.

After completing the story, facilitate a class discussion, ask students to share their thoughts, interpretations, and reactions to the story

Moreover, technology plays a key role in several activities, with students utilising digital tools and resources to enhance their learning experience. For instance, students may use online platforms to collaborate on projects, conduct research, or create multimedia presentations. By integrating technology into the learning process, students can explore new ways of accessing information, communicating ideas, and collaborating with others. Overall, the design and development of the teaching plan are guided by the principles of student-centred learning and active engagement. By incorporating interactive and participatory activities, the plan seeks to empower students to take ownership of their learning and develop essential skills for success in the 21st century. Furthermore, the plan aims to create a dynamic and inclusive classroom environment where all students feel valued and supported in their educational journey.

The design and development of an innovative teaching plan are essential for enhancing student engagement and fostering meaningful learning experiences. By gathering insights from students and analysing their feedback, educators can create tailored learning modules that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of students. Through a combination of interactive activities, technology integration, and collaborative learning opportunities, educators can inspire students to become active participants in their learning journey, ultimately preparing them for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The process of designing and developing an innovative teaching plan centred around enhancing student engagement has been both enlightening and transformative. Through the utilisation of a Google Form survey to capture the perspectives of 94 students, invaluable insights were gained into their preferences, desires, and needs regarding classroom learning. The findings from the survey served as a guiding light, illuminating the path towards the creation of a teaching plan that prioritises interactive, student-centred approaches. The survey results revealed a resounding call for more opportunities for students to share their perspectives, engage in two-way communication with instructors, and participate in interactive learning sessions. These insights underscored the importance of fostering an inclusive and collaborative learning environment, where students feel empowered to actively contribute to their education. Furthermore, the survey findings highlighted the positive impact of interactive teaching and learning sessions on student motivation, focus, and critical thinking skills, reaffirming the efficacy of such approaches in promoting deeper engagement and meaningful learning outcomes.

Armed with these insights, the process of analysing the feedback and translating it into actionable steps for the design and development of the teaching plan began. A comprehensive examination of the survey data allowed for the identification of common themes and preferences among students, which served as the foundation for the creation of a potential teaching module consisting of 10 21st-century learning activities. Each activity within the proposed module was carefully crafted to align with specific learning objectives and to promote active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration among students. From group brainstorming sessions to peer teaching exercises, interactive quizzes, and technology-enhanced projects, the activities were designed to cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences of students while fostering a culture of creativity, inquiry, and exploration. Moreover, the integration of technology played a pivotal role in enhancing the learning experience, providing students with access to a

wealth of digital tools and resources to support their educational endeavours. By leveraging technology, students were able to engage in collaborative projects, conduct research, and create multimedia presentations, thereby expanding their horizons and tapping into new avenues for learning and discovery.

Ultimately, the overarching goal of the teaching plan is to create a dynamic and inclusive classroom environment where students are actively engaged, intellectually stimulated, and empowered to take ownership of their learning journey (Bucholz Ed D & Sheffler, 2009; Webster, 2014; Main, 2021). By embracing interactive, student-centred approaches, educators can cultivate a culture of lifelong learning and equip students with the critical skills and competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Hence, the design and development of an innovative teaching plan represents a pivotal step towards reimagining the future of education. By listening to the voices of students, harnessing the power of technology, and embracing pedagogical approaches that prioritize active engagement and collaboration, educators have the opportunity to inspire and empower the next generation of learners (King & South, 2017; Dhawan, 2020; Almusaed et al., 2023). Lastly, educators should continue to embrace innovation, creativity, and inclusivity in education, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential and make a meaningful impact on the world.

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