Why and How Do Students Activate Previous Knowledge?

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مركز التميز في التعلم والتعليم

Studies have confirmed that students' previous incorrect or incomplete knowledge stands as an effective obstacle in acquiring new knowledge. Therefore, it has become one of the characteristics of distinguished teaching, the method of activating previous knowledge among students, because it helps them improve their understanding of new topics, and link them to their previous knowledge. It also helps you to identify mistakes or deficiencies in their previous knowledge, and guide them to correct or enhance them.

Your activation of students' prior knowledge begins with providing an overview of the new topic or required concepts, and explaining their relationship to prior knowledge.

Students' participation in activities and discussions enables you to identify misconceptions or inadequate information that may become an obstacle against students' understanding of new concepts and how to apply them.

How do we involve students in activating their previous knowledge:

- **Concept maps:** Provide the students, within groups, with a semi-completed concept map, ask them to fill in the previous concepts and point out the importance of the links between the concepts and discuss them with the students.

- **Online surveys:** Use the survey in Blackboard or Google Forms to check students' understanding of prior knowledge.

- **Brainstorming:** Use one of the technical tools which enables the participation of the largest number of students (such as Padlet) to figure the students knowledge about a concept or how to apply it.

Activate Prior Knowledge. Univ. of Texas.
https://ctl.utexas.edu/prior-knowledge

Enriching Resources

Assessment of students previous knowledge. Center of Excellence in Learning and Teaching.
https://celt.ksu.edu.sa/sites/celt.ksu.edu.sa/files/imce_images/mmrs_tlymy_1.pdf
Top 100 Tools for Learning 2022: Padlet.
https://www.toptools4learning.com/padlet

Example of a quick prior knowledge survey (x):

❑ I haven't heard of x

❑ I've heard of x but don't understand it

❑ I have a clear understanding of x but have never used it

❑ I can understand it easily, as I have used it before