Tutorial

Description The tutorial is a session that is additional or supplementary to the lecture. It is normally intended for further exploration of concepts, theories, principles and inquiries arising from the lectures so as to help students to develop deep understanding of the topics and skills and to apply of knowledge to solve problems. Tutorials can also be conducted differently by using various kinds of interactive activities mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The tutorial, used as a discussion platform, can be administered in many formats such as buzz groups, pyramids, debates, fishbowls, etc. In order to facilitate active discussion amongst the students, it is preferable for the teacher to use a series of pauses, prompts and probes to encourage students to think deeply so that they reach the interpretations, conclusions, and answers for themselves. The following examples delineate different approaches to managing the discussion process in a tutorial.

Example 1 Teacher recites the issues covered in the lecture, ask questions and invite volunteers for answers. The teacher gives answers if there is no volunteer. The teacher wraps up the tutorial by giving explanations and demonstrations.

Example 2 Students form groups of 4 to 5 and each group is given a question for discussion. A leader is chosen to record and report important ideas to the whole group. Students 'buzz' for about 5 minutes. Leaders take turns to report important points of their groups to the whole class. During reporting, teacher prompts students for explanations and suggestions. Students post up ideas and inquiry, if any. Lastly, the teacher gives feedback and invites the whole class for solutions.

How Active? Teacher dominance is obvious in the scenario depicted in Example 1 in which students are discouraged from thinking or speaking up in the class. In contrast, in Example 2, students are given a larger space to take active part in the learning tasks, discuss actively with their teacher and peers, and think deeply and apply what is learned to solve problems. Group discussions like 'buzz groups', as illustrated in Example 2, are effective to build up teams and enhance interpersonal communication.

How Related to Real Life? Whether the tutorial is conducive to authenticity or not really depends on the materials used for the discussion. Bringing more real examples into the explanation helps explain abstract concepts and principles. Likewise, bringing real cases into the discussion helps students to apply book knowledge into near real-life situations.

What Learning Outcomes? It is difficult to know what outcomes students can achieve in Example 1 as students are given very little chance to engage themselves in any activity. They might only be able to recite what is said in the textbook. However, in Example 2, students are able to explain, compare and contrast ideas and concepts with reference to the knowledge previously learned and, based on these negotiate for the answers, decisions or solutions later. They are also more active in criticising different information and making suggestions.