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# Monitoring in an Active Teaching Methodology: an Experience Report

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This article intends to report an experience inside the monitoring process in a Psychology course, within a active teaching methodology. One of the most interesting activities offered in the active teaching methodology filed is the monitoring, that motivates the student to exercise his autonomy and initiative, introducing him to the teaching experience. **Method:** This experience's report allows for a sharing of the narrative, meaning to contribute to future monitor's experience, as well as exercise its scientific production abilities. **Results:** The monitoring experience provides the student's exploration of his role as author of his own knowledge in a active way, boosting the group work and initiative elements of his work, as well as creating oportunities for a better understanding of the teaching experience. **Conclusion:** Throughout the monitoring experience, the student can notice the benefits of an active teaching method, and also execute it along the tutor to boost the students' learning process, but also finds several hardships, especially when the class isn't well- adapted to the method and shows apahy and lack of interest.

**Keywords:** learning, PBL, monitor, students, psychology.

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## INTRODUCTION

The educational field has been a stage for constant discussion and evolution towards the boosting of learning through various methods. An interesting question is the use of active methodologies in college education, as a way of motivating the student's autonomy so that he can build his learning process in a questioning and critical way, but also with the proper scientific foundation. The active teaching methodology is based in the student's direct participation in his own learning and the group's learning. This method's objective is not to pass along knowledge in a straightforward, one-sided way, with the teacher in a superior position. On the contrary, it's about offering the students ways of obtaining his own knowledge, so that he seeks his learning process exchanging experiences and building his own ideas in an active way. Within the field of active teaching methods, the Problem Based Learning method (PBL) was first proposed in 1969 and is adopted by the Faculdade Pernambucana de Saúde (FPS). PBL's foundations can be found at the theoretical basis of several authors, such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, among others<sup>1</sup>.

Within the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method adopted by FPS, the activities are divided into tutorial groups, workshops, laboratories and practice. The tutorial group is a moment when the students gather weekly into small groups, during a pre-established time and place, where, alongside a tutor, they're introduced to theoretical or practical cases which serve as triggers to stimulate reflections and questions. These cases are the starting point so that, following the seven points, the student can research and build his own knowledge. The workshops are moments where, along each semester, the student is introduced to concepts related to the field of psychology related to public health issues, among other subjects. This workshop works alongside the practice, when students have the opportunity to watch the professional practice of psychology, exploring the different fields of acting inside the

psychology grounds. During the course's first semester, there are two laboratories: the Models and Anatomy lab, where neuroanatomy concepts are discussed with the aid of real pieces and in relation to psychology, and the Digital Resources lab, where students have the opportunity to be introduced in the research field, learning and exercising writing, books and articles quotations and other bibliographic sources, as well as getting to know the digital research databases. All of the activities work in a connected way, so that the student can live a full active learning experience.

## THE EXPERIENCE REPORT AS A TOOL

During all of the activities, the student is guided by a tutor, who organizes and coordinates, but there can also be a monitor student. The monitor's role is to aid the tutor throughout the activities, always seeking to expand the student's skills, as well as acting as a helping hand in the quest for knowledge. One of the richest ways of describing the monitor's experiences is through a experience report. This type of report has been largely utilized and is an important tool within the scientific field, as told by Lopes<sup>2</sup>:

A experience report belongs to the social domain, being part of the human experiences, and it should contain both observed and conjectured impressions. This type of study is important to the description of a peculiar situation which has aroused new reflections about a specific phenomenon.

The experience report is important, thus, by allowing a more accurate description of the monitor's classroom experience, exploring the narrative view of the learning acquired along the monitoring. During the first semester, the monitor is often seen by the students as someone who will ease their transition into the active teaching method, helping them along the way. One of the things the monitor's experience aims is to provide the monitor with the opportunity to live the teaching experience, at the same time he will remember concepts which he learned during his time as student.

## THE MONITOR'S ROLE AND ITS HARDSHIPS

During my experience as a monitor in the Digital Resources Laboratory on the first semester of the Psychology course, I've had the opportunity to follow and execute several activities along the tutor and the class. As a monitor, I also could notice the main hardships the students faced along the semester. The monitoring experience was very gratifying, for I had the freedom and autonomy to suggest activities and subjects, prepare expositive classes and interact with the class outside the classroom environment, helping the students with exercises and other difficulties. I also noticed that the monitoring experience has awakened the desire for teaching inside me, as I was following the teaching process, from the choice of subjects to the preparation of classes, to the correction of activities, noticing each student's peculiarities as well as their class performance. As the months went by, I also noticed that the class would come to me not only to discuss matters related to the subject, but also for motivation and clarification in regards to extension projects, other classes and especially the active methodology itself, which kept raising questions until the end of the semester.

As a monitor, I've realized that, when leaving the traditional teaching method, there are some clear hardships faced by the students. It's hard to leave the comfort of a structure that, all along the educational process, preached only the passive absorption of knowledge, with few opportunities to raise questioning, or even look for other learning sources or methods. This shock is easily perceptible in students who just came out of college, for they still have the mind structured towards meeting the college scores and standing out for their measurable performance, but also in older students, who already come from previous college graduations, because many times they have a solidified habit of memorizing the subject without really learning it, without questioning or initiative. One of the main hardships faced was the lack of interest from the students towards the execution

of non-obligatory activities, or exercises that wouldn't generate a score. That solidifies the students' difficulty in leaving the commonplace, a critic also made by Dr. Sigmund Freud<sup>3</sup>:

(...) Either can one do without a minority's domination over the masses, for the masses are indolent and unreasonable, don't like to waive impulses, cannot be persuaded with reasoning concerning the inevitability of such surrenders, and its individuals strengthen each other in the tolerance of its desertifications.

All the activities made in the laboratory were made from a theoretical-expositive part and a moment of exercising the exposed subject, whether it was a synthesis model, an introduction to reference formats or an introduction to the Lattes platform. During almost all of the activities, the students would also receive a homework, which could also be produced with the monitor's aid during a pre-established day and time, following the tutor's instructions. Ever since the beginning of the school semester, I noticed, as a monitor, some resistance among the students when it came to really embrace the active teaching method, dedicating themselves to the class activities or showing any type of initiative to expand their knowledge. Besides, the class as a whole showed passivity, as if they were still waiting for a teacher to come and pour all the knowledge, so that the class could only absorb, without having to think too much.

When executing any activity, interest is essential so that there can be a minimum of reflection and exploitation of the moment. One of the class' most pressing characteristics was the lack of interest, which made the execution of activities and exercises very difficult, as well as the class dynamics as a whole. In each class, both the tutor and the monitor would spend a good amount of time investing in the students' motivation, asking about their interests, doubts and previous knowledges, seeking to bring them to the discussion and making them conscious of the importance of actively participating in the activities and the course as a whole, for only

through one's individual research and their exchange of experiences the knowledge would reach its full potential. This is evident in the speech of Barufi<sup>4</sup>:

When interest is generated, the power structure is relatively shared, the possibilities of conceptual creation and reflective criticism from the student's part, faced with certain problems, expand extraordinarily.

Coming from this perspective, the possible devices used by the students in order to perform well in a active teaching methodology are easily recognizable, mainly because they come from a place of not knowing how to be the author of their own learning process, from a place of intellectual immaturity. The pattern of speech repeats itself in a succession of explanations always based on others, never themselves; whether is the exercise's complexity, or the lack of practice, but, in most of the cases, the lack of interest in searching for their own knowledge is evident. This immaturity also derives from an entire educational system that never stimulates the student to seek knowledge for the pleasure of it, but for the fear of punishment or expectation of a reward, and also doesn't exercise the critical reflection of the subjects, leaving the students in a state of dependence that is not only educational, but also intellectual.

Despite these points of hardship, it became clear to me that both the tutor and the monitor performed several different ways of thinking and acting during the classes, with the goal of awakening the students' interest and initiative. Some were more successful than others, but all of them were faced with distrust at first, and with apathy or just acceptance in the end.

## CONCLUSION

With all of the discussion, the monitor's role become essential, because it works as a sort of bridge between the tutor and the students, someone who can see both sides of the situation. Not only is the monitor also a student, who already went through the college life's tribulations, but he also has the consciousness

about the importance of living the learning experience in an active way. It's up to the monitor, alongside the tutor, to seek alternative methods of raising the students' interest in regards to the active teaching methodology, as well as trying to motivate them towards seeking knowledge for the pleasure of it, to leave the darkness of ignorance and become authors of their own knowledge, opposed to learning only to score in tests.

My experience as monitor has provided a maturing not only in regards to the college course, but to life in general, awakening in me an interest for teaching and reflection about contexts never thought before. I had the opportunity to think about didactic strategies and ways of interacting with others, always seeking the balance between work and learning. All the work made alongside the responsible tutor and the class has developed a sense of cooperation and group learning in me, which motivates me to keep searching for new ways of motivating the students regarding their autonomy and interest. No professional is perfect, neither the perfect student exists, but there has to be a continuous and mutual exchange that allows for constant growth in both parts, towards knowledge.

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