**Using the teaching methods of group discussion, group activities and presentation for first year honours microbiology specialism students**

**Context :** There aremany students in our department. Each class has about a hundredstudents but the microbiology specialism students are few, so most students are majoring in Botany or other subjects.. Previously, our students were taught in a traditional lecture style, listening the lecturer, writing the notes from their teachers and studying the textbook. They never used their own ideas and observations. So it was decided that changing the teaching methods would be appropriate.

It was hoped that the new teaching methods would improve students’ thinking, ability, use of technology and team work. Students would also learn how to find information using the internet, and develop presentation skills.

**Activity Aims**

* To develop the students’ self-confidence and learning
* To encourage student enthusiasm for the lessons
* To encourage group discussion for sharing knowledge
* To improve students’ presentation skills
* To encourage team building within the class

**Why the activity was developed:** The activity was developed because group discussion in the classrooms made learning more interactive. It helped students develop skills that cannot be taught in a traditional lecture format. Group discussion helped students to develop and strengthen interpersonal communication skills as well as analytical and critical thinking skills. Group discussion, activities and presentation is a useful learning tool for students.

**The activity:** First, the class was divided into five groups and each group chose a leaders. Each group is assigned a topic in the lessons. I explained the overview of the topic and how to make the activities and presentation. Then I advised each group about their topics, helping them to prepare questions and answers, group by group.

Next, students conducted a group search for the required information for the topic from textbooks, references and the internet. Depending on the information available, they collected and discussed key principles by group. They shared their knowledge and gathered the necessary information. They prepared the presentation about the topic. They also learned how to do activities related to the topic, asking for advice from the teachers as required. After that, they read through the groups and presented the topic. One group and the other set up a discussion. They also come up with answers to many questions. They shared different ideas and advices. Sometime, I also advised some ideas for my students.

The presentations were scored and I rewarded the best presentations. My evaluation showed a positive correlation between the quality of classroom discussion and student understanding of what they have learned. Improved discussion in the classroom will help students build better problem solving skills.

**Feedback from students:** When I took feedback from the students, it was anonymous, because most Myanmar students respect their teachers and find it difficult to make criticisms of them. Students said that they appreciated the good experiences, developing their learning and conceptual thinking. They were more confident about presentation and sharing knowledge. They also developed organizational skills in the group work. They found group discussion and group work to be very good teaching methods. They commented that these teaching methods are more motivational, enjoyable, informative and effective for them.

**Strengths and weakness of the activity:** Group discussion helps in the evaluationof a problem and most groups reached a suitable decision based on the suggestions presented by members. With the help of group discussion the exchange of ideas takes place. Presentation is a means of communication that can be adapted to various speaking situations. Students start working as a team and share different ideas with each other.

Students’ information technology skills also improved. Searching on the web became more effective. They also learned how to make Powerpoint presentations, and to give live presentations.

Some problems did arise. Sometimes group meetings were difficult for students to arrange because of the large distances between home and campus. Next, internet connectivity is sometimes a problem. One final problem concerns the accuracy of the presentations. Sometime, there were misunderstandings within the group about the topic and therefore debate when sharing knowledge.

**Key words :** group discussion, activity, presentation, organization, sharing knowledge

**References:**

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