Peer Instruction, Technology, Education for Textile and Fashion Students

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Abstract : One of the key goals on Learning and Teaching as documented in the University strategic plan 2012/13 – 2017/18 is to encourage active learning, the use of innovative teaching approaches and technology, and promoting the adoption of flexible and varied teaching delivery methods. This research reported the recent visited to Prof Eric Mazur at Harvard University on Peer Instruction: Collaborative learning in large class and innovative use of technology to enable new mode of learning. Peer Instruction is a research-based, interactive teaching method developed by Prof. Eric Mazur at Harvard University in the 1990s. It has been adopted across the disciplines, institutional type and throughout the world. One problem with conventional teaching lies in the presentation of the material. Frequently, it comes straight out of textbook/notes, giving students little incentive to attend class. This traditional presentation is always delivered as monologue in front of passive audience. Only exceptional lecturers are capable of holding students' attention for an entire lecture period. Consequently, lectures simply reinforce students' feelings that the most important step in mastering the material is memorizing a zoo of unrelated examples. In order to address these misconceptions about learning, Prof Mazur's Team developed "Peer Instruction", a method which involves students in their own learning during lectures and focuses their attention on underling concepts. Lectures are interspersed with conceptual questions called Concept Tests, designed to expose common difficulties in understanding the material. The students are given one or two minutes to think about the question and formulate their own answers; they then spend two or three minutes discussing their answers in a group of three or four, attempting to reach consensus on the correct answer. This process forces the students to think through the arguments being developed, and enable them to assess their understanding concepts before they leave the classroom. The findings from Peer Instruction and innovative use of technology on teaching at Harvard University were applied to the first year Textiles and Fashion students in Hong Kong. Survey conducted from 100 students showed that over 80% students enjoyed the flexibility of peer instruction and 70% of them enjoyed the instant feedback from the Clicker system (Student Response System used at Harvard University). Further work will continue to explore the possibility of peer instruction to art and fashion students.

Keywords : peer instruction, education, technology, fashion