

## **ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARDS THE USE OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHODS**

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*This study was undertaken to find out the attitude of teachers towards the use of Active Learning methods at Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia. The subjects were 23 university teachers purposively selected from foreign language department at Bahir Dar University. Data about the subjects were collected through questionnaire. Results of the study have demonstrated positive outcomes.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Attitude is an important concept to understand human behaviour. It is defined as a complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings. Anastasi (1957) defines attitude as tendency to react in a certain way towards a designed class of stimuli. Attitude has been defined as a mental and neutral state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. People's attitudes towards their profession have an effect on their performance. This case is also valid for the profession of teaching. According to Bradley (1995), inadequate funds of schools, lack of parent and community support, and insufficient salaries are examples of those factors. Marchant (1992) added the role of experience to the factors influencing teachers' attitudes for their profession. Dodeen et al. (2003) found that female teachers have more positive attitude than male teachers. The attitude and expectation of society in general and of the family of the learner in particular affect how learning is viewed and how teaching is organised. These attitudes and expectations vary from society to society and attempting to copy learning and teaching strategy from one society into another, without trying to adapt into the local conditions may not be successful (Derebssa 2006). Studies have pointed out that teacher's negative personal and professional behaviour and poor social image of the teacher and teaching profession are serious factors responsible for teacher's low status. Awanbor (1996) reported that teacher trainees had a negative attitude towards teaching and those teacher trainees who had positive attitude towards teaching did so with strong reservation which range from the poor social image to the teaching profession, the comparatively poor financial remuneration for the teacher, to the general lack of encouragement by educational authorities. The attitude of teachers comes to the fore as they reflect upon the language that they use in teaching. Consciously or unconsciously, their attitudes play a crucial role in language's "growth or decay, restoration or destruction" (Baker 1988). Their attitudes, too, as part of their cultural orientation, influence heavily their younger students (Shameen 2004). There has been a general agreement that the attitude of teachers towards teaching is significantly correlated with teaching success. In general, it may be concluded that there are indications that teacher's attitudes have a positive relation with success in teaching. Researchers identified many factors and situations that influence the development of attitudes are: type of schooling, the parental attitudes, and the attitude of friends, teachers, and siblings. The negative attitude of teachers has been documented in many studies (Houck 1992; Lobosco & Newman 1992; Allred, Brulle & Shank 1990). Another important factor is attitude or belief towards the subject. Callahan and Clark (1988) indicate that one can facilitate development of attitude by providing a conducive atmosphere and models. Development of understanding may enhance the development of attitudes just as value clarification, role playing, and discussion of dilemmas may enhance the development of values and morals. Teachers can have general attitudes towards students. According to Brophy (1974), general attitudes stem from the teacher's personality and definition of his role as a teacher. Many attitudes are the results of deliberately planned education and religious training and influences and propaganda. Person-oriented teachers are likely to enjoy their contacts with students and to hold generally favourable attitudes

towards them. In contrast, introvert and withdrawn teachers may prefer to minimize social contacts with students and more likely to develop neutral or relatively negative attitudes towards them. Teachers' attitudes can affect teacher-student interaction. That is, once a teacher forms a particular attitude toward an individual student, the teacher is likely to begin to treat this student in individualised way. Thus, attitudes have the potential for affecting students and for functioning as self-fulfilling prophecies.

## **OBJECTIVE**

To study attitude of English language teachers towards the use of active learning methods in teaching communicative English.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

The sample consisted of 23 English language teachers (All teachers at Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia).

### **Tool**

A questionnaire developed by the researchers.

### **Method**

Data analysis used percentages, frequencies and narrative description .

## **FINDINGS**

Out of the 23 questionnaires distributed to the English language teachers, 20 were filled in and returned. The response rate was 86%. Data on English language teachers' attitude towards the importance of active learning methods for communicative English language teaching revealed that 17(85%) of the subjects were in favour of the idea that active learning methods can give students a sense of participation; while 3(15%) were not in favour of this idea. With regard to the idea that active learning methods can integrate students' experiences, 14(70%), and 6(30%) respondents agreed and disagreed, respectively. To the idea that active learning method creates desirable attitude towards communicative English language teaching, 13(65%), and 7(35%) of the English teachers responded agree and disagree, respectively. Moreover, to the item that students are engaged in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities 15(75%), and 5(25%), responded agreed and disagreed, respectively. In summary, the great majority of the teachers had good attitude towards the significance of active learning method as it enables English language students to participate actively in English language classes, and integrate their learning experiences. Therefore, the English language teacher respondents are in favour of utilisation of active learning methods to teach English language. The respondents were asked about students' learning experience in collaborative and supportive environment. It was found that 15(75%), 4(20%), and 1(5%) English language teachers replied agree, undecided and disagree, respectively. From this, one can see that majority of the English language teachers have agreed with this idea. In the second item, the subjects were to respond as to how students identify, analyse, and resolve problems by using their previous experience. It was found that 12(60%), 6(30%), and 2(10%) responded agree, undecided, and disagree, respectively. Thus, it seems to be true that students use their previous experience to identify, analyse, and resolve problems. Regarding the enhancement that the English language teachers provide for their students' motivation, it was found that 14(70%), 5(25%), and 1(5%) replied agree, undecided, and disagree, respectively. However, majority of the students responded that their English language teachers did not motivate them at all. Concerning whether students participate to learn sufficient content through active learning, it was found that 4(20%), 5(25%), and 11(55%) of them responded agree, undecided, and disagree, respectively. Most of the English language teachers

opined that students' participation to learn the content was not sufficient. The English language teachers were also asked as to how far active learning method helps to classroom interaction. It was found that 13(65%) agreed and 7(35%) disagreed. Therefore, active learning method improves their classroom interaction. The fruitful support of active learning method utilisation becomes realised, only when equipments are available, class size is small, and the English language teachers has necessary training on active learning method utilisation.

## CONCLUSION

The English teachers under study showed quite a positive attitude towards the utilisation of active learning methods. They were of the opinion that utilising active learning methods is crucial as it makes students participate in discussion, integrating their learning experiences, and raising their interest of learning English. Besides, teachers underlined the paramount significance of active learning as it helps them improve their English teaching methods. Though teachers showed positive attitude towards the utilisation of active learning methods, there were a number of factors hindering them from utilising the approach properly. These included lack of enough training and experience, inadequate budget meant for the purchase of instructional materials and the shortage of enough seats for the students. Since quality of education is a product of stable and solid leadership, sound and conducive polices, great concern and sustained commitments are vitally important. The reform of instructional practice in higher education must begin with faculty members' efforts. An excellent first step is to select strategies promoting active learning that one can feel comfortable with. Faculty developers can help, stimulate, and support faculty members' effort to change by highlighting the instructional importance of active learning in the newsletters and publications they distribute. Academic administrators can help these initiatives by recognising and rewarding excellent teaching in general and adoption of instructional innovations in particular. Comprehensive programmes to demonstrate this type of administrative commitment should address institutional employment policies and practices, the allocation of adequate resources for instructional development, and the development of strategic administrative action plans.

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