

INVOLVEMENT, CONCENTRATION, AND MOTIVATION USING ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON GENERATION Z

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Role Play was designed on behalf of undergraduate marketing students and implemented in the classroom. The principal goal was to simulate a re Advertising Agency and a Client. Several Active Learning techniques were introduced by complementing the principle one, such as small group writing, and large group discussions. Results reveal that Active Learning activities are determinant to attract Generation Z's attention and involveme and filming the group during the class, demonstrated that students were highly involved in real work context simulation by the Role Play. All stud enjoy interacting with their pairs. As a result, students were involved, concentrated, and highly motivated during the activities.

Keywords:

Active learning, role play, higher education, teaching-learning pedagogical practices, simulation of real-world activity.

INVOLVEMENT, CONCENTRATION, AND MOTIVATION USING ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON GENERATION Z

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic had an enormous impact on the Higher Education teaching-learning process, of students from Generation Z. Additionally, Generation Z is characterized by easy access to the technology world, such as the internet, iPods, iPhones, and more recently the ChatGPT. The problem arises: how can teachers attract Generation Z's attention and involvement in a classroom context, namely in the Higher Education system? This article aims to answer this question by describing the implementation of Active Learning Activities during the Advertising and Public Relations Course Unit, among Marketing Bachelor students, at Bragança Polytechnic University.

Role Play was designed on behalf of undergraduate marketing students and implemented in the classroom. The principal goal was to simulate a real situation between an Advertising Agency and a Client. Several Active Learning techniques were introduced by complementing the principle one, such as small group work activities, in-class writing, and large group discussions. Results reveal that Active Learning activities are determinant to attract Generation Z's attention and involvement. By observing students and filming the class it was demonstrated that students were highly involved in real work context simulation by the Role Play. All students participated. They enjoy interacting with their pairs. As a result, students were involved, concentrated, and highly motivated during the activities.

Keywords: Active learning, role-play, higher education, teaching-learning pedagogical practices, simulation of real-world activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 had an enormous impact on the Higher Education teaching-learning process, particularly on students from Generation Z. Fears, worries and anxiety are some COVID-19 consequences that some higher education students feel. These consequences are reflected in how students are motivated to learn, their involvement in the proposed activities, and their concentration. In these circumstances, it is determinant to adopt some important methodologies that promote and facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, the working environment is full of challenges. The global environment, the development of technologies, the competition pressure, and other uncontrolled and unexpected incidents, such as COVID-19, the Russia and Croatia war, and more recently the Israel war are factors that business companies need to consider. Those factors have forced companies to rethink their business strategy, in particular, new job positions have emerged, and the marketing functions have been strongly solicited by companies. The role and importance of the marketer in companies have been highlighted in several functions.

There is evidence in the literature that Higher Education needs to better prepare students for the job market demands and to overcome global challenges [1, 2, 3, 4]. There is a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning process [1, 2]. If in the past a more traditional paradigm prevailed, the teacher was the center of attention and used more expository methods in which the student assumed a passive role, today it is completely different. Nowadays, new teaching paradigms are needed to keep up with changes in society and the markets (eg. [4]). Active learning educational paradigms are seen as a new teaching paradigm that better prepares the students with the skills and content, they need to be prepared for the working challenges [2]. The authors also argue that knowledge must be constructed by students and teachers. In addition, the teaching-learning process should prevail in a student-centered learning environment, in which the student learns by participating in this process and behaving actively. The teaching profession is more complex,

the required academic qualifications are not enough to achieve professional success [2]. Table 1 summarizes the comparison between the traditional paradigm and the new paradigm.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional and New Teaching Paradigms

<i>College</i>	<i>Traditional Paradigm (Passive Learning Approach)</i>	<i>New Paradigm (Active Learning Approach)</i>
Knowledge	Transferred from faculty to students	Jointly constructed by students and faculty
Students	Passive Containers to be filled with faculty's knowledge	Active constructor, discovers, transformers of own knowledge
Faculty Role	Classify and sort students	Develop students' competencies and talents
Relationships	Impersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students	Personal interactions among students and between faculty and students
Activity Type	Competitive and individualistic learning activities	Mixture of individual and cooperative learning activities
Assumptions	Any expert can teach	Teaching is complex and requires considerable training

Source: Adapted from [1] cited by [2]

After understanding the paradigm shift in business education, in the marketing discipline [2], it is important to understand the Active Learning concept. The concept has been a buzzword for years [5]. Different authors have presented different concepts [5, 6, 7, 8]. For example, a restrictive concept was presented by [6] where the authors state that "active learning consists of short course-related individual or small-group activities that all students in a class are called upon to do, alternating with instructor-led intervals in which student responses are processed and new information is presented". In this concept is evident that the activities can be performed individually or in small groups, and with the involvement of all students, there exists an interaction between students and professors. [9] highlights the importance of student-centered teaching and the professor is viewed as a facilitator of the teaching-learning process. [2] reinforce this line and thought and add that the teacher acts as a facilitator to promote the active environment where the students are encouraged to discover, to acquire more knowledge and to develop critical thinking about a certain problem or situation. Students and teachers work together to promote better knowledge and understanding. The involvement of students in the teaching-learning process is reinforced by [7] as opposed to passive learning and involves "higher-order thinking". Active learning also can be pleasurable, and motivational, the students learn by being active in the learning process and can achieve great results [10]. The author also suggests that students have increased confidence and self-esteem and are thus respected by their peers and teachers. All authors are consensus about the active involvement of students in building knowledge and understanding [2, 5, 6, 7, 8].

This article focuses on the generation Z, also called 'Gen Next,' 'Gen I,' or 'Echo Bust [11]. They were born between 1995 and 2010 [12]. The literature recognizes that they are the first generation that are true "digital natives", because they are characterized by easy access to the technology world, such as the internet and high technology (e.g. iPods, iPhones, and more recently the ChatGPT) [11].

2 METHODOLOGY

The present paper describes the implementation of active learning activities in the classroom of Higher Education. The students were enrolled in the second curricular year of Marketing Bachelor, in the spring semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. Advertising and Public Relations was the curricular unit of the second academic year of Marketing Bachelor at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal.

The problem arises: how can teachers attract Generation Z's attention and involvement in a classroom context, namely in the Higher Education system?

Higher Education needs to prepare students with some specific and challenging competencies. Active learning activities can help students to achieve and develop the competencies required. The active learning activities were planned and implemented to involve, to motivate, and to integrate all the students and better develop the real competencies that companies are demanding.

The activities were implemented during a four-hour class on the last day of the school week (Friday). The main aim was to give the students a real experience so that they could gain a greater understanding

of a marketer “day” in an advertising agency. Planning the four hours was a challenge, but fundamental. It was decided that for this session the students need to work on a creative briefing to develop an advertising campaign. Some specific students’ skills and knowledge need to be developed and acquired, such as (i) oral and written communication; (ii) group work; (iii) simulation of a real situation (time management, objectivity, selecting relevant and important information); (iv) learning how to carry out a Creative Briefing; (v) learning to understand and ask the most pertinent questions to a client; (vi) putting themselves in the client's position.

A total of 22 students attended the 4 hours, and one more student only attended the 2 last hours of class. Of the total of the students, 26% were male, and 74% were female, with ages between 19-24 years old.

The planned activities were:

First, the professor did a PowerPoint presentation that carried out activator slides with the instructions. The PowerPoint presentation starts with a video followed by an activity in the Mentimeter. Figure 1 shows an image of the video as an example.

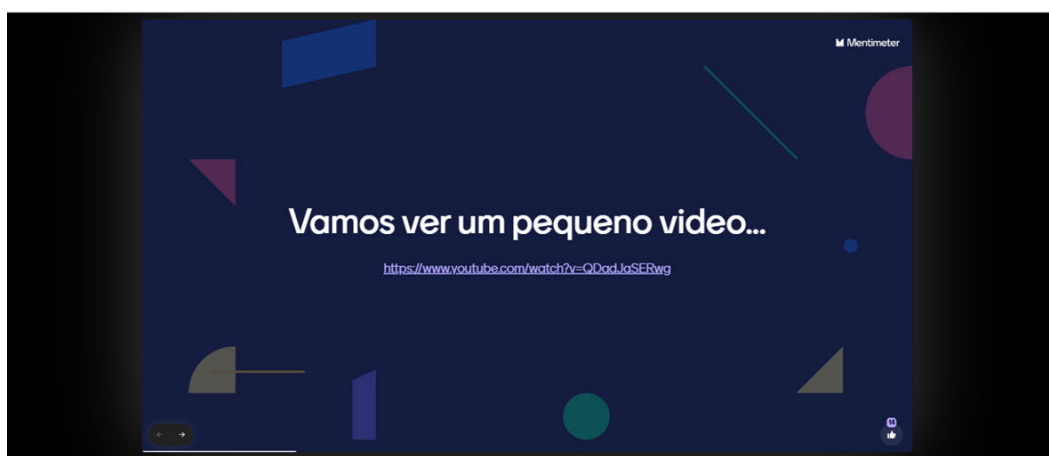


Figure 1. Presentation of a video: Mad Man movie

The Mentimeter presents a reflection question. The activity asked students to indicate three competencies that justify watching this video for the profession of marketer working in an advertising agency. Aiming to explain it better, figure 2 shows the Mentimeter-reflection question as an example.

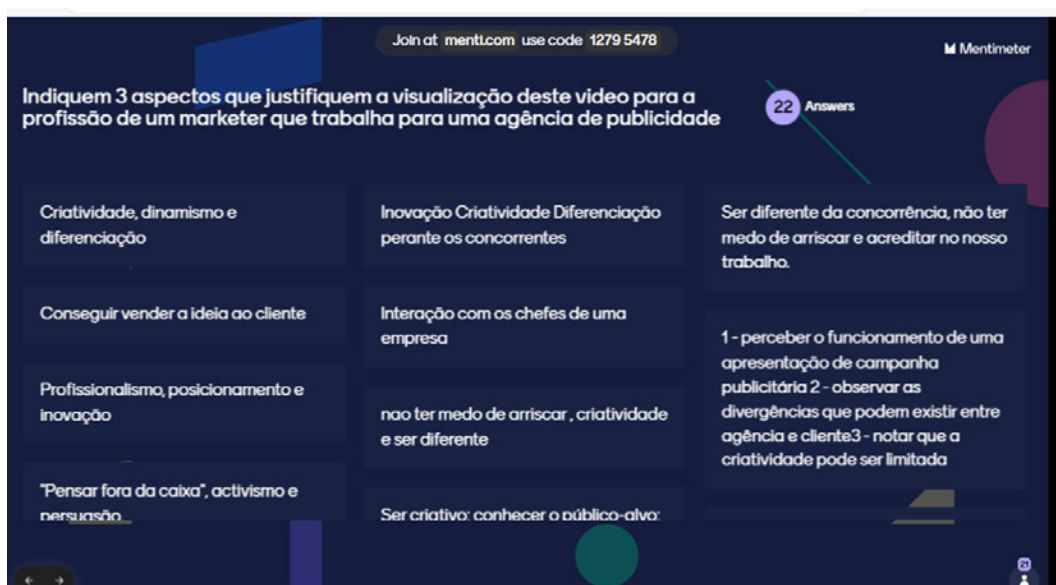


Figure 2. Mentimeter-reflection question

Then the students were divided into groups of 2-3 students. To simulate the real activities of advertising agencies and clients, the Role Play activity was proposed. Then, while the advertising agencies were working on a Creative Briefing, the Clients were working on presenting an advertising problem. It should be emphasized that the clients should indicate the objective to be achieved, as well as define other relevant points for the development of the advertising campaign.

In active learning mode and using Jamboard, the activities of the Client and the Advertising Agency were developed in groups. This activity was followed by a Role Play activity with a time limit, but this time was extended twice.

To extend learning, the roles were reversed, and the positions were swapped. These favor understanding through complementary perspectives. A new roleplay, again with a time limit but not extended. Finally, the results were presented using Google Slides.

The importance of feedback is emphasized. Each student had the opportunity to write their opinion about what they thought of the activity and the pedagogy. According to the instructions, the student had to explain what could be changed to achieve better knowledge. Figure 3 shows the resume of the methodology.

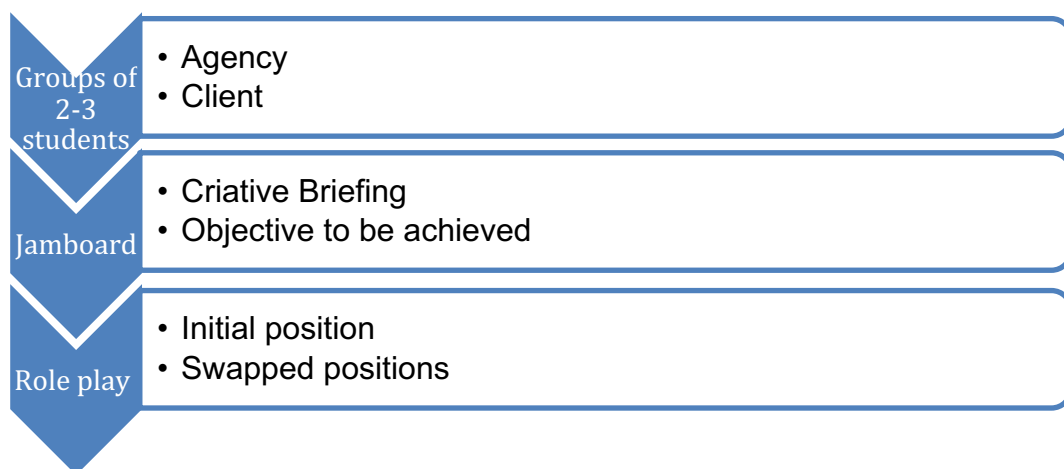


Figure 3. Methodology

Considering these three stages, Figures 4 and 5 below describe the agency and client activities and how it appeared in the slide presentation.

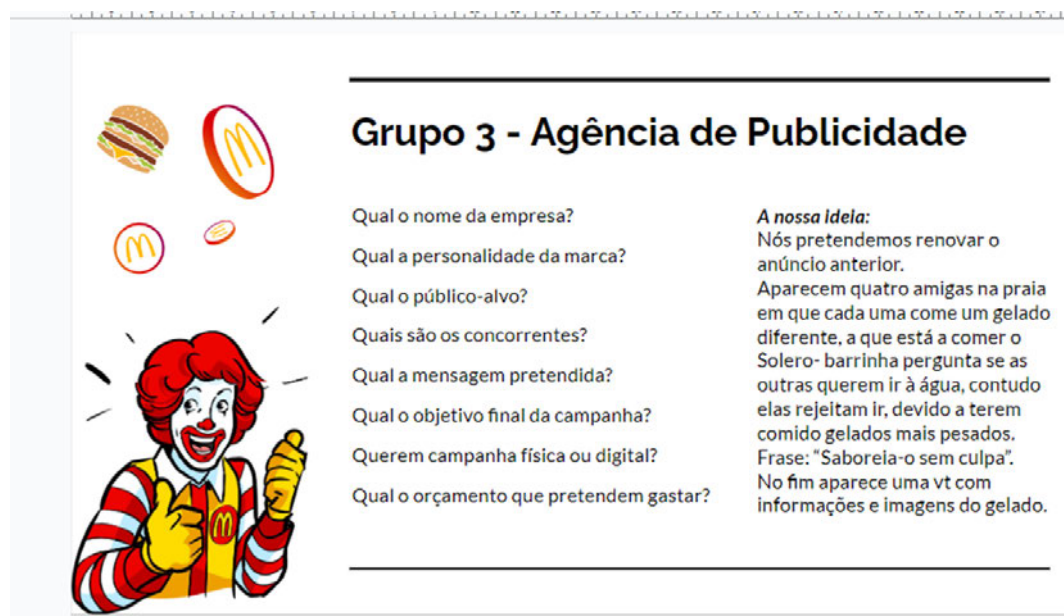


Figure 4. Agency activity

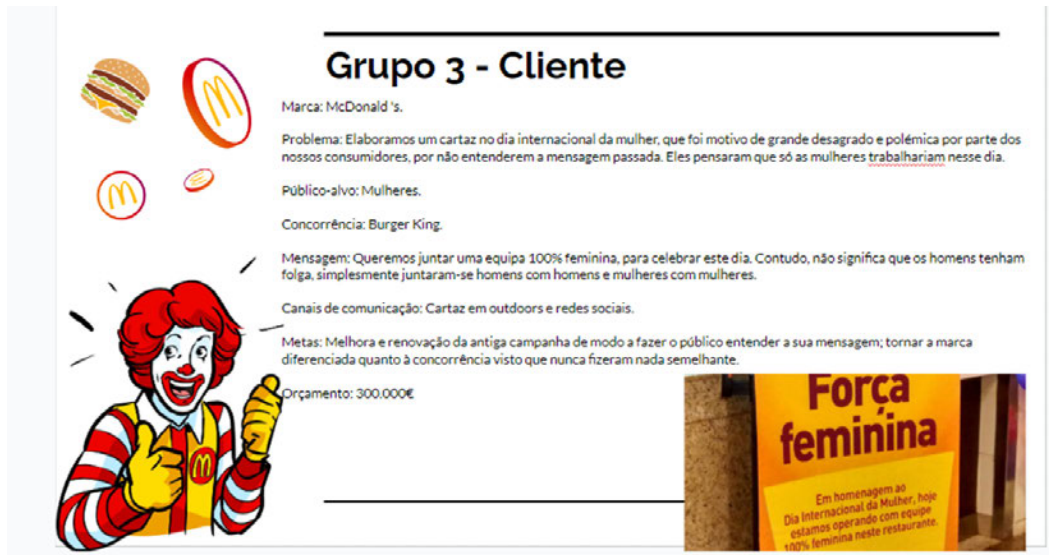


Figure 5. Client activity

3 RESULTS

A description of the activities carried out in the classroom and the results achieved will be presented.

At the beginning of the class, the teacher sensibilized all students to the importance of cooperating in the activity that was going to be presented. It was explained that active learning activities would take place over the four hours of class and that it was necessary to have an open mind and trust of all students. Students were sensibilize for being part of the active learning process.

3.1 Mad Man movie and Mentimeter activity

For the first activity carried out in class, the students needed to watch 2 minutes of “Mad Man” movie. Subsequently, a question was formulated about the movie and the students had to answer using *Mentimeter*. Table 2 presents several students' answers.


Table 2. Mentimeter students' answers


“Creativity, dynamism, and differentiation”	“Innovation, creativity, differentiation from competitors”	“Interaction with company leaders”
“Professionalism, positioning and innovation”	“Thinking outside the box, activism and persuasion”	“Not being afraid to take risks”
“Observing the differences that may exist between the agency and the client”	“Communication, present important ideas and creativity”	“Understand how an advertising campaign presentation works”

3.2 Creative briefing prepared by an advertising agency and client purpose.


When the students were divided into groups, they were very confused with the activity's purpose and they spent more time than was planned, because it was a new activity, the time was extended twice. This activity displayed a 10-minute clock showing the time remaining to complete the activity and was extended 5 minutes twice. At this moment all groups were very focused on the activity and wanted to present the best results. They did not get distracted, nor spoke with the other groups.

For the group that represented the client, it was easier. Students needed to present a branding that had a problem with a particular campaign and needed to prepare the correct information to give the agency for the advertising campaign presented. Figure 6 shows a creativity briefing of the advertising campaign developed by the agency. Figure 7 presents the client's purpose of the advertising campaign by the client.

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Qual o problema identificado pela empresa?
 Quais os objetivos com esta campanha?
 Qual o público alvo?
 Onde será veiculada a campanha?



Quais as restrições? (cor, tom de voz, elementos na publicidade)
 Como querem destacar-se da concorrência?
 Tem alguma inspiração para esta nova campanha?

Qual o orçamento?
 Qual o prazo de entrega?




Figure 6. Creative Briefing by Advertising Agency

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inclusão de diferentes corpos nas campanhas.



sustentabilidade presente nas peças de roupa.



Envio de um press kit para influenciadoras com corpos fora do padrão

Tonalidade de cores



Outdoors e redes sociais.



Figure 7. Results of the activity

3.3 Role play activity

In the role-play activity, the students were very motivated, which resulted in a huge commitment. At this moment the professor recorded the activity, and everybody was so focused on the role-play activity that they did not care about being recorded by the professor. Surprisingly some students who arrived late and did not participate in the class before were very participative and committed. During all activity, the professor proceeded as a facilitator, sometimes needing to call the attention that they were speaking with a client, and it is very important to use proper oral communication. They worked well as a group, even one student appeared only in the last two hours, he was integrated with one group and quickly he was participating as the rest of the group.

When the groups switched positions, they took much less time to do the activity and respected the time limit.

3.4 Presentation of Creative Briefing and the Client Purpose

During this activity, the students have to present their work in a PowerPoint presentation shared in Google Docs. All groups only have one slide to show the information. It was very interesting; some groups had different results, and others had similar results. It was discussed with all students. Everybody was committed and participated.

3.5 Feedback of the activity

Five minutes before the lesson ended, the students were asked to give their feedback on the lesson and the active learning strategy on a white sheet of paper, without identifying themselves. Everybody liked the class. One student said: "I think it's very important to cover the practical side in the classroom. It gives us a better perspective on the job market and real life. More dynamic classes strengthen our knowledge". Another student wrote: "Overall, it went well, but "the weather" made the activity even more challenging. I think getting out of my comfort zone stimulates my critical thinking. The interaction with other members of the class was very interesting".

The students also wrote about the competencies that were developed during the class, such as: group work, efficiency in carrying out activities, creativity, not being afraid to take some risks, believing in ourselves, capacity for dialog, and organization.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Today's business environment, as well as the labour market environment, is a real challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic moment also has some impact on Generation Z, such as fear, worries and anxiety and these consequences have an enormous impact on students, like lack of motivation, involvement and concentration. The Higher Education System must respond to these challenges in the best way possible, by adopting new learning methodologies that are more active and meaningful for students, such as Active Learning Strategies.

Some competencies were developed with active learning activities, such as (i) oral and written communication; (ii) group work; (iii) simulation of a real situation (time management, objectivity, selecting relevant and important information); (iv) learning how to carry out a Creative Briefing; (v) learning to understand and ask the most pertinent questions to a client; (vi) putting themselves in the client's position. The student's perception also adds more competencies acquired, such as creativity, not being afraid to take some risks, believing in ourselves, capacity for dialog, and organization.

It is important that higher education promotes active practice in the classroom, and involves, motivates, and promotes concentration [2]. Furthermore, the authors said, "all students, not just higher performers, need to be respected and valued".

Not only the current business environment, but also the labor market environment, is a real challenge, and nowadays, the students need to understand what they are learning and apply it in the real-world context.

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