

ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGY (ALM) IN TAMILNADU (A Conceptual Framework)

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ABSTRACT

Human capital is the major sources of every country; such human capital is developed and procured by quality education. India is second largest country in the population strength for which, education is a common source to shape the human resources to whole of nation. It is possible, every child get quality education through a system of small multi age group schools across the nation. At present learning process became student centered. Every child has to learn by doing with the help of the teachers, they are using the term “active learning methodology” in the upper primary level class room environment. In this students are doing something in the sense of learning, processing and applying information and knowledge. Active learning ensures when students are given the opportunity to take a more collaborative relationship with the subject matter of a course, encouraging them to generate rather than simply receive knowledge. The aim of ALM is empowerment of students in such a way that he/she is confident and able to function in many perspectives. In the middle school years (Classes 6-8) such learning can be blended into the curriculum of any school easily. In October 2007 the Government of Tamilnadu has issued an order indicating that for Science and Social studies the ALM methodology to be adapted in all schools. There is much work that SSA BRTEs have put in to generate the lesson plans and now the ideas internalized by the trainers have found translation into lesson plans. Teachers from the school KFI have been assisting them in this endeavor. Therefore, the present study has attempted to explore and elicit a clear idea about active learning methodology (ALM), further it has also tried analyze the various steps to implement and how the active learning method become important in developing the learners.

Key words: Active Learning methodology (ALM), SSA, BRTEs, Mind map, reinforcement and consolidation, remedial.

1. INTRODUCTION

Active Learning Methodology involves having the students read, think, make observations, solve problems and discuss their ideas. It puts the responsibility of learning with the student, and allows for a variety of learning styles to benefit. There are a number of techniques that can be used to engage the students, including solving problems, team discussions, formulating questions, role playing and case studies. Having the students work on some activity during class time wakes them up, gets them to focus on the key concepts of the lecture and gives them time to practice honing their critical thinking skills during class where they can receive immediate feedback on their progress. Weak students benefit by getting help from academically stronger students, and the strong students learn the material further by explaining it to someone else. When students complete an activity, they learn it better than if they watch the instructor complete it. In addition, by completing an activity, students find out how much else they need to learn to master the particular topic, and are able to focus on the lecture better than if they were just copying down the words.

In India, education for whole country every child was possible through a system of small multi-age schools across the country, run on the ability of teachers. The term Active Learning is not new. The classroom and the given content are taken. This may be considered faulty by many. But the steps into tomorrow have to lead from what exists now. We cannot imagine schools in entirely new circumstances - different building, teachers, books etc. Whatever methodologies we choose have to be viable in the present circumstances. Thus the approaches suggested here are those that may find applicability in many circumstances (Gautama G, 2008).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the concept of Active Learning Methodology (ALM).
- To study how ALM important in the teaching learning process in Tamilnadu.
- To analyze the various steps to implement active learning Methodology (ALM) in the upper primary level.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is mainly based on secondary sources of data and it was carried out as descriptive and conceptual design. The subject matter of relevant concepts was collected through reference of already published sources such as periodicals, journals, books, magazines and bulletins.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is limited with the conceptual framework, importance and the various steps of Active Learning methodology, in the upper primary level of students.

5. CONCEPT OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGY (ALM)

Active Learning Methodology consist three aspects viz., 'active', 'learning' and 'methodology'. With regard to these terms, many authors and experts have given clear definitions for the terms active, learning and methodology. The definitions for the above are as follows. According to Accurate & Reliable Dictionary (A free English – English online dictionary)

- **'Active'** given to action; constantly engaged in action; energetic; diligent; busy; - opposed to dull, sluggish, indolent or inert; as, an active man of business; active mind; active zeal.
- **'Learning'** to gain knowledge or information of; to ascertain by inquiry, study, or investigation; to receive instruction concerning; to fix in the mind; to acquire understanding of, or skill; as, to learn the nay; to learn a lesson; to learn dancing; to learn to skate; to learn the violin; to learn the truth about something.
- **'Methodology'** a procedure, technique or way of doing something especially in accordance with a definite plan.
- **Definition of 'ALM'**

Bonwell and Eison state "...that student must do more than Just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Within this context, it is proposed that strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing." Active learning methodologies require that the student must find opportunities to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject (Meyers & Jones, 1993).

6. BACKGROUND OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHOD (ALM) IN TAMILNADU

In the year 2006, The School, Krishna Murthy Foundation India (KFI) introduced after much deliberation, a Pilot Mixed age class initiated for students of classes 5, 6 and 7. This attempt was made following up on a similar change. The School made in 1999 for the junior school, classes 1 to 4. The idea behind these move was that the individual student needs space in school and also that the peer pressure is not conducive to learning and wellbeing.

SSA team visited The School KFI in April 2007 and wanted to know if there was an approach similar to ABL possible in the Upper Primary classes. After explorative conversations SSA TN invited The School (KFI), Chennai to conduct an 11 - day Workshop for about 60 Block Resource Teacher Educators (BRTes), in the month of May 2007, to explore the possibility of bringing an active pedagogy into the upper primary classrooms. These workshops were conducted by teachers of The School (KFI) as

part of the Outreach work of the school, and introduced to the trainers the possibility of moving towards "ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES"(ALM) in Middle School. Many of the ideas presented were those that were tried in the mixed age Pilot programme. The workshop met with wide enthusiasm from the participating trainers. They saw good possibility of introducing this approach in the Upper Primary schools. Further, Teachers from The School held a five day workshop in July2007, for BRTEs of SSA TN to generate materials for piloting the new methodology. The workshops outlined conceptual frameworks and introduced strategies that could be used by teachers in the classroom.

Teachers of TN, taught by the BRTEs, tried out the suggestions made by the teachers of The School, over the month of June 2007, in 12 Districts at the rate of one Block in each District. Considering the wholehearted reception and response to the approach and methodology from teachers and students, the SSA TN now proposed to scale this up to all the middle schools in the state. In October 2007 the TN Government has issued an order indicating that the for Science and Social studies the ALM methodology should be tried in all schools. There is much work that SSA BRTEs have put in to generate the lesson plans and now the ideas internalized by the trainers have found translation into lesson plans. Teachers from The school KFI have been assisting them in this endeavor.

7. SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF ALM

The term "active learning" has been more understood intuitively than defined in commonly accepted terms. As a result many educators say that all learning is active. Are not students actively involved while listening to lectures or presentations in the classroom? Research however, suggests that students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss or be engaged in solving problems (Chickering and Gamson 1987). Further, students must be engaged in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to be actively involved. Thus strategies promoting activities that involve students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing may be called active -learning.

Importance of ALM

Use of these techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact upon students' learning. Studies have shown that students prefer strategies promoting active learning to traditional lectures. Other research studies evaluating students' achievement have demonstrated that many strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking and writing. Some cognitive research has shown that a large number of individuals have learning styles that are best approached using pedagogical techniques other than lecturing.

Active learning stands in contrast to "standard" modes of instruction in which teachers do most of the talking and students are passive. When you have learned something you have changed your brain

physically. Education once was thought of as a process of transmission (i.e., pouring knowledge into empty vessels), research has made it abundantly clear that the quality of teaching and learning is improved when students have enough opportunities to clarify, question, apply, and consolidate new knowledge. There are many teaching strategies that can be employed to actively engage students in the learning process. Some of these are group discussions, problem solving, case studies, role plays, journal writing, and structured learning groups.

However, research also indicates that by re-organizing or adapting the ways they present material to students, instructors can create an environment in which knowledge retention is significantly increased; of course, such situations require the cooperation of the students themselves. One of the best methods is to implement so-called active learning. Active learning is involving students directly and actively in the learning process itself. This means that instead of simply receiving information verbally and visually, students are receiving, participating and doing. Thus active learning is:

- Engaging students in doing something other than listening to a lecture and taking notes
- Students may be involved in talking and listening to one another, or writing, reading and reflecting individually or in small groups

Scope of ALM

The aim of ALM is empowerment of the learner in such a way that he or she is confident and able to function in many contexts. In the middle school years - (classes 6-8) such learning can be blended into the curriculum of any school easily. It includes:

- learning to affirm oneself and one's learning style -The ALM classroom
- learning to be healthy and safe —Biology curriculum enrichment
- learning to think skillfully, recognize and deal with one's feelings and be resourceful in a variety of situations - Learning for Life Units
- learning to live in social systems - living and working together with other people, good citizenship skills, being able to participate in the debate of our times— (Civics curriculum enrichment)
- learning to live in and interact with a physical environment - finding environmentally viable responses in terms of lifestyle and choices (Environmental Education and Biology curriculum enrichment)

Above all the Active Learning Skills will help students negotiate the world of knowledge with skill and enthusiasm, confident of their own abilities and opening widening newer avenues to learning.

If you learn to watch students, they will learn to watch themselves - J. Krishnamurti

8. STEPS OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGY

Active Learning Methodology

In active learning, the students are doing something including discovering, processing and applying information. Many teaching strategies can be employed to actively engage students in the learning process. The activities in ALM improve skills in critical thinking, increase motivation and retention and interpersonal skills. Active learning involves students directly and actively in the learning process. Instead of simply receiving information verbally and visually, the students are receiving and participating and doing. Active learning methodologies require that the student must find opportunities to meaningfully talk, listen, write and read.

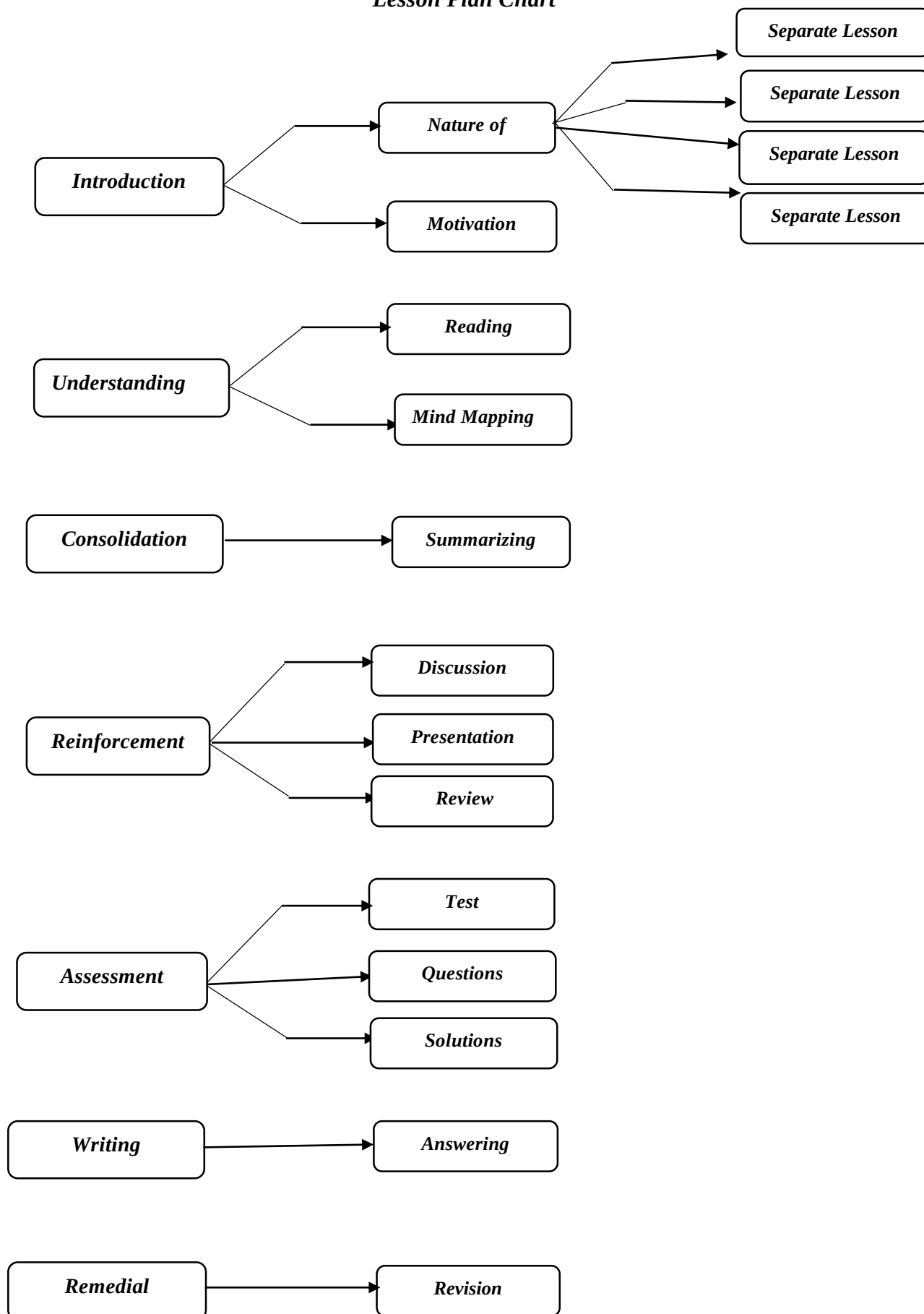
Lesson Plan Model

Topic	: Tense
Standard	: 8 th Standard
Nature of the Topic	: Descriptive
Time	: 90 minutes
Subject	: English Grammar
Unit	: II sec 'C'

Technique: Chalk & Talk.

1. Introduction :
2. Understanding :
3. Mind mapping :
4. Summarizing :
5. Discussion :
6. Writing Activity :
7. Revision :
8. Evaluation :

Lesson Plan Chart



9. SELF STUDY FORMAT

This format contains all the elements considered essential for the students learning. It is a simple format to use. It focuses on the student reading, drawing mind maps, summarizing and discussing. It is useful where reading material is simple.

Elements of the Format	Formations	Timing
Introducing	Large Group	10 Minutes
Reading	Individual	30 Minutes
Mind Map	Individual	-
Summary	Individual	-
Discussion of mind map and summary	Small Group	20 Minutes
Consolidation and reinforcement	Large group	30 Minutes
Assessment	Individual/Small Group/large Group	-
Remedial	Large Group	-
Writing	Individual	Home work

Some elaboration on each of the elements of the format are given in the table below

Step	Elements of the Format	Some possibilities to consider
1	Introduction	• Evocation to kindle interest – story, anecdote • Students sharing questions that they may have on the topic • Linking to prior knowledge • Showing an experiment • Using charts, pictures • Setting/ evolving guiding question for reading • Sharing of what the students is expected to know at the end of the chapter. • Connect to the overall lesson mind map
2	Reading	• Underline key words • Identify words whose meaning is not known • Clarify meaning using dictionary/ask peer/ask teacher • Teacher can make a list of new words with meanings if a dictionary is not available
3	Mind Map	• Draw mind map and share individual maps in the small group
4	Summary	• Summarize individually and share in the small group
		• Presentation of a few mind maps done by students • Students and teacher evolve a common mind map and summary.

5	Consolidation and reinforcement	• Going over key words • Observation/ identification of specimens/ diagrams • Demonstration of small experiments • Exploring applications of learning
6	Assessment	• Quiz • Match the following • Fill in the blanks • Short answers • Draw a diagram • Label a diagram • Tabulation etc. • Based on what the students are expected to know at end of the unit • Students self-assessment/peer assessment
7	Remedial	• Going over the incorrectly
8	Writing	• Writing exercises of various kinds

10. CONCLUSION

In India, education for whole country every child was possible through a system of small multi- age schools across the country, run on the ability of teachers. The term Active Learning is not new. The classroom and the given content are taken, it may be considered faulty by many. But the steps into tomorrow have to lead from what exists now. Active learning must engross students in expressive activities that require them to think about the “what” and “why” of what they are doing. The steps of active learning methodology should be integrated into lesson plans. The experienced teacher can modify in teaching methodology and the development of new methods for instructing the students. In the light of this conceptual study, the upper primary teachers can effectively exercise the various steps of ALM to be implemented successfully for the betterment of the students. Effective incorporation of active learning method clearly, what they are doing should help students understand, apply and master the content/concepts in the classes they are taking.

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