Student Guided Learning - from Teaching to E - learning

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Abstract: In recent months, the world in general and the academic world are coping with wide ranging changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, which force us all to assimilate many changes. The academic world has quickly adopted these changes and made the transition to digital distance learning. These changes are challenging and are added as an additional struggle in adopting distance learning. At the same time, there is a growing notion that academic institutions are not just providers of knowledge, but cultural agents of change as well. As such, they must develop new skills among students. These includes real-time problem solving, decision making, independent learning, synthesis of knowledge, and daily challenges of the ever-changing New-World as well as developing critical thinking and self-esteem. In order to remain relevant, the academic world must incorporate innovative content and teaching paradigms that allow adaptation to these changes, rather than holding on to traditional online teaching methods alone. This article describes the implementation of a unique student-centered teaching methodology which is digitally learned and assessed. The methodology is part of a transformation of higher education into student-oriented and as a necessary development of skills for students in a changing world environment using distance digital learning platforms.

Keywords: *Student guided learning; Digital learning; E-Learning; Life-Long Learner.*

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1. Introduction

Demands of the western business and academic worlds are constantly changing, as are the ways they are conducted. As a result, the question of the relevance of teaching and academia becomes more critical from day to day. In order to adapt learning to changing future needs, that are not necessarily known to us, we need to make changes in learning goals, ways of learning and assessment. These changes are needed more than ever these days. Worldwide coping with the global crisis, among other things, requires adapting and changing frontal and active learning methods to distance teaching and learning methods that preserve innovative perceptions of teaching and learning.

Today, there is a growing notion that academic institutions are not only providers of knowledge but agents of cultural change and therefore must develop new skills among students (Bruffee, 1999). Society's demands from higher education leaders are to prepare students to be adapted to the job market and the academic world and to be able to solve real-time problems, synthesize personal knowledge, and deal with daily challenges in this ever-changing New World (Friedman, 2007; Massimiliano, 2004).

In order to meet market requirements as those responsible for shaping future generations, those engaged in the craft must think innovatively about changing market needs. They must understand that as part of adapting to the new world, they must create learning frameworks which will make the end goals of students' learning process accessible.

Many times, in the teaching process, there is focus on a subject that is narrowly studied. In doing so they ignore multidisciplinary views of market conditions which are already changing and certainly will do in the future (McArthur & Sachs, 2009). Therefore, one of the tasks of those currently teaching in higher education is to train students and graduates who are highly capable in problem solving, integration of studied material and its implementation while working collaboratively in a team. Such training will enable teachers to inculcate meaningful lifelong learning capabilities in students (Donahue-Di Conti, 2004).

This philosophy shifts the emphasis from traditional teaching processes where the main emphasis is on the lecturer, to the learning process, where the main emphasis is on the process the student goes through. Although this approach has been implemented for several years at teaching institutions at various levels, it can be seen that most practitioners do little to adhere to it and treat it with some skepticism (Johnson et al., 2009).

The ever-growing understanding of the importance of student-centred and innovative online learning methods for future market needs is emphasized in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. This challenge requires the academic world, whose institutions have closed, to move to distance digital learning and adapt innovative learning approaches to that learning. Thus, is specifically suitable for the COVID-19 times.

1.1. Digital learning

Digital learning and teaching are based on the accessibility and use of digital teaching and learning units and materials, along with online information resources (Shalev-Shwartz, 2012). Communication channels during learning and methods of using them are of great importance in online distance learning. Interaction in online learning consists of communication, collaboration, or active learning with or without a social component (Marks, Sibley, & Arbaugh, 2005). The purpose of online course interaction is to enhance the development of knowledge and understanding of course content. Online learning interactions can take place in a synchronous environment where both parties interact at the same time, or in an asynchronous environment, where the parties respond at different times. Also, interactions can be on several levels: between student and lecturer, among the students themselves, and between students and course content (Anderson, 2003; Marks et al., 2005). High level interactions will enable meaningful learning and a good learning experience; however, the subject requires investment of resources and time.

Digital teaching and learning processes are challenging and often have difficulties and barriers and objections. Due to these difficulties and the urgency of adapting teaching to the crisis facing the world, many lecturers are neglecting the possibilities based on the innovative paradigms: student-centred learning and active learning. Instead, they focus on online frontal teaching, which makes the student passive in the learning process and the lecturer as a key knowledge leader.

This article presents a student-centred learning methodology adapted to online teaching – distance learning. In this approach the centre of gravity lies with the student, who becomes active in a learning process that involves a great deal of interaction with his environment.

1.2. Student Guided Learning

This methodology is a Student-Guided Learning (SGL) process – while the course is set under the guidance of a lecturer, the student leads the learning. The concept refers to a methodology of building and teaching a

course in which students take an important part in the initial stages of selecting contents and study materials, responsibility for teaching some of the content and decisions' making about inclusion and presentation of topics.

In order to facilitate this process and assimilate it in academic courses, it is necessary for students to set goals and pave the way while guided and closely supervised by the lecturer. The lecture is leading the students on a long active journey to a close destination of course objectives on the one hand, and a distant destination of a never-ending lifelong learning path on the other.

In developing the concept of **student-Guided learning**, we used different formative teaching methods while adopting the Collaborative Learning model. This model includes a variety of methods and models that are studied together to achieve a common goal (Brody & Davidson, 1998). Achieving the goal is based on a positive interdependence between learners, where everyone is responsible for his or her learning and their contribution to the group (Slavin, 2010). This learning also emphasizes the learning process and is characterized by active learning using digital learning platforms. The lecturer is not the sole source of knowledge and learning is guided by student choices while directed by the lecturer.

2. Teaching methodologies

With SGL teaching methodology processes, students influence and chooses course contents, how it works and how it is presented. This process is directly guided by the lecturer and integrated with course topics.

In designing a course with these methodologies, lecturers must define in advance what capabilities they want the students to develop. It includes areas and broad topics that will provide a value and learning envelope for the course. This framework constitutes a boundary for the study topics to be written by students, problems and cases will be presented within these boundaries (Utecht, 2003).

Using this methodology, there are nine steps that are the guideline and interface between the lecturer and students:

1. Description of a personal experience – in this assignment, students will create the course contents through personal experiences and events from their lives. Each student will recount a personal situation relevant to the course content.

2. Turning the experience into an event / dilemma – the lecturer constructs a number of dilemmas and events based on students' personal

experiences. The events are presented to the students while maintain complete anonymity.

3. Turning students into experts in their field / building a database – each student uses existing databases online and academic databases to create a knowledge base on the topic of their chosen dilemma.

4. Small group study and student teaching – students divide into small study groups, learning together from afar on a digital platform and sharing the materials collected with their groups.

5. Group discussion and planning – students work together towards the course final project and select the presentation method and material to be presented.

6. Final project – collation and summary of materials and work processes by digital visual means – digital poster, mind map and concept map etc. in accordance with group decision.

7. Group presentation of the project – presentation of the final project by the group in a digital platform before all course students.

8. Peer review – student evaluate each other in accordance with guidelines sent by the lecturer in advance.

9. Group and personal reflection – during the course, students are required to reflect their work in both individual and group reflective writing, as part of adopting independent and collaborative thinking and active learning processes and as part of coping with digital learning.

Figure 1 – 9 Steps of Student Guided E-Learning

An example of using the model can be seen according to the model stages as shown in Figure 2. The illustration reviews model implementation

steps in a patient-therapist relationship course, within health systems management studies. Course topics include communication, trust, boundaries within treatment, multiculturalism, violence against medical teams, privacy protection and the like. By implementing the steps, you can see the progress of assignments and the choice of topics throughout the course which is given digitally online.

Figure 2 – Example – Implementation of SGL

In conclusion, it can be seen today that more than ever, it is of great importance to adapt curriculums to the changing needs of the labour market and the academic world. As part of this adjustment, it requires to adapt new student-centred learning and teaching methods through the option of innovative digital distance online learning.

Using SGL teaching methodologies while guiding students on digital platforms allows a great deal of interaction between the interfaces – student-lecturer, student-student and student-course content. This interaction ensures a better learning experience (Marks et al., 2005). It also contributes to security and experience in using digital tools. All of these contribute to students' sense of ability and motivation and enable readiness to adopt these methods in the future, including in other courses.

The Student Guided Learning methodology that described in this article can be suitable to academic institutions internationally, as it can be embedded in different courses in different fields of study. Adopting models such as SGL and accessing a digital learning environment are especially

important these days, in times of distress such as the covid-19 crisis. This crisis is a challenge for the entire world and the academic world in particular to take a step forward in making the academic world more relevant than ever in preparing graduates for a changing and unpredictable world.

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