
The debate as an active teaching and learning method

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Abstract

Debate is a formal oral argument on a given subject with defined rules that are accepted by all participating parties. Within debate framework, parties discuss central issues of a particular theme in the attempt to overpower one another based on logical argumentations. Deliberation's central objectives are the construction of logical arguments, improvement of expression skills and the ability to stand before an audience, alongside utilization of various means of persuasion and in depth delving into core issues in all fields of knowledge. As debate technique may be applied to any field in all disciplines, debate themes can originate from all fields of knowledge – exact sciences, humanities, social sciences and so forth.

In recent years, education methodology has undergone change where there is a gradual shift from passive learning to active learning. According to this approach, the student actively participates and is involved in the learning process. Multiple diverse tools have been developed for the active learning approach and debate constitutes one of these tools available to the supervisor or teacher. The current article depicts/suggests/claims/shows/ that debate forms an easy to use tool that may be utilized methodologically in various fields of research for the improvement of theoretical thought. In fact, its utilization (upon understanding its limitations and problems) affords advancement and development of knowledge in an array of scientific fields. The principles of the debate procedure coincide with those of scientific methodology while integrating critical thinking with numerous skills: attentiveness, investigation, problem solving, raising arguments and reasoning, asking questions, and improvement of communication skills.

The current article has two objectives: (a) to present and explain the art of debate (or competitive debate) for diverse audiences; (b) to suggest a slightly different approach to the presently fixed approach of most competitive debate circles at the academy and schools by suggesting to focus on the encouragement of a more active and involving teaching which strengthens literacy skills and engages in "education for values". Many academic debates are based upon the competitive technique that necessitates (and rewards) quick and eloquent speech. Such a debate pattern primarily relies on logos (logical arguments) and ignores one of the central components of rhetoric – pathos (emotion). In order to enable speakers maximal verbalization in a limited time frame, academic debate and school debate abandoned significant and essential components of classical rhetoric. These components are the mile stones of rhetoric and persuasion, without which rhetoric solely remains in form.

Key words: active learning, argumentation, debate, education, speech.

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