


*Holistyczne wsparcie dziecka i rodziny. Interdyscyplinarna perspektywa społeczna*, red. K. Wojtanowicz, M. Duda, Kraków 2025, s. 69–84 (Praca Socjalna w Teorii i Działaniu, 7).

 <https://doi.org/10.15633/9788383701097.05>

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# **Activating teaching methods within contemporary pedagogical and psychological frameworks**

Contemporary educational theory and practice face increasing demands for quality and effectiveness in teaching. Traditional models of education, based on the transmission of ready-made knowledge, are proving insufficient for developing students' key competencies in the 21st century. Rapid technological development, societal changes, and the emphasis on lifelong learning call for new instructional approaches that foster active student engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking.

Activating teaching methods represent a response to this challenge. They signify not merely a methodological shift, but a transformation in the very conception of teaching from a transmissive model to learning as an active, social, and meaningful process. Activating instruction emphasizes collaboration, creativity, reflection, and deeper understanding of content, thereby contributing to the development of competent, independently thinking individuals.

The aim of this article is to provide a theoretically grounded overview of activating teaching methods in education, present their classification, and

elucidate their psychological and pedagogical dimensions. The article also highlights both the practical benefits and challenges of implementing these approaches across various levels of education.

## Theoretical foundations of activating teaching methods

Activating methods are grounded in several key theoretical paradigms that shape their conception and didactic application. Among the most influential are constructivism, humanistic pedagogy, and Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives. These theories provide a foundational framework for understanding the principles of active learning, the roles of teachers and learners, and the emphasis on deeper cognitive engagement with the subject matter.

The constructivist approach views learning as an active process in which learners build knowledge based on their experiences and interactions with the environment. Emphasis is placed on meaningful learning, discovery, and connecting new knowledge with prior understanding. In this context, the teacher serves as a facilitator who fosters autonomy and creates a stimulating learning environment. Fosnot and Perry (2005) emphasize that constructivism promotes deeper understanding by positioning learners not as passive recipients of information, but as active creators of meaning. In practice, this can involve open-ended questioning, discussion-based methods, or project-based learning.

Humanistic pedagogy places importance on the individuality of the learner, their need for autonomy and self-actualization, and a positive relational climate. The learner is not a passive participant, but an active co-creator of the educational process. This approach supports confidence in the learner's ability to grow and learn, provided they are supported by a respectful and empathetic teacher. Carl Rogers (as cited in Cornelius-White, 2007) considers the empathic teacher-student relationship to be a key condition for effective learning. Practical applications of these principles include reflective methods, facilitated discussions, and student-led learning.

Bloom's taxonomy provides a systematic tool for designing instructional objectives and distinguishing cognitive levels, ranging from remembering to creative thinking. Activating methods can thus be intentionally aligned with the development of higher-order thinking skills and metacognition. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), who revised the original taxonomy, emphasize the importance of planning educational activities according to levels of cognitive processing, which significantly enhances instructional effectiveness. This

framework can be used in practice, for instance, to differentiate tasks according to cognitive demand.

The integration of these theoretical foundations offers a solid basis for pedagogical reflection and the development of instructional strategies that support deep learning, motivation, and active student participation. At the same time, it highlights the necessity of linking theoretical perspectives with empirical findings on the effectiveness of active learning, as demonstrated by Freeman et al. (2014). This integration ensures that activating teaching methods are not merely a didactic trend but are grounded in well-established and evidence-based educational theories.

## Classification of activating teaching methods

Activating teaching methods encompass a wide range of instructional strategies that promote students' active engagement in the learning process. For clarity and systematic application in pedagogical practice, these methods can be categorized based on their predominant principles and the educational goals they aim to achieve. This classification helps educators select appropriate strategies with regard to learning objectives, student age, and the nature of the subject matter.

### Project-based methods

Project-based learning is grounded in extended student work on complex tasks that often integrate multiple subject areas and are rooted in real-life contexts. It supports autonomy, planning, collaboration, and creativity. Kratochvílová (2016) emphasizes the importance of authentic projects that develop life skills and connect academic content with everyday experiences. These methods are especially suitable for older students, particularly in upper primary and secondary education, where learners can operate with greater independence. They often incorporate elements of problem-based learning and collaborative approaches.

### Discussion-based methods

These include various forms of structured or open-ended discussion aimed at developing argumentation skills, critical thinking, and the ability to reflect

on diverse viewpoints. Examples include debate formats, fishbowl discussions, and moderated classroom dialogues. From a pedagogical perspective, they are an effective tool for cognitive activation and the formation of civic attitudes (Zormanová, 2012). These methods are particularly relevant in upper primary and secondary education, especially in humanities and social science subjects.

## Heuristic methods

Heuristic approaches focus on learners' independent discovery of knowledge through problem-solving situations, experiments, or creative task completion. Typical examples include heuristic questioning or guided discovery learning. Polya (1945) demonstrated that such instruction fosters analytical thinking and deeper understanding. Heuristic methods are particularly effective in science and technical subjects but are also suitable for nurturing creativity across disciplines.

## Problem-based learning (PBL)

Students are placed in the role of problem-solvers confronting real or simulated challenges with no predefined solutions. This method requires hypothesis formulation, data analysis, and exploration of alternative solutions. According to Blumberg (2019) and Petty (2020), problem-based tasks enhance engagement and support knowledge transfer. PBL is most suitable for older students in upper primary, secondary, and tertiary education, where learners *possess foundational analytical skills*.

## Dramatic and simulation-based methods

These methods draw on drama education principles, simulations, role-play, or model situations. They foster empathy, socio-emotional learning, and the ability to perceive diverse perspectives. Often applied in literature, civics, or foreign language instruction (Dougill, 1987), they are especially suitable for early and middle primary grades, where experiential learning and diverse expression styles are beneficial.

## Collaborative and creative methods

This group includes strategies such as brainwriting, collaborative writing, or cooperative task-solving. Berkeley and Humphreys (1982) describe how structured group creativity can lead to a broader range of ideas and active participation by all group members. These methods are applicable across all educational levels, including preschool, and can be combined with other approaches based on classroom needs.

## Digitally supported methods

These approaches leverage digital technologies to facilitate interactivity, collaboration, and immediate feedback. Tools such as Mentimeter, Padlet, Google Docs, and online simulations are examples. They enable meaningful student engagement, including in remote learning contexts (Laurillard, 2012). While especially effective in higher education, carefully selected tools can also be successfully implemented in primary schools.

Special attention should be given to the flipped classroom method, which is based on students acquiring foundational knowledge beforehand (e.g., via video), while classroom time is devoted to active practice, problem-solving, and discussion. This approach integrates digital support with elements of project-based and problem-based learning.

This typology offers a flexible framework that can be adapted and combined in practice according to the specific nature of the instructional context. It is essential that teachers select methods thoughtfully, aligned with educational objectives, student needs, and the learning environment. Blending multiple approaches often results in greater instructional effectiveness and deeper understanding. Each method has its strengths and limitations, and its success depends on the instructional intent, teacher preparedness, and student collaboration.

## Psychodidactic context of activating teaching

The effectiveness of activating teaching methods is significantly influenced by psychological factors that affect motivation, cognitive information processing, metacognition, and social dynamics in the classroom. The psychodidactic context thus focuses on connecting psychological theories of learning with the didactic reality of instruction, including the role of the teacher, students' needs, and learning conditions.

## Motivation

Motivation is a key prerequisite for students' active engagement in learning. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017), students exhibit higher intrinsic motivation when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled within the learning environment. Activating methods that offer choice, promote autonomy, and foster positive relationships enhance intrinsic motivation and reduce passivity. This principle is practically reflected in project-based learning, where students may choose the topic or form of presentation, resulting in a greater sense of ownership over their learning.

## Cognitive activity

From the perspective of cognitive psychology, activating methods are effective primarily because they support higher-order cognitive processes. In line with Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), these methods guide learners from basic memorization to analysis, synthesis, and creative thinking. Active learning stimulates cognitive conflict, which deepens knowledge processing and supports long-term retention. For example, in problem-based learning, students must confront their prior knowledge with new information, leading to a restructuring of their mental models.

## Metacognition

The ability to plan, monitor, and reflect on one's own learning (i.e., metacognition) is considered one of the most important competencies for lifelong education. Activating methods that incorporate reflection, self-assessment, or peer feedback contributes to the development of metacognitive skills (Black & William, 2009). The teacher plays the role of a facilitator who encourages students to ask questions such as: "What have I learned? Why was it important? What would I do differently next time?"

## Social aspects

Active learning has a strong social dimension. Pair work, group collaboration, discussion, and dramatization develop not only cognitive but also social competencies. Social constructivist theory (Vygotsky) emphasizes that learning

is significantly shaped by the social context and interaction. The teacher acts as a facilitator who supports peer learning, trust, and openness. Group tasks also foster skills such as shared responsibility, empathy, and conflict resolution.

## Cognitive load and coping

From a psychological standpoint, it is also essential to monitor the levels of cognitive and emotional load. Activating methods should be chosen with regard to appropriate difficulty, task structure, and student support. Excessive complexity or lack of clear instructions may lead to frustration, while well-designed tasks contribute to a sense of achievement and reinforce self-confidence. It is useful, for instance, to include stages of preparation, ongoing reflection, and final summarization to help students structure their learning.

## Neurological perspective

Modern neuroscience research confirms that active student engagement promotes multisensory learning, which activates multiple areas of the brain. This increases the likelihood of deep processing and long-term retention of information. For example, incorporating movement, emotion, or visual elements enhances the cognitive effectiveness of instruction and contributes to better concentration and motivation.

The psychodidactic context thus provides a key framework for the meaningful and effective integration of activating methods into instruction. Linking psychological theories with didactic practice not only increases the efficiency of teaching strategies but also enables educators to better respond to the individual needs and potential of each learner. A teacher who understands the student in their full psychodidactic complexity is able to create a learning environment that is not only effective but also meaningful and supportive.

## Inclusive potential of activating teaching methods

Activating teaching methods represent not only a pathway to greater student engagement but also a tool for implementing the principles of inclusive education. They allow for differentiated instruction based on the individual needs of students while simultaneously fostering cooperation and social cohesion

within the classroom. Their flexibility and emphasis on active participation make them particularly suitable for heterogeneous student groups (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

## Individualization and differentiation

One of the core principles of inclusion is respect for individual educational needs. Activating approaches—such as group work, project-based learning, or digital tools—enable variation in activities, pacing, and levels of support. For instance, within a single project, students may engage in different tasks depending on their abilities and interests. Teachers can accommodate diverse learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and varying levels of cognitive complexity (Tomlinson, 2014).

A practical example can be drawn from geography instruction, where some students create a digital map with commentary, others prepare a simplified presentation, and another group produces a short video. This approach combines different competencies and ensures that each student has an opportunity to succeed.

## Support for relational learning

An inclusive environment is not only about academic performance but also about relationships, trust, and safety. Activating methods provide opportunities for collaboration, sharing, negotiation, and mutual support. Working in pairs or small groups promotes social interaction among diverse learners, thereby helping to break down stereotypes and enhance empathy (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

## Self-concept and participation

Students who actively participate in learning and are given choices experience a sense of competence and autonomy. This strengthens their self-confidence and school engagement, especially among those at risk of academic failure. Activating methods such as dramatization, the presentation of personal ideas, or reflective activities reinforce the notion that their voice matters—an essential element for social inclusion. For students with attention deficits, structured brainstorming with time limits and visual support has proven particularly effective.

## Reducing barriers

Due to their variability, activating methods help reduce barriers to learning and participation. They can be adapted for students with learning disabilities, language disadvantages, or neurodevelopmental differences. Visualization, technology use, structured worksheets, and peer support can significantly improve accessibility to education (UNESCO, 2021).

## The role of the teacher

In an inclusive classroom, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge, but a coordinator of collaboration, a designer of learning conditions, and a facilitator. Activating methods enable more effective responses to the diverse needs of learners. It is essential for the teacher to be aware of the strengths and limitations of each method and to combine them in a way that fosters integration rather than isolation. Support from a teaching assistant or collaboration with counseling services can be an integral part of this process.

The inclusive potential of activating methods lies in their ability to adapt to student diversity while creating conditions for shared learning. Where these methods are used thoughtfully and sensitively, they contribute not only to cognitive development but also to a positive classroom climate and mutual respect. Thus, activation becomes not merely a pedagogical technique but also a tool for cultivating an inclusive educational environment in line with national curriculum frameworks and the principles of education for all.

## Synthesis of the benefits and limitations of activating teaching

Activating teaching methods represent a dynamic and, in many ways, transformative approach to education, shifting the role of the student from a passive recipient of information to an active co-creator of the learning process. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theories (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasize active engagement and social interaction as key factors in the acquisition of knowledge. The use of these methods brings numerous significant benefits, both at the level of individual learning and in shaping classroom culture, the professional role of the teacher, and the broader educational paradigm.

At the individual level, activating approaches enhance student engagement. Involving multiple senses, promoting decision-making, and integrating hands-on activities foster intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and a sense of competence. This phenomenon corresponds to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which asserts that individuals have innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Students perceive the learning process as meaningful and are more inclined to participate actively. These methods improve learning capacity, reflection, collaboration, and creativity. The positive effects are particularly notable among students with special educational needs who often struggle or remain marginalized in traditional forms of instruction.

From the perspective of cognitive development, activating methods foster deeper understanding by requiring analysis, comparison, application, and creativity. Knowledge is not presented as a static fact but becomes the subject of exploration and independent reasoning. This aligns with the revised Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), which emphasizes the development of higher-order cognitive processes.

Another significant advantage is the promotion of metacognitive strategies. Students learn to plan their activities, monitor progress, and reflect on their learning. These are essential for long-term educational autonomy and adaptability in a changing world. Such competencies are considered core "soft skills," including cooperation, independence, and self-management skills that are crucial not only in education but also in the labour market.

At the classroom level, activating methods promote collaboration, partnership, and social cohesion. The teacher becomes a facilitator who fosters an environment of trust and safety. Students experience success, learn from each other, value differences, and develop social competencies. This climate is particularly important in inclusive education, where classroom diversity demands respect, openness, and equal opportunities (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

In terms of the teacher's professional role, activating methods pose both challenges and enrichment. They require creativity, reflection, openness, and the willingness to move beyond the comfort zone of traditional teaching. Simultaneously, they enhance the meaningfulness of teaching, increase student feedback, and create space for the teacher's growth as a guide rather than a content deliverer.

Despite these benefits, activating approaches also present certain limitations and risks. One of the primary challenges is the higher demand on planning, preparation, and classroom management. Teachers must carefully design the learning process, ensure appropriate materials and settings, anticipate potential pitfalls, and respond flexibly to students' current needs. This can be particularly exhausting under the constraints of an overburdened school system.

Another limitation is the risk of uneven student participation. Not every student is ready or willing to engage actively, and without sufficient structure and support, more assertive students may dominate, while less confident peers remain passive—potentially reinforcing, rather than mitigating, existing disparities.

The school environment also plays a crucial role. If school leadership does not support innovation, peer collaboration, and professional development, it becomes difficult for teachers to implement these methods systematically. A lack of teamwork, misunderstanding from parents, or unstable teaching conditions may result in a withdrawal from active approaches.

This synthesis of benefits and limitations reveals that activating teaching holds significant potential to enrich the educational process, develop student competencies, and enhance teacher professionalism. However, to fully realize this potential, adequate support, understanding, preparation, and evaluation must be in place. Activating teaching is not a universal solution but a thoughtfully selected approach that, when systematically implemented, can contribute fundamentally to the quality, equity, and inclusiveness of education in line with modern pedagogical and psychological insights.

It is essential to recognize that the effective implementation of activating methods should not be seen as an isolated didactic technique but as part of a broader pedagogical culture grounded in trust, openness, and professional collaboration. The success of these methods depends not only on individual teachers but on systemic support, educational policy, and the willingness to explore new paths to meet the diverse needs of students. In this context, both methodological grounding and cooperation among professionals, researchers, and school teams are critical. Here lies the opportunity for further academic reflection, development of methodological tools, and enhancement of the overall quality of the educational system.

In pedagogical practice, teachers are encouraged to employ activating methods not mechanically but thoughtfully and meaningfully. This entails considering why a particular method is chosen, how it aligns with instructional goals, what kind of support it requires, and how it will be evaluated. Teachers should view students as partners in the learning process, listen to their needs, and adapt instruction to be as inclusive and developmental as possible. A key factor is also the willingness to experiment, share experiences, and foster a collegial culture that supports innovation and continuous professional growth. Activating teaching methods are most beneficial when grounded in understanding, collaboration, and respect for each student's educational needs.

Looking ahead, it is desirable to strengthen the connection between educational research and school practice. Many questions remain open—for example,

which specific conditions most effectively promote student activation across age groups, how to assess the long-term effectiveness of these methods, or how school climate influences their acceptance. Moreover, it is necessary to further develop the implementation of activating methods in alignment with the Czech national curriculum, especially the goals of the Framework Educational Programme and the criteria of the Czech School Inspectorate, which emphasize competency-based education, the active role of students, and an inclusive approach.

## Discussion

The discussion on the use of activating teaching methods opens space for critical reflection and deeper consideration of the implications of this approach across diverse educational contexts. While their benefits in terms of motivation, understanding, and social learning are indisputable, a number of questions related to their implementation must not be overlooked.

One of the most prominent issues remains the gap between the theoretical ideal and school reality. Activating instruction presupposes a culture of openness, creativity, and collaboration—elements that are by no means guaranteed in many schools. A significant barrier lies in the attitudes of teachers themselves, particularly in smaller schools or regions where a conservative approach to teaching prevails. Here, innovative methods are often rejected not only due to a lack of time or support, but also due to deeply rooted beliefs about the roles of teachers and students. This resistance is also evident in the context of inclusive education, which is frequently perceived as a burden or as a threat to the quality of teaching. This phenomenon warrants systematic research and deeper understanding.

Another pressing concern is the risk of formalization of activating methods. When these approaches are introduced uniformly without sufficient methodological support and a deep understanding of their foundations, their use can become superficial. As a result, they lose their transformative potential and become just another pedagogical obligation. This can lead to frustration among both teachers and students, who may perceive such methods as ineffective or even counterproductive.

The issue of equity and fairness also deserves discussion. Under certain conditions, activating methods may unintentionally exacerbate inequalities, especially in environments where students lack home support or cultural capital. If activities are not adapted to the needs of all learners, they may benefit only the most active students. Similarly, the question of evaluation remains

unresolved—how can we assess the outcomes of instruction built on process, collaboration, and creativity without reducing these aspects to quantifiable data?

Closely related is the marked level of resistance to inclusive education. Many teachers, especially in smaller schools, perceive it as a systemic pressure unsupported by adequate training, assistance, or clear expectations. According to available findings, more than ninety percent of teachers express disagreement with inclusion, not only due to increased workload but often because of perceived threats to their professional identity, uncertainty in working with diversity, and a lack of structural support. This discrepancy between the ideal and reality calls for open dialogue, systematic teacher education, and above all, the creation of conditions under which inclusion becomes feasible rather than merely mandated.

From the discussion, it becomes clear that the meaningful implementation of activating methods requires more than the goodwill of individuals. It necessitates the cultivation of a professional culture based on trust, methodological guidance, and experience-sharing. In this regard, the integration of pedagogical theory, research, and everyday practice is crucial not only within individual schools but also at the level of regional and national educational strategies.

Teacher resistance to innovative or inclusive approaches should not be interpreted as individual failure, but rather as an indicator of deeper systemic and psychological dynamics. Insecurity in working with diversity, fear of losing control over instruction, and a perceived lack of competence often stem from insufficient support, a lack of preparation, and overwhelming workloads. Teachers need a safe environment for professional growth, access to methodological and expert assistance, and clear frameworks that enable them to develop their skills without bearing disproportionate responsibility for top-down reforms. Genuine transformation of school culture must therefore be a shared responsibility among teachers, school leadership, local authorities, and the state. It requires more than goodwill; it requires a systematic effort to build a professional environment based on trust, guidance, and the integration of pedagogical research with practical teaching. Only through such cooperation can activating methods fulfil their potential to contribute meaningfully to inclusive and high-quality education.

## Conclusions

The topic of activating instruction represents a complex and multi-layered challenge for contemporary educational systems. As demonstrated throughout this study, activating teaching methods are not merely a collection of techniques but rather a deeper didactic-psychological framework grounded in respect for learner individuality, a partnership-based concept of education, and trust in students' inner potential. These approaches can significantly enhance the meaningfulness of instruction, foster the development of key competencies, and support long-term motivation to learn.

At the same time, it is evident that their successful implementation depends on a range of conditions, among which teachers' professional beliefs, school leadership support, the availability of methodological resources, expert background, and systemic anchoring play a critical role. Without an open and supportive school climate—where innovation is embraced as an inherent part of pedagogical development—even the most progressive methods may lose their impact.

Part of the challenge facing education lies in the ability to respond to the increasing diversity of classroom populations, which necessitates inclusive and flexible approaches. Activating methods may play a crucial role in this regard, but only if they are rooted in the real needs of schools and accompanied by consistent support for educators. Teacher resistance to inclusion policies and innovative practices should not be viewed as a sign of unprofessionalism, but often as a reaction to long-standing systemic failures in the areas of preparation, support, and institutional trust.

In conclusion, the path to effective and equitable education does not lie in the mechanical adoption of new methods, but in transforming the overall culture of education—where activating instruction becomes a tool for participation, understanding, and professional autonomy. It is essential to create the conditions for open dialogue between research and practice, provide systematic support for teachers, and develop educational policies that do not reduce pedagogical activity to mere performance, but instead recognize it as a creative, value-based, and socially responsible process.

This article is intended not only as a theoretical framing of the issue but also as a call for both professional and institutional dialogue. If activating instruction is to become a true instrument of change, it must be understood as part of a broader paradigm one that does not seek mere efficiency, but strives for genuine quality and human-centered education. This is a challenge not only for individual educators but also for educational institutions, governing bodies, policymakers, and the academic community.

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## Abstract

*Activating teaching methods within contemporary pedagogical and psychological frameworks*

Contemporary education faces the necessity of re-evaluating traditional teaching methods and adopting approaches that promote active student engagement. Activating teaching methods rooted in constructivism, humanistic pedagogy, and Bloom's taxonomy aim to foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and a deep understanding of subject matter. This chapter provides a systematic overview of the theoretical foundations, a classification of the most significant activating methods, and a discussion of their psychological and pedagogical dimensions. The authors also reflect on current research findings and offer practical recommendations for the effective application of these methods in educational practice. The text is intended for teachers, academics, and educational policymakers striving for innovative and effective teaching strategies.

**Keywords:** activating teaching, constructivism, motivation, learning methods, pedagogy, psychology, didactics, inclusion