Is It Always the Same People Talking?
17 Ideas for Lecturers

Melanie Bittner

Methodology

1. User a diverse range of methods to provide good learning opportunities to different participants.

2. Select engaging methods, such as group work, buzz groups, and online classroom assessments.

3. Switch to written communication, such as a bulletin board brainstorming session (can also been done on paper using a flipchart) or a learning journal.

4. Be transparent about the chosen method, including aspects such as the process, presentation and assessment of results.

5. Enable preparation so that spontaneous participation is not the only option.

Shaping the Culture of Conversation and Learning

6. Show conspicuous interest in what all students have to say.

7. Give positive feedback.

8. When calling on a student, allow them to "pass", for example once per class session, without making a big deal about it.

9. Make and enforce agreements on mutual treatment.

10. Practice error friendliness: Demonstrate that there are no negative consequences for asking "dumb questions" or giving "wrong answers"; address, and if necessary process, the tensions between open learning space and shielding against discrimination.

11. Announce and practice the "stack" method for setting the order in which you call on students. If several students raise their hand, you will first call on those who haven't spoken yet.

Addressing Inequalities in Who Speaks

12. Share your own perceptions with students and discuss ideas for changes.

13. In a midterm evaluation, ask students' about their perceptions of their own participation and the participation structure.

14. After a discussion and agreement, experiment with and reflect on a "progressive stack" system that compensates for systemic inequalities.

Self-Reflection

15. There are many reasons students don't speak up. It does not necessarily mean they are unmotivated, poorly prepared, or low-performing.

16. How conscious of gender and diversity is your course design?
    Is the language you use conscious of gender and diversity? Which authors are included on the syllabus? How diverse are the examples and images? Do you integrate content from gender and diversity studies in your teaching?

17. How might the culture of participation relate to the culture of the discipline?
    Who are the discipline's contemporary and historical role models? Which norms and ideals are communicated explicitly or implicitly?
    → These aspects can also be addressed in the course itself.

Author

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