

Coordinate and adjust teaching during a class

What is the pedagogical practice of coordinating and adjusting teaching during a class?

The high-leverage practice of coordinating and adjusting teaching during class consists of the application of different strategies that allow the teacher, in real time, to adjust the teaching during a class or learning experience to maintain coherence in relation to the learning objectives, ensure that it responds to the needs of students, and use time efficiently (Teaching Works, 2022). This involves executing routines and procedures for the benefit of effective use of time and classroom management, helping students understand the purpose of the class, explicitly connecting each part of the lesson, and making changes to the plan in response to progress and obstacles detected. The teacher, therefore, should identify throughout the session what learning is being achieved, what is not, and what might be hindering it, and should be able to incorporate learning scaffolds based on the context and learning data obtained.

Therefore, it is important that the teacher recognizes and values the opportunities provided by the discretionary space, a concept coined by Deborah Ball (2018) that refers to the scope of possibility that the educator has to make fundamental decisions, capable of changing the course of an action, offering new opportunities for students during the implementation of a class. These moments or micro-moments, on many occasions unexpected, become relevant because an opportunity to focus on learning, empower students and ensure that everyone learns is at stake in the decision made by the teacher. Taking advantage of these fundamental opportunities requires paying attention to the context and the moment, identifying the possibilities that open up at that moment and making quick decisions for pedagogical purposes. Examples of such discretionary space might be the instant when a student interrupts turns to speak, when we need to think about how we will incorporate a student's comment, or when we realize that the activity is not unfolding as planned and we need to react to get back on track. These discretionary spaces, therefore, highlight the autonomy of the teacher, since he/she is not a mere executor of a planning, but a subject who, using his/her experience, knowledge and reflection, can identify and enhance unforeseen learning opportunities in his/her students. To do so, the educator must pay attention to how students respond during class and thus make pedagogical decisions. These determinations require the teacher to situate knowledge, read the context, incorporate learning facilitators, be wise in his or her actions, and engage in deliberation committed to student learning.

Another important element of the practice of coordinating and adjusting the teaching during a class corresponds to planning, monitoring and adjusting the time during the class to meet the intended learning objectives as well as to promote the regulation of autonomous work, the efficient use of time and the adaptation of instruction to the detected needs. In addition, it is essential for the

educator to effectively manage transitions between activities and moments in the class. The implementation of adequate and timely transitions avoids frustration and confusion of student when moving from one activity to another (Hemmeter, M. et al, 2008). This allows students to focus on learning and also provides a sense of security and autonomy and decreases the anxiety levels of the group; it helps to maintain attention, understand the different periods of the day and prepare for the tasks ahead. It also implies that the educator must make decisions that allow him, in real time, to adjust his class to respond to the pace and learning needs of his students (Teaching Works, 2022).

Coordinating and adjusting teaching during a class implies that the teacher:

- Delivers in a diverse manner the work instructions (using visual support, audiovisual, kinesic language, etc.) with the purpose of adjusting the teaching to the needs of each student.
- Uses instances of formative assessment during class to obtain feedback and adjust instruction when necessary.
- Implement simple, clear and balanced transitions between the different moments of the class.
- Identifies, during class implementation, students who need individual support during activities to target aids.
- He/she makes discretionary decisions during the implementation of the class, deciding how he/she will act in certain situations. For example, during a class, a student falls asleep and the teacher, considering the information about the student's context and taking care to provide opportunities for development and learning, must decide what to do: approach to talk?, tap the student on the shoulder to wake him/her up?, offer the opportunity to drink water and clear his/her head to rejoin the room?, ignore the situation?

What it is not to Coordinate and adjust teaching during a class:

- Collecting prior knowledge from students at the beginning of the class and not considering those results for the development of the class.
- Intervene in the students' autonomous work or plenary discussion in order to promote an abrupt change in the discussion or work times. For example, announcing in front of a discussion or plenary scenario "there are no more turns to speak because we do not have time" or leaving an activity unfinished because the end of the class block cut the exercise short due to lack of time.
- Interrupting students during their interventions to adjust class time. Saying, for example, to a student, while participating in the plenary discussion, "Leave the idea up to there" or giving the chance to speak to someone else without making sure to close or take up the previous student's idea.
- Make transitions between class activities so implicit or quick that students do not realize that the class has moved on to something else. It often happens that teachers, in order to accomplish all planned didactic moments, do not take the time to make explicit closing of one moment or activity and the beginning of the next. For example, while students continue

working in groups, the teacher implements the closing question of the session. This may cause several students to be focused on the task they are completing, others may be putting away their materials, and only a few may be focused on the closing.

- Improve a transition or implement very long transitions that cause students to lose focus and thus lost learning opportunities. For example, when we start the autonomous work of the class we take excessive time in determining, on the go, the form of grouping, the method for grouping students (random or designated, by affinity or by needs), the delivery of materials, the distribution of the use of space, among others.
- Generate social conversations during class to collect interests, preconceptions and learning. It often happens that, in some classes, students' interests, experiences and needs appear, but this can take a course that is not very close to the proposed learning objectives. For example, using several minutes of class time to talk about a topic related to interests not linked to what is being learned, such as detailing the life of an actor or actress we like, commenting on the latest action of a singer or comparing personal tastes in food or hobbies with students.

Teaching strategies to coordinate and adjust teaching during a class:

- **Tools for continuous monitoring of progress, interests and understanding:** Include throughout the class various activities that allow gathering evidence and immediate data on students' learning and achievement levels to guide decision making. For this purpose, it is suggested to implement small spaces in which a review of the learning achievement of the group and individuals is carried out. For example, the "Everybody shows" technique (Lemov, 2016) proposes asking one or more central questions and requesting that students respond simultaneously using simple strategies that allow collecting information instantly, such as using thumbs up and down to demonstrate whether one agrees or disagrees with a statement; using green, yellow and red cards to demonstrate degrees of approval; showing an answer in the notebook or individual whiteboards, among others. Digital platforms for interactive participation can also be used for voting, surveys, true and false exercises, multiple choice, among others, with the purpose of formatively verifying understanding and making decisions about elements to deepen, expand or advance during the class. In addition, these digital tools can be used to gather information on topics of interest, tastes, preferences and needs of the group. For this purpose, it is recommended to use platforms that project information graphically and quickly, such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Mentimeter or Qualtrics, and to ask multiple-choice questions. The information collected, both in analog and digital format, allows the teacher, during the implementation of his/her class, to evaluate the levels of learning achievement as well as the activities implemented and thus make the necessary adjustments to his/her initial planning. For example, the teacher could decide to continue moving forward, stop at a point or go back to reinforce learning. Likewise, the teacher could decide to regroup students using other criteria, reinforce instructions or work in a tutorial manner with some of them.

· **Essential questions:** When the class discussion extends beyond the planned time or when the discussion deviates from the initial objective, the strategy of essential questions can be used. These are questions that serve to guide the conversation, rephrase the class objective in an interrogative manner, incorporating the concept and key elements of the planned session; they should be open-ended and wide-ranging questions to promote transfer of learning. They allow students to inquire and make sense of ideas and knowledge that they have discussed and return to the central thread of the session. Examples are: How can we apply this in our daily lives?; How does it relate to what we have learned in other subjects?; How will learning this help us?; How does it relate to the objective of the class?; How does it relate to what we have seen in previous classes?;

· **Learning lights:** This refers to a strategy for self-monitoring the level of understanding or achievement of what is being learned and allows instantaneous delivery of information to the educator to be able to mediate instructions and/or focus help during the class. For this purpose, each student should have three objects of the traffic light colors (for example: cards, cups or cones). Each color represents a state, referring to the student's self-perception of the objective of the class or independent work activity. Thus, green means "I understand", "I am doing well", "I can do it on my own"; yellow represents the ideas "I am having a little trouble" and red means "I do not understand", "I cannot go on". During the activity or class, each student should have the objects in his or her place, leaving the color that represents him or her visible. As the session progresses, the student can change the color of the cups/cards/cones according to how he/she feels about learning. In this way, the teacher can approach those who need support to adjust instructions, model examples and thus provide effective help.

· **Verbal transitions:** Corresponds to the sentences that we make so that students identify the change between moments or activities of the class. They should be simple, using economy of language and precise about what we want to happen. They allow students to make the use of time and change evident. For example, when many students want to share their opinions and experiences and, after several interventions, begin to reiterate ideas, causing the discussion to go on longer than planned, we could intervene by saying "Let's hear two more comments before we continue".

· **Non-verbal transitions:** When planning simultaneous activities in the classroom or outdoors, it is often recommended to use sound or visual elements as a stimulus for students to change activities, start a station or rotate learning corners. This can be done by using hand signals, raising a board, ringing a bell, using a whistle or a musical instrument such as a tambourine and a water stick, among others. It is important to consider the context in which the strategy will be used because some students are more sensitive to sound stimuli.

· **Questions for comprehension verification or reflection:** At the end of the class, we can ask questions that allow students to reflect and share ideas, mistakes and/or apprehensions about what they have done. For example: do we have any doubts before moving on to the following?, in what way have we achieved the objective of the class?, how do we relate it to what we have

learned in the unit?, what difficulties have we detected? The above exercise corresponds to a formative learning evaluation practice that allows obtaining information on the students' level of achievement with respect to the learning objectives and helps the educator to recognize the impact of his/her practices on learning and thus adjust his/her work. The evidence collected allows adjustments to be made to what was planned both in that session and in subsequent classes. For example, the teacher could extend an explanation, shorten an activity, modify the grouping for independent work, incorporate a new learning resource, or even incorporate another class to work on the objective that was not achieved.

- **Transitions with framing:** At the end of a moment of the class or activity we can ask questions that allow students to link what was done with the purpose of the class as well as with the sequence carried out. For example, "Now that we have concluded [x], what about [y]?", "Considering what we have learned about [x], what should we do about [y]?", "How does [x] relate to [y]?". This allows the teacher to verify the overall understanding of the learning and to make explicit the links between each part of the session worked on with the purpose being pursued.

- **Explicitness of adjustments:** Throughout the class and the sequence of classes, the teacher must use the information and evidence gathered about the levels of achievement, understanding and interests, and thus make decisions. It is recommended that the adjustments made are explicit to the students so that they take ownership and become involved in the learning process. Examples of this are the following sentences: "Based on the results of the last test applied, we are going to reinforce [x] content" or "Given the depth that you have assigned to the group research, we will make the following adjustment in the schedule" or "As there are several questions about [x], we will work in pairs to solve the doubts". The above allows transmitting to the students an environment of security, since they can recognize a structure and timetable. In addition, students' participation levels increase because they feel that the educator connects with their needs and rhythms and also encourages the group's autonomy by understanding the steps, changes and purposes of the actions they are carrying out.

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