Introduction

Sophocles, the ancient Greek Philosopher said in 4000BC

"One must learn by doing the thing. For though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try."

An Idea can only become a reality once it is broken down into **"organised actionable elements"**. It is important to note that you have to "DO", not just decide to do, to be an active learner. Do you **procrastinate or act**? This section is intended to help you engage with the concepts of active and passive learning from a reflective stance; and to help you move from being a passive learner to becoming an active learner.

Why choose active and not passive learning?

According to Bonwell and Eeison (1991), **ACTIVE Learning** "is involving students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing". Chickering and Gamon (1987) adds that learning is not a spectator sport – students learn when they talk about what they are learning, when they write about it, relate it to past or current experiences, apply it to daily living and make what they learn part of themselves. Active learning also requires that students explore their own attitudes and values towards learning, as learning is enhanced when the environment is intellectually and emotionally positive. Furthermore, students need to read, write, discuss, be engaged in problem solving – "do". **PASSIVE Learning**, on the other hand, is when one does not set goals, and not engage the brain is "doing" some activities that can help the learning centre of the brain to absorb and hold on to the learning.

According to Johnson (1989) active enquiry, not passive absorption of information, enhances and engages student learning. As Chickening and Gamon expound, learning is not a spectator sport. Passive learning does not yield results or translate into productive learning outcomes.

Now that you have read what the experts have to say, how would you transfer this knowledge into a strategy for your own active learning experience?

Your brain and active learning: How it works

Your brain learns best by action and doing. The memories that you best recall are the ones where you were involved in an activity; or an emotion you felt strongly, where you were involved with a significant other in an experience. This is because, in the brain, the amygdala in the hippocampus is the centre of learning (Blakemore and Frith, 2005). The amygdala learns, and stores learning experiences that are emotional and social. It is important to note that studying is the act of creating memory. The more the senses that are put to use during memory creation activities, the more the brain learns and memorises. So, you do not read with just your "eyes" or "go through" academic work as you would when are reading a

magazine or paging through an album. Be engaging with as many of your senses as you can – talk, sing, explain, play, reflect, act and imagine. Use your visual, oral (saying), aural (listening), imaginative, dramatic, neural, playful and interpersonal self to learn. As explained by the experts cited above, read, write, jot down, annotate, test yourself and POWER LEARN.

P.O.W.E.R Learning as a means of learning actively

POWER learning is an acronym for a series of activities that you can engage in to help activate the use of your senses and memory creation, and therefore, learning.

P = prepare/plan/play/ponder
O = organise/overview/outline
W = work it out /write it/wonder about it
E = examine/evaluate/excel at it and master the idea /explain
R = read actively/reproduce/rethink/reflect/recite

Here is a list of actions you need to take if you want to excel and achieve academic score of 70 – 90 percent:

- **10% - Attending a lecture (attendance is linked to performance – creates opportunity for consolidating new work as soon as you get it)**
- **10% - Reading (reading actively/annotating)**
- **15% - Audio Visual (listen to it/see it)**
- **30% - Demonstration (do it again/repeat)**
- **50% - Discussion group rap/say/sing/recite/study buddy**
- **75% - Practicing and doing spot tests often**
- **90%- Teach it/explain it**

Summary

Students learn by becoming involved. Such involvement includes the amount of physical and psychological energy that students devote to the academic acts (ASTIN, 1985). Active learning is one approach to learning that ensures successful learning outcomes, as it encourages the engagement of multiple senses in activities that help to create stimuli for memory creation, and for learning to take place. In contrast, little or no learning outcomes

are achieved when students adopt a passive approach to learning. We encourage you to apply the active learning strategies presented here to enhance or promote successful learning outcomes.

References

Blakemore & Frith (2005). The Learning Brain: lessons for education. Blackwell publishing.

Bonwel, CCl & Eison, JA (1991). Higher education report. Washington University.

Johnson (1989). Active Learning, not Passive Absorption, Enhances and Engages Students

Chickering and Gamon (1987). Teaching for Innovation.