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Opinion Piece: The Role of Active Learning in the Development and Enhancement of Students' Self-Regulatory Strategies

ANNA SIDOROVITCH

Active learning is far more than a pedagogical trend. It is a transformative approach that nurtures students' capacity to regulate their own learning. It equips learners with the cognitive and motivational tools essential for lifelong learning. Through the intentional scaffolding of active learning activities and guided self-regulatory processes, learners develop into autonomous, self-directed individuals (Pintrich, 2000). This transformation, in my view, is what makes their learning journey undoubtedly sustainable. Unlike passive modes of instruction, active learning demands engagement at cognitive, metacognitive, and social levels, stimulating the development of strategies that help learners manage their motivation, set meaningful goals, and reflect on progress (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014).

From my perspective, the power of active learning lies in how it operationalises the principles of self-regulated learning (SRL), where students learn to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes (Zimmerman, 2000). Approaches such as inquiry-based learning, peer teaching, problem-based learning, and reflective journaling provide purposeful opportunities for students to practice these skills (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Michael, 2006). I contend that teachers, in this context, are not mere facilitators but critical catalysts who model self-regulatory behaviour, offer meaningful feedback, and gradually release responsibility to learners. This deliberate scaffolding enables students to internalise self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies which are the fundamentals of independent learning (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

Equally important is the social dimension of active learning. I am convinced that

collaboration strengthens self-regulatory development, aligning with research that shows how learners engage in socially shared regulation of learning (Hadwin et al., 2011). In these settings, students co-construct goals, track progress, and manage collective understanding which are the skills that mirror real-world teamwork and leadership. Such environments foster empathy, communication, and shared responsibility, qualities essential for lifelong learning. Active learning strategies like cooperative problem-solving and group inquiry not only enhance cognitive understanding but also cultivate the interpersonal and regulatory competencies that sustain effective learning communities (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014).

Finally, I maintain that the sustainability of learning depends on motivation and self-efficacy. Active learning inherently supports these affective domains by empowering students with a sense of agency and competence (Pintrich, 2000). When learners experience ownership over their learning, they are more likely to persevere through challenges and transfer self-regulatory strategies to new contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In conclusion, I view active learning as a developmental framework rather than a single instructional method. If education is to prepare individuals for an unpredictable future, then embracing active learning is not optional. It is essential for ensuring sustainable, lifelong learning.

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About the author

Dr Anna Sidorovitch has been an educator for over 30 years, working in various countries around the world. Currently Senior Lecturer in Teacher Education (TESOL) and an ALN satellite network lead at Sheffield Hallam University, she contributes to a wide range of programmes and passionately advocates for Active Learning among colleagues and students.

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