

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS USING DEBATE

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Abstract: The article explores the effectiveness of debate as a methodological tool for developing students' speaking skills. It emphasizes how structured argumentation fosters critical thinking, fluency, vocabulary enrichment, and confidence in public speaking. The study highlights debate as both a communicative activity and a pedagogical approach that enhances oral proficiency and prepares students for academic and real-life communication contexts.

Key words: analyze, educator, utilize, debate, assessment, self-esteem, interaction, capacity, preparation, initiative

Learning occurs more effectively when students actively analyze, discuss, and apply the content in meaningful ways rather than absorb the information passively; therefore, students benefit when educators utilize instructional strategies that promote active engagement. This article presents the use of debates and presents the use of a debate as an assessment method within an undergraduate module incorporating a student's (co-author) reflective comments on the module. Encouraging an active learner role in learning fosters a deeper level of learning and cultivates an increased capacity for self-direction and initiative which in turn facilitates greater self-esteem and learner success. Interaction between the learner and the teacher comprises the heart of education and learning, and nurse educators must be willing to facilitate rather than control learning. As student learning occurs through active engagement with the subject matter, lectures may be ineffective for such engagement. Furthermore, transmission of information and its transformation into knowledge are not the same. For this transformation to occur, students need an opportunity to engage in deep processing of the subject matter. The educator's role is to help students develop the capacity to incorporate new and sometimes conflicting ideas and experiences into a coherent cognitive framework [1].

Critical thinking that includes debate allows for collaboration where teams can achieve higher levels of thinking through the use of persuasive evidence. This collaboration allows individuals to retain information longer and the opportunity to engage in discussion and shared learning. Debate as a pedagogical method are used to improve critical thinking skills and oral communication skills, and are currently being used in various programs to foster student learning, critical thinking and learner-centred education. Thereby debates can be tailored to increase student learning and understanding of difficult topics by encouraging student dialogue and research of the debate topics. Debates require; active engagement and mastery of the content and listeners and participants to evaluate competing choices. Following Vygotsky social interaction through developing higher-order psychological functions and critical thinking skills by moving up Bloom Taxonomy. The lower order thinking skills of knowledge, comprehension, and application focus on rote learning or what students should think, whereas the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation focus on how to think. The short term objective of acquiring knowledge should be tempered with the long-term goal of training the mind to think analytically and critically. Instructional strategies such as debate are better suited to the development of students' higher order thinking skills than traditional instructional

strategies such as lectures. Critical thinking skills used in debates include defining the problem, assessing the credibility of sources, identifying and challenging assumptions, recognising inconsistencies, and prioritizing the relevance and salience of various points within the overall argument. Thereby offering immense opportunities for students to enhance relevant skills; both for a personal and profession development context. Debating, as a skill, can be seen as a means of discussion; however, they go beyond this, requiring a structured argument to be developed. Challenging students to consider the present and discuss their views with others. These elements can all be aspects students fear or lack confidence in, but need to be individually developed by students. Helping students to improve is about encouraging them to develop their own style and to learn to be confident about it. From a professional standpoint, the debating process encourages an individual to consider multiple viewpoints and arrive at a judgement and enhances students' oral critical communication, as a means of self-expression, social interaction, and working in a team. These skills will be invaluable to discussing ideas, problem-solving and working with colleagues in the future. The use of debates is seen as a holistic teaching method because it requires students to develop research skills, critical thinking abilities. Preparing students to structure arguments in ways that authenticates their opinions and teaches them to perform in front of audiences. Students generally enjoy debates because they add an element of competition to assessments, whilst still allowing for multiple opinions to be heard and accepted. Debates are also found to be socially stimulating, allowing students to articulate ideas better, empower students to take responsibility for their own learning, and it also forces the students to 'think on their feet' [3]. Amongst the reasons why debates are popular in the classroom is that they enhance the learning experience for students by making the content personal. Students feel the experience benefits their critical thinking skills, helping them retain factual information and increase awareness of important issues in the field. Studies comparing debates versus lectures as teaching strategies find that students exposed to debates perform better on assessments examining comprehension of concepts. Instructional strategies such as debate and case studies are better suited to the development of students' higher order thinking skills than traditional instructional strategies such as lecture. Critical thinking skills used in a debate include defining the problem, appraising the credibility of sources, identifying and challenging assumptions, recognising repugnance, and prioritising the relevance and prominence of various points within the overall argument. In addition to critical thinking skills, debates also demand the development of oral communication skills, which are vital for success in most careers. Debate involves not only determining what to say but how to say it [2].

Structured student debates have great potential for promoting competence and in-depth knowledge of substantive topics relevant to practice. Like other interactive assignments designed to more closely resemble real-world activities, issue oriented debates actively engage students in course content. Allowing students to develop and exercise skills that translate to practice activities. Most importantly debates help to stimulate critical thinking by shaking students free from established opinions and helping them to appreciate the complexities involved in practice.

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