ACTIVE LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY IN BOOSTING STUDENTS’ ATTENTION SPAN IN CLASS

by:
Ysabel Angela V. Embile

Today’s digital era is said to have created an easily distracted generation with limited attention spans. Indeed, it is a common teacher’s endeavor to uphold the students’ undivided attention and to keep them from getting bored amidst class.

In contrary to the popular belief that students have an average attention spans ranging from 10 to 15 minutes, several studies suggest that there is insufficient evidence to confirm this theory. A research in 2010 recorded and mapped students’ clicker-responses to report attention lapses of students subjected to various methods of teaching. This debunked the 10-15 minute theory because there is no pattern of attention lapses reported every such duration. Instead, the study concluded that periods of inattention usually lasts within one minute or less, and occurs more frequently as the lecture progresses; however, the researchers found out that fewer lapses were recorded for classes that involved student-centered pedagogies. (Bunce, Flens & Neiles, 2010)

One reason why students got bored in class is that they cannot find the lessons’ significance in their everyday lives. As such, teachers often involve motivational strategies in order to draw the students’ attention. Grounding concepts and theories to real-life application, as well as drawing examples where students can relate to, can help the teachers in promoting appreciation to the lesson. Students are more likely to stay interested in classes in which they have personal contribution to the lesson. Active learning methods such as demonstrations, hands on activities and asking questions during lectures are known to decrease inattention during class. The said student-centered
pedagogies also causes indirect boost in attention for the lessons taken immediately after such activities.

Despite the common belief that digital advancements are more of an academic hindrance that promotes distraction and limits attention spans of students, advancements in technology can also be beneficial in academically improving the students. As millennial students are greatly engaged to these advancements, digital technologies can in fact boost student participation in class since these materials are more appealing and thus exhibits personal relevance to them. Moreover, digital technologies are instrumental in creating educational media that promotes visual, sensory and/or auditory coordination. This helps the learner to retain more information since the human brain is more likely to process the input that engages most senses.

Student attention levels vary during the 40 to 60 minute typical class duration. As such, teachers are faced with a common dilemma of capturing and upholding students’ attention for optimal education. Active learning and the proper use of technology are two such tools that are instrumental for teachers in order to continually engage students as the class progresses.

References:
