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Effective and Successful Small Group Teaching

Small group teaching can encourage students to engage more closely with module content and develop a range of academic and interpersonal skills, such as self-confidence, critical thinking, communication skills, and teamwork. In this way, small groups are an effective technique to achieve module outcomes and give students better understanding of the material covered.

Teaching in small groups can be exciting and challenging. It requires wide knowledge and experience of the subject and ability to go into detail while keeping the discussion flowing smoothly. Some researchers indicate that teaching in small groups is one of the most difficult techniques in teaching, in which students are supposed to take responsibility for their learning, alongside their tutors.

For effective small group teaching, it's very important that staff are well prepared and fully plan the session, they must prepare students effectively and then evaluate how the session went and consider group development. I will consider each in turn.

At first glance, small group teaching can appear to be unstructured. However, successful and effective small group should be planned in advance like any other teaching activity; all components and engagement activities should be planned in a coherent and concise framework taking into consideration the learning outcomes of the session, the context of the module, the prior knowledge of the students, and student diversification. Secondly, students complain that tutors assume that they are familiar with small group teaching techniques and have prior knowledge about how it works and what is required from them. Nevertheless, this is not the case in reality. Therefore, tutors should prepare students to work in groups before starting their sessions. This could be done through an introduction at the beginning of the session on how small group works and what are the learning outcomes. In this way, students know exactly what is expected from them by the end of the session. Finally, it's very

important to evaluate the progress and the development of the groups against the learning objectives of the module. Also, from an environmental view point, an effective and supportive learning environment, like use of AV equipment and the way the room is set up, have a great influence on the performance of both students and tutors in enhancing and enriching their interaction and participation inside the classroom.

If these three stages are followed, it will be possible for students to get the most out of the sessions, to feel comfortable participating and as a result engage with the material, developing and expressing their ideas freely.

Small groups and deep learning nexus

There are various types of small groups used extensively in social sciences in the spirit of student-centred learning, involving various types of engagement activities (buzz groups, think-pair-share, snowball groups etc). For instance, the case study approach, where the focus will be on students learning through active participation in the discussion and co-operative efforts, while the central task of the tutor is to facilitate and guide the discussion and ensure that all students are participating. This approach enhances student understanding, reading, analytical, strategic planning and implementation skills and has the great advantage of being practical and applied to simulated or real life organisations.

The case study learning approach is most appropriate in business and social sciences in general, because there is no definite answer to each problem. There is no one right way to overcome the situation identified in the case. There are always a range of options. Usually different responses reflect different points of view. With appropriate facilitation, students will freely express themselves, interact and engage with other colleagues and be open minded. In addition, international students who may sometimes be reluctant to engage or participate in small group sessions due to lack of contextual knowledge and/or language barriers, can be

encouraged to offer their different but equally valid perspectives with a well-chosen international case.

Adopting interactive teaching techniques, through incorporating more interactive and effective teaching activities like small group activities, will boost students' learning and encourage deeper engagement and deeper learning.