Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teachers' Perceptions on Integrating Transferable Skills in the Classrooms to Create an Active Learning Environment

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Abstract

Despite many efforts to promote transferable skills development, it remains a challenge for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools. To improve education practices and meet the challenges of an ever-changing environment, it is vital to introduce a paradigm shift in education. In light of this, it is significant to identify and implement the teaching strategies that facilitate transferable skills development. There has long been a controversy over the traditional pedagogical style of lecture delivery as opposed to an active learning environment in which learners are engaged in the learning process itself. The paper sheds light on various ways of integrating transferable skills in the classroom. It examines diverse methods, teaching/learning strategies, and educational tools that aim at promoting a learner-centered learning environment, to ensure the development of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication, collaboration, creativity, research skills, etc. Creating such a learning environment stimulates students' interests, engagement, and motivation. Consequently, it overviews a practical application of some activities and strategies that can activate the skills as well as reveals the results of findings that showed teachers' perception regarding a practical application of some methods and strategies to enhance transferable skills. This research is significant by identifying the indicators of an active learning environment, which encourage educators to reimagine their classrooms and implement

innovative teaching practices.

Introduction

Both Higher Education Institutions and schools are expected to modify their teaching and learning process, in order to ensure transferable skills development. The fast-changing labor market and the transitions in society have made this issue even more important to be addressed, so the task of today's education is to empower learners with the skills that can allow them to boost their professional and social development. Since there is a paradigm shift in terms of both teaching and learning approaches, the students are no longer viewed as passive recipients of knowledge. They are believed to be involved in the construction of their knowledge. Hence, it is crucial for teachers to rethink their classrooms, meaning that their task is to incorporate the teaching strategies and methods, which can facilitate skills acquisition. Due to the fact that there is a critical shortage of these skills, this issue requires more explicit support, in terms of designing and modifying approaches and strategies that could create a more effective learning environment (Tran-Nguyen & Smirl, 2019). In addition, Chadha and Nicholls (2006) also highlight that providing content-related knowledge is more frequently emphasized in higher education, and less attention is given to addressing transferable skills incorporation. Both course structure and delivery methods need to be rethought, in order to prepare today's learners for the 21st-century workplace and daily life. In the European Commission's (2020) report, it is clearly pointed out that "higher education is an essential vehicle to provide students with the skills they will need in the future. Universities generate the advanced knowledge and skills that help society innovate to address its big challenges" (p.11). Embedding a single approach or a method cannot guarantee the development of the skills, but creating an active learning environment, where students are viewed as active and autonomous learners could facilitate planning skills-oriented teaching practices.

Despite many efforts to promote skills development in the classroom, it remains a challenge, due to several hindering factors, which need to be addressed. It is important to recognize that among some challenges are the lack of teaching resources, teachers' professional development, guidance, and support from the university or school administration regarding creating an active learning environment (Todorovski, Nordal & Isoski, 2015; Khabeishvili & Tvaltchrelidze, 2021). One of the key findings regarding the significance of explicit support to promote the skills throughout the degree programs puts forward the existence of a skills gap and calls for action. According to Hanson

and Overton (2010), there is a noticeable difference between the skill sets that students actually possess and employers' expectations of students' skill sets. Similarly, the new skills gap especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period is emphasized, which accelerated the need to enhance transferable skills among students (Fore & Moritz, 2020; Belachew & Surkin,2020). Mismatches of a range of skills are explained by not using the teaching methods, which could prioritize the skills development (Cedefop, 2018; Sandoval & Ormazábal, 2021).

McGunagle and Zizka (2020) also point out that HEIs still have not adapted to the changes, and continue to teach in traditional ways, neglecting the skill sets needed for today's job market. Undoubtedly, this has led to the skills gaps between what students are acquiring in their educational programs and what real-world employers are looking for in the learners. The actuality of the study is based on the fact that today, employees with generic skills are demanded rather than with cognitive skills, which in its turn requires revising the study programs and teaching/learning methods (Qizi, 2020). Moreover, based on the study conducted in the USA, merely 15% of these graduates are prepared to face workplace diversity, while 95% of employers expect the graduates to be able to deal with the problems and work in a dynamic setting (Akdere et al., 2019). So, their expectation is higher than the reality exists. In order to minimize the gap between employers and educational leaders concerning the perception of what skills are necessary, it is vital to cooperate and reflect on the current and future priorities of the workplace (Rayner & Papakonstantinou, 2015; Jang, 2015). A similar view is noted by the European Union (2017) regarding the learning outcomes that are determined by HEIs, combining skills, competencies, and knowledge. It is believed that there is a need to establish a better dialogue between the labor market and education sector, in order to promote the skills development in learners.

Since there is a growing demand to have more students with the necessary skills, which they can apply in a dynamic setting, it is a primary task of teachers to rethink and alter the way they teach. As there is an elevated interest in incorporating more explicitly the skills development in the classroom, the main objective of this paper was to find out the participant teachers' perception regarding a practical application of some methods and strategies that can enhance the skills in the classroom.

Research Questions
1) What are the perceptions of active learning among teachers in Georgia?
2) To what extent do teachers incorporate the common active learning strategies to enhance the skills development in the classroom?
3) What factors impede the promotion of active learning in the classroom?

Literature Review
The concept of skills

Alongside enhancing academic skills, career competencies are also prioritized, which refer to students' reflection on their skills, career goals, knowledge, and abilities (Hirschi et al., 2015).

According to Sandoval and Ormazábal (2021), "the influence of globalization, job insecurity, the massification of higher education, and the shift towards a knowledge-based economy are also intervening factors in the concern for the employability of graduates and relevant generic skills" (p.242). Several frameworks were compiled to raise awareness regarding the concept of skills development. Promoting this issue began even in the twentieth, when UNESCO's Delors Report was issued aiming at putting forward the key functions of education, and the fundamental four pillars: (learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be) that contribute to the concept of learning (Delors et al.,1996). The suggestions on how to meet a fast-changing environment were later revisited to identify how the notion of competencies/skills was addressed at schools (UNESCO,2015). Moreover, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) framework was also created in an attempt to shed light on the significance of modifying learning and teaching instructional modes in OECD countries to ensure skills development.

Many terms are used interchangeably, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. It is sometimes determined by the national policy. Among commonly used terms are employability skills, life skills, soft skills, generic skills, transferable skills, important skills, and 21st-century skills (Commission, 2016). The fact that various terms exist does not change the essence of the skills phenomenon. Regarding this, Cauley (2011) points out that there is no universal clarification of the term 'transferable skills', it could be defined in different ways. Moreover, the skills might be labeled as 'employability skills', 'key skills', 'common skills', and 'core skills' in different literature (Fallows & Steven, 2000). Similarly, Qizi (2020) notes that there is no universal definition of the term 'soft skills' and various variations could be found in different sources. All these terms carry a similar meaning, and imply those generic competencies, which are significant for an individual to function in the workplace and daily life. For instance, the term 'employability skills' is more frequently mentioned by the industry (Andrews & Higson, 2008). It is argued that these skills are not only meant for the world of work, but they are also beneficial in personal activities, in other words, in life, in general (CBOC, 2018). Therefore, these are the skills that are relevant across many fields, and could be applied in a dynamic context, and transferred from one situation to another. Moreover, Nägele and Stalder (2017), state that "in most descriptions of transferable skills, it is mainly an individual's

capacity to transfer these skills, as they are part of an individual's competence (p. 743). Reflecting different perspectives on the definition of the term, transferable skills are also described as generic skills. It implies using these skills in a variety of jobs in life, including teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, planning, literacy, and emotional labor skills (Ramos et al. 2013). The transferable skills are also referred to as 21st-century skills that imply possessing knowledge, skills, and character traits, which are crucial to succeed in the future world. Starting with thinking skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, innovation, and metacognition. Communication and collaboration skills are considered to be ways of working (Siekmann & Korbel, 2016). As mentioned in the Tuning project, there is a difference between subject-specific and generic competencies. Generic are those which are also labeled as transferable skills (Tuning, 2007). Cinque (2016) proposed numerous terms that could be observed in chronological order.

Figure 1. *Various terms connected to 'skills'*

Life skills (WHO, 1993)
Transversal skills (ISFOL,1998)
Generic competencies (Tuning project, 2000)
Key competencies for a successful life and well-functioning society (OECD, 2003;2012)
Key competencies for lifelong learning (UE,2006)
21st century skills (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009)
Future work skills (IFTF,2010)
Transferable skills (RPIC-Vip,2011)
Soft skills for talent (Manpower Group, 2014)
Skills for social progress (OECD, 2015)

After analyzing various definitions, it could be clearly identified that some common features unite all proposed variations for the term. All these terms share a common understanding, and they imply having transversal features, as they could be applied in different fields. Furthermore, these are the skills, which are vital to obtain a job and they are not limited to one's profession (Qizi,2020).

It is noteworthy to mention that a range of definitions and taxonomies of transferable skills could be expanded, as there is no one generally accepted set of skills. Considering the demands, needs, and expectations the set tends to be modified. However, there is a general agreement regarding the understanding of the concept, and it is believed to be the skills, which are significant in various real-life contexts (Nägele & Stalder, 2017).

Various domains and sets could be identified in different findings. For instance, four skill domains are suggested by (Rychen & Salganik, 2003; Weinert, 2001). These domains include:

- Subject competencies (knowledge, facts, definitions, concepts, systems);
- Methodological competencies (skills, fact-finding, analysis, problem-solving);
- Social competencies (communicating, working interactively, citizenship);
- Personal competencies (attitudes, values, ethics)

Similarly, three domains were created by the Tuning project (Tuning,2007) working on promoting skills integration in the study programs. It is divided into instrumental skills (including cognitive, methodological, technological, and linguistic abilities); Interpersonal skills (focusing on social interaction and cooperation), and systemic skills (abilities and skills concerning whole systems combining understanding, sensibility, and knowledge).

In addition, in the Forbes' publications, a wider framework of the skills is presented. Among the most demanding skills are leadership skills, judgment and complex decision-making, collaboration, data literacy, critical thinking, tech savviness / technical skills, adaptability and flexibility, creativity, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, and diversity (Marr, 2019).

A question arises among today's graduates: Do I really fit tomorrow's labor market or not? Labor market requirements and needs have been radically changed over recent decades. Consequently, besides having job-specific skills, it is required to possess general skills, so-called '21st-century skills ' both for living and working in today's world. These skills comprise communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Habets, Stoffers, Heijden & Peters, 2020).

The table below reveals the set of skills, which could be found in the Team at Employment Hero (2020) and European Commission (2020) reports.

Table 1. *Range of skills*

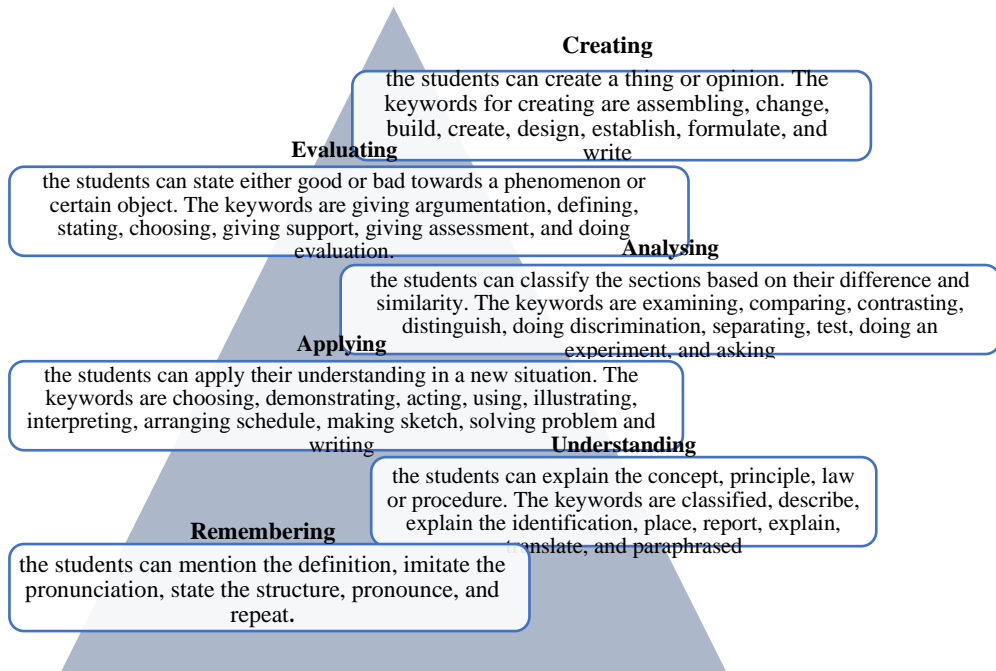|	
Technology skills/ digital skills	Ability to shift to remote learning/working and adapt to digital transformation
Leadership	Ability to motivate, inspire, and promote collaboration
Data literacy	Ability to interpret the information and suggest solutions based on it
Digital communication & interpersonal skills Critical thinking	Ability to communicate successfully in a remote mode and maintain social skills
Creativity and innovation	Ability to create things generate new ideas and find solutions
Emotional intelligence	The ability of an individual to understand, empathize, and negotiate with others. It can be broken into categories: self-regulation,

	self-awareness, empathy, social skills and motivation
Adaptability	Ability to be flexible and adapt. Working on upgrading the skills

Sources: adapted from: The Team at Employment Hero (2020); European Commission (2020).

Besides, High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are included in the 21st-century skills category which are those essential thinking skills needed to prepare for the future (Collins, 2014). HOTS involves the learning of judgmental complex skills, and they are essential to facing real-life challenges, which are complex and complicated (Aliyawinata, Utari, & Mahrawi, 2021). Apino and Retnawati (2017) put forward four aspects of HOTS, including creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking, as they are considered to require higher thinking and the ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, generalize, and estimate. Similarly, Hwang et al. (2017), determined the skills that fall under the umbrella of HOTS. These are: problem-solving, which refers to the ability to tackle problems and collect and analyze information in order to implement a solution; critical thinking which implies having the ability to analyze information and make a reasonable judgment; and creativity skills refer to being able to develop innovative ideas and create new objects, in order to refine, analyze and evaluate existing ones. Bloom's taxonomy is a model of thinking compiled by Benjamin S. Bloom in 1956. According to this model, thinking skills are divided into six cognitive levels. It is also noteworthy to mention Bloom's revised taxonomy which is considered to be the framework for fostering skills (Bloom,1956; IUPUI Center of Teaching and Learning, 2006).

Figure 2. *The level of thinking according to Bloom's taxonomy*

Creating
the students can create a thing or opinion. The keywords for creating are assembling, change, build, create, design, establish, formulate, and write

Evaluating
the students can state either good or bad towards a phenomenon or certain object. The keywords are giving argumentation, defining, stating, choosing, giving support, giving assessment, and doing evaluation.

Analysing
the students can classify the sections based on their difference and similarity. The keywords are examining, comparing, contrasting, distinguish, doing discrimination, separating, test, doing an experiment, and asking

Applying
the students can apply their understanding in a new situation. The keywords are choosing, demonstrating, acting, using, illustrating, interpreting, arranging schedule, making sketch, solving problem and writing

Understanding
the students can explain the concept, principle, law or procedure. The keywords are classified, describe, explain the identification, place, report, explain, translate, and paraphrased

Remembering
the students can mention the definition, imitate the pronunciation, state the structure, pronounce, and repeat.

Source: (Krathwohl, 2002); (Pasutri, Bukhori & Helmiati,2021, p.3)

Consequently, designing the framework of the learning model to facilitate the development of higher-order thinking skills is required. It in its turn could create opportunities and necessary conditions to boost the skills (Lu, Yang, Shi & Wang, 2021; Kwangmuang, Jarutkamolpong, Sangboonraung & Daungtod, 2021).

What does active learning imply?

Constructivist learning theory serves as the foundation for active learning, which could even be traced to Socrates (Bransford et al., 1999). It is also known as deep learning or representation learning (Brame,2016). This approach is not a new concept, as the key characteristics of it could be found in other teaching and learning theories. For instance, the guide that was compiled in 1991 for the Association for the Study of Higher Education, focused on promoting active learning strategies, which implied integrating the activities engaging students in doing and thinking about what they are doing. Accordingly, active learning has been perceived as an approach to learning and teaching that focuses on fostering students' higher-order thinking skills and explorations of their values and attitudes (Bonwell & Eison,1991). Active learning is defined as an individual's effort to actively construct knowledge through engaging in discussions, tutoring peers, and projects inside and outside the classroom (Carr et al., 2015). Creating an active learning

environment requires considering various factors, including providing activities that would encourage learners to construct their knowledge and understanding, applying higher-order thinking, and implicitly making them think about their learning.

Therefore, the classroom is no longer a place where teachers have to pour knowledge into passive learners (Westwood, 2008). The main emphasis is given to students rather than teachers. This kind of paradigm shift has made learners the key figures in the classroom, who are actively involved in their learning process. The teachers' task is no longer spoon-feeding their students with ready-made information. On the contrary, the teachers, who act as facilitators, are responsible for leading students to obtain information themselves through creating engaging and interactive learning environment (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). A similar view regarding the concept definition is shared by Wetzel and Farrow (2021). The format of instruction has moved from stand and deliver to students' active participation, as they can acquire more in such a learning climate. An active learning approach shares similarities with the principles of learner-oriented teaching, which can be summed up in the following table.

**Table 2.** *Seven Principles of learner-oriented teaching*

Teachers Do Learning Tasks Less	Learners: Question things more, summarise the discussion, organize the content, deal with the problems, and ask questions to analyze the information.
Teachers Do Less Telling; teacher as a facilitator and a guide	Students do more discovering: Students discover the information themselves, make conclusions, solve problems, and work autonomously with the teacher's guidance.
Teachers Do More Design Work (of activities and learning experiences)	Activities help learners to: Develop learning skills (learning "how to" learn); Motivate student involvement and participation; deal with real-world topics
Do More Modeling	The students fulfill the tasks following the provided model/example. They work out the solutions.
Do More to Get Students Learning from and with Each Other	Engaging students in collaborative activities. Promoting cooperation inside and outside the classroom. Learning from one another, through sharing information.
Work to Create Climates for Learning	Creating an autonomous learning climate, where learners take ownership of their learning.
Do More with Feedback	Promoting a more self-reflective environment. Peer reviewing is a natural process of learning. Learning from mistakes and being reflective on their learning.

Source: (Weimer,2002)

What are active learning techniques to apply?

The given figure illustrates the variety of strategies and activities, which could be integrated to ensure an active learning environment in the classroom.

Figure 3. *The common active learning techniques*
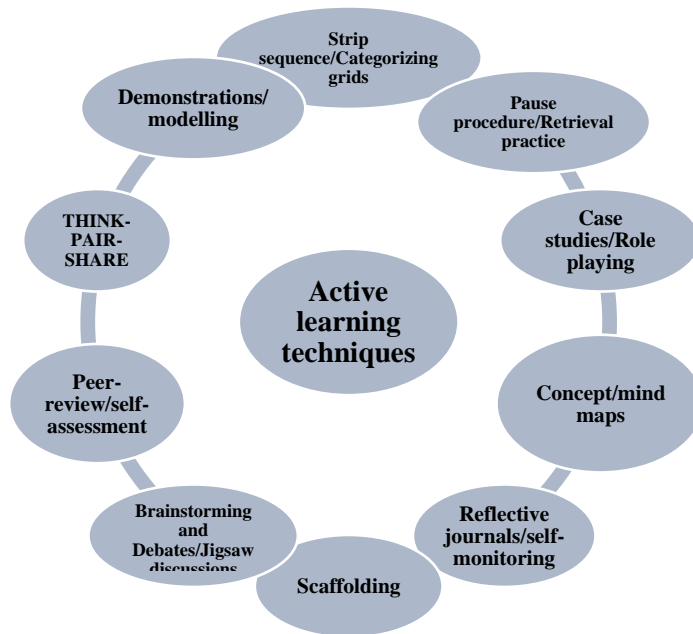
Source: Adapted from Jalinus, Sukardi, Wulansari, Heong, and Kiong (2023); Brame (2016); O'Neal and Pender-Grover (n.d.); Bonwell and Eison (1991).

Application of the Pause procedure and Retrieval practice techniques in the classroom implies pausing for two minutes every 12-15 minutes, encouraging students to consider their understanding through questioning, allowing them to rework notes and retrieve information from their memories in pairs. Various activities could be planned considering the Think-pair-share technique. It stimulates higher-order thinking, such as application, analysis, and evaluation. The students could use this technique before exploring the lecture material. They could be asked to create the questions or their predictions regarding the lecture topic, then get the answers through discovery and pair work. It can be followed up with the teacher's explanation. Moreover, creating concept maps and mind maps could also encourage students to identify and form connections between different topics related to the lesson. It could be an ideal lead-in phase before they are going to be introduced to the topic. Such organization and planning help them form a better understanding of different issues. Similarly, making strip sequences and categorizing grid activities facilitate students' logical thinking, as they are asked to work

together to reconstruct the sequence or categories. It could be scrambled terms, images, or concepts. In addition, having students engaged in demonstrations or case-based learning could support them in making predictions, discussing real-life scenarios, questioning different issues, and coming to conclusions.

Despite many efforts to integrate fully active learning techniques in the classroom, it remains a challenging task for teachers. It could be explained by the factors that impede the creation of an active learning environment both at schools and in higher education. According to Michael (2007), among some hindering factors are: the lack of preparation time to plan active learning, teachers having less control in the classroom, the lack of knowledge of how to use active learning, the impact of active learning is diminished when students arrive unprepared for class, the students show less willingness to participate actively, and it is challenging because of student heterogeneity. Furthermore, the assessment part is difficult in an active learning classroom, as it is hard to predict the learning outcomes. The class size and the lack of learning resources also impede the creation of such an environment. Sometimes, the culture of learning and students' expectations about learning are also barriers to applying active learning strategies.

Approaches to facilitate skills development in the classroom

There has been a debate over the teaching methods and strategies that could guarantee transferable skills enhancement in the classroom. Undoubtedly, a single approach cannot facilitate skills development among students. The traditional teaching model does not support achieving the learning outcomes expected in the 21st century. Hence, there is a need to integrate a variety of techniques and methods to ensure an effective learning environment.

Inquiry-based pedagogical approaches are believed to facilitate 21st-century skills development. Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari, and Lee (2021) provide specific examples of the implementation of this kind of instructional mode across Asia, Europe, and North America. It is perceived that inquiry-based approaches are built upon social constructivist views of teaching and learning. The key concepts in social constructivist approaches are scaffolding, problem-solving, discovery learning, self-directed learning, questioning, or demonstrations (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2009; Kuhlthau et al., 2007). Therefore, these concepts are central elements to the implementation of inquiry-based learning and greatly contribute to skills acquisition.

Inquiry-based learning is tightly related to *problem and project-based approaches* to learning and teaching. In this form of instructional mode, the learners are engaged in a knowledge-building process through constructing meaningful questions, communicating, sharing, and reflecting on the process

as well as outcomes. Project-, problem-, and inquiry-based learning are focused on guiding learners (Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari & Lee, 2021). Enhancement of skills could be scaffolded by various strategies. Organizing inquiry or project-based learning requires teachers to plan the activities that would engage learners in problem-solving or giving feedback (Rapporteur,2010).

Table 3. *The summary of approaches*

Approach	A brief description
Inquiry-based learning (IBL)	"A learner-centered approach focusing on questioning, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The learner is actively involved in formulating the question/naming a problem
Project-based learning (PjBL)	An individual or group activity that is carried out over a specified period, resulting in an output (product, presentation, or performance)
Problem-based learning (PBL)	A student-centered learning approach in which students work together to address an open-ended question through inquiry and problem resolution, within a learning environment that is designed and scaffolded to strongly support the needs of students with prompts and resources, as they do so."

Source: (Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari & Lee, 2021, p.7).

According to these approaches, the views towards learning are different. Collaboration plays a great role in this form of instruction, as it is considered to be an effective way to find the path and solve the problems. The main task of a teacher is to provide guidance and feedback. Integration of these approaches implies creating a learning process, where students not only grasp subject-matter knowledge, but also promote 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, or lifelong learning (Louis, Thompson, Sulak, Harvill & Moore, 2021). In light of this, Pasutri, Bukhori, and Helmiati (2021), put forward some steps to foster higher-order thinking skills. The following figure illustrates the steps.

Figure 4. *Steps to Promote higher-order Thinking Skills*
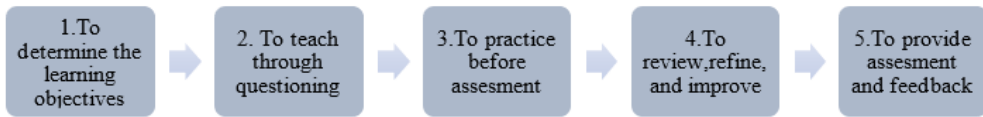
Source: (Pasutri, Bukhori & Helmiati,2021)

Methodology and Methods
Goal of research and research paradigm

The primary objective of the research was to get a clear picture in terms of perceptions of the teachers regarding a practical application of the common active learning strategies in the classroom to enhance skills in learners. Besides, it also revealed teachers' understanding of the concept and the factors that hinder the integration of active learning techniques in the classroom.

Hence, the qualitative paradigm was chosen as the methodology for the research. The reason for this is that it enables to identify the participants' direct experiences. In light of this, DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), point out that "the method allows the researcher to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic and to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues" (p.1).

The data was collected through a semi-structured interview with school and university teachers. The interviews were conducted, and it was planned to last 10-15 minutes. Five questions were asked. Two questions were aimed at collecting background information about the participants regarding their experience and their place of work. Other questions were asked to gather information about their understanding of the concept of active learning, the challenges they face while integrating active learning strategies, and the level of application of the common active learning techniques in the classroom.

Upon participants' consent and assured anonymity and confidentiality, interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts were imported in NVivo and the coding process was performed. The researchers went through the participants' responses and assigned the codes/themes and sub-codes/sub-themes. This coding process involved analyzing their responses by finding the most frequently mentioned statements and words. While analyzing the answers in NVivo, all similar statements were given the same codes, in order to come up with the set of common themes mentioned by most participants. Thus, the given tables summarize the themes and the sub-themes, which emerged from the semi-structured interviews with teachers. It also reveals how many times these words or phrases were referenced in the interviews.

Participants and Research Context

Fifteen participants were teachers from a private university in Georgia, who deliver general English language courses to students majoring in various fields, such as Philology, International relations, Information technology, and Business administration. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-five English language teachers, who teach English as a foreign language to pupils starting from the primary to high school levels in two different private schools in Georgia.

All participants were explained at the beginning of an interview that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw themselves at any stage of the research with no further consequences. Their responses were anonymous and their participation was closed to publicity.

Limitations of the research

This qualitative research had several limitations. The first is the number of participants. There were forty teachers, who took part in the semi-structured interview. To come to more generalizable findings, it is recommended to conduct similar research with more teachers. Secondly, the research involved only one private university and two private schools. Therefore, it is suggested to include more universities and schools in future research.

Findings

Table 4. *The main themes emerged from semi-structured interviews with English language teachers from the private schools and university*

Main Theme	Sub-themes mentioned by school teachers	Sub-themes mentioned by university teachers	How many times the items were referenced by school teachers(N.25)	How many times the items were referenced by university teachers (N.15)
The teachers' awareness of the concept of an active learning	The teacher is a supporter/guide	The teacher is not the leading figure. He/she is a facilitator	9	13
	The teacher does much planning	Students' needs are considered	15	7
	The classroom climate is active	The learning process is interactive	23	12
	The students have a choice	The students are engaged in cooperative work	5	8
	The teacher does not talk too much, pupils talk more	The students evaluate their own learning	10	3
			17	2
		Peer feedback is valued	3	10

	The students discover and explore the things themselves	The students construct their knowledge	1	6
	Teacher makes decisions with pupils	Much attention is given to students' learning ownership and autonomy	6	9
	Pupils are more motivated to learn Pupils can develop different skills	The students improve creativity, group work, critical thinking, and so on.		
The integration of the common active learning strategies in the classroom	Group projects	Debates/discussions	15	12
	Hands-on activities	Group/pair works	7	10
	Discussions	Guiding students to the main topic	13	7
	Supporting pupils to understand through stimulating cooperation	Connecting the course content to real-life situations	5	10
		Planning the activities, which include developing general skills	17	9
	Giving feedback sometimes without giving formal grades		12	13
	The pupils have much responsibility to seek the information themselves	The students are engaged in reading case studies and problem-solving	3	10
		The students are involved in peer teaching and evaluating	6	8
	The pupils are given the choice of activities or learning strategies		16	7
	The pupils give feedback to each other	The students brainstorm, predict, and explore	18	12
	The pupils are given tasks to think critically	Consulting with students regarding the topics and content		
	Different visuals are used to make	Having them involved in discovery/research tasks inside and outside the classroom		

	pupils understand			
The hindering factors for practicing active learning strategies in the classroom	Too much preparation time Not supported by the school administration The teaching resources are not enough No guidelines were provided on how to integrate Assessment is difficult Pupils' negative attitude towards being active in the class	The lack of resources Curriculum content should be covered and not much time remains Some students' level of motivation Lack of professional development training The large classes The students' lack of willingness to participate in active discussions	10 16 20 13 5 15	6 5 9 7 11 13

According to Table 4, it could be seen that several themes have emerged from the interviews. The research was aimed at identifying the teachers' perception of the concept. Considering the responses gathered from the participants working at schools and university, it could be clearly seen that English Language teachers are aware of the concept of an active learning approach. Even though the teachers from schools and the lecturers from the university define this type of instruction mode with different words, some similarities could be spotted between the characteristics they mentioned while defining an active learning approach. The numbers given in the table revealed how many times the teachers mentioned various features. Hence, it can be stated that there is a common understanding of the concept among teachers. Looking at the data, it could also be noticed that the least associated items with the elements of an active learning environment are 'teacher makes decisions with pupils', and 'Pupils are more motivated to learn'. So, these are not considered to be as important as other aspects among school teachers. As for the teachers at university, the following two items are referenced less frequently: 'The students evaluate their own learning', and 'Peer feedback is valued'. It could mean that most teachers still do not enable students to reflect on their own and other's learning.

One of the primary goals of the research was to investigate how teachers facilitate active learning in their classrooms. In other words, what strategies and techniques are applied and practiced, to create an active learning

environment aiming at boosting transferable skills. Several strategies are mentioned by teachers from schools and university. According to the table, the most commonly mentioned items by school teachers are using 'Group projects', 'Giving feedback sometimes without giving formal grades', 'Giving tasks to think critically', and 'Using visuals to make pupils understand'. As other strategies are mentioned less frequently, it might make us think that they do not often apply those techniques in the classroom. Similar activities and strategies are also referenced by university teachers. However, more complex strategies could be noticed here. The strategies that could be more related to facilitating higher-order thinking. On the other hand, 'Consulting with students regarding the topics and content' and 'Guiding them to the main topic', are less favored among university teachers. It might be explained by the fact that most of them still consider themselves as the main decision-makers and key figures in the classroom.

Moreover, the research revealed some factors that impede the integration of active learning strategies from the teachers' viewpoints. Several hindering factors are pointed out by teachers. The school and university teachers more or less share similar challenges regarding this issue. Nevertheless, some differences could be noticed. The most commonly mentioned factors by school teachers are the lack of support and resources as well as pupils' negative attitudes towards being active in the class. It is not surprising that the majority of pupils do not really show interest in participating actively in classroom activities, as they have different learning expectations. In most cases, they prefer to be passive listeners. Similarly, the most mentioned items are having large classrooms and the lack of students' willingness to participate in active discussions by university teachers. All the factors that are emphasized in the interviews with teachers, need to be the main priority of schools and higher education, in order to promote skills acquisition and an active learning environment.

Discussion

This study revealed that English Language teachers from schools and higher education institutions share quite a similar understanding of the concept of an active learning approach and implementation of various strategies. However, there is a difference in terms of theoretical knowledge of the concept and its practical application. It is noticeable that some strategies and methods are integrated into teaching that foster the development of skills among students. The teachers from the higher education institution apply more varied approaches compared to the participants from the private schools. Furthermore, the study showed those hindering factors that could be considered as the barriers to implementing fully active learning approaches to teaching and learning in order to ensure the environment, where the skills

could be boosted. Similar challenges are being faced by teachers in the Georgian context. Among those factors are the lack of support and resources, the student's willingness, and expectations.

These results of the research are in line with the study conducted in 55 different universities and 960 schools of construction (Wetzel & Farrow,2021). The purpose of that study was to investigate the teachers' perception regarding active learning practices from the undergraduate programs. 61% of participants indicated that active learning is an actively used method, as it improves students' involvement. Besides, 63% of respondents mentioned that they received training about engaging students in active learning. Among the hindering factors, class size, teachers' knowledge, the lack of resources, students' attitudes, too much preparation time, or institutional pressure are mentioned by the majority.

The previous study carried out in Georgia about the significance of transferable skills development, and the universities' contribution in this regard, showed there was no great focus on skills development, and it was explained with the challenges regarding adjusting the existing curriculum as well as the lack of systematic training to incorporate skills-based approach in teaching (Khabeishvili,2020). Similarly, the study conducted at the University of Applied Sciences questioned whether the university programs meet the labor market requirements, in terms of equipping students with 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. It also revealed that educational programs need to be updated, and teachers are expected to rethink their teaching methods to meet the changing market demands (Habets, Stoffers, Heijden, & Peters, 2020). Most curricula of higher education in Uzbekistan also do not meet the objectives of creating a suitable study environment for boosting skills (Qizi, 2020).

Moreover, various findings regarding the integration of different active learning elements in the classroom indicate a positive outcome. For instance, the study about using constructivist approaches at schools in Thailand showed that the students' higher-order thinking skills increased after their engagement in active learning (Kwangmuang, Jarutkamolpong, Sangboonraung, & Daungtod, 2021). Similar research to evaluate the correlation between active learning strategies and skills development in a Mexican high school showed the effectiveness of using flipped learning and gamification strategies (Forte-Celaya, Ibarra, Glasserman-Morales, 2021). The common active learning activities and strategies that are analyzed in this paper were also investigated based on higher education institutions in Malaysia and Indonesia. The quantitative research was conducted among 403 educators to determine the impact of the teaching activities on developing four Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking, and Creativity skills). The results of that study showed that the teaching activities that are most often used or appear

with a percentage to develop communication skills are brainstorming, debates, and discussions. Mind mapping appears to be a frequently applied strategy to boost creativity (Jalinus, Sukardi, Wulansari, Heong & Kiong, 2023). Correspondingly, integrating discovery learning model elements in the classroom is considered to affect the students' higher-order thinking skills (Aliyawinata, Utari & Mahrawi,2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Today's global and knowledge-driven economy requires students with skills(Asian Development Bank, 2007). As noted in ISTE NETS Standards for Teachers (2008) "with this change in the teacher's role from a knowledge deliverer to a mediator of students' knowledge development, new tools and pedagogies are needed to appropriately scaffold students' acquisition of skills" (p.115). The findings gained from this study revealed that the teachers are aware of the concept of active learning, and they integrate various teaching techniques to facilitate skills acquisition. However, explicit support is needed from the school and university administration. It is crucial to promote skills development through encouraging teachers to modify their teaching and learning methods. The barriers that were identified in this research, once again make us conclude that the study programs need to be updated, to ensure skill-oriented teaching, which could prepare individuals for the challenging labor market.

Consequently, considering all the efforts that have been made, this issue still requires more systematic support. It is recommended that teachers be equipped with the ability to teach 21st-century skills. They are expected to facilitate and inspire students' learning process as well as creativity. What is more, having the skills to design and develop digital-age learning experiences and assessments, which imply incorporating contemporary tools and resources, are some of the facilitating elements. It is also important to be engaged in professional growth and leadership for lifelong learning purposes (ISTE NETS Standards for Teachers, 2008).

It is also noteworthy to mention the benefits of having collaboration between schools, universities, and the labor market. This kind of cooperation leads to a critical reflection on challenging issues, such as the skills gaps and the ways of upskilling teachers to plan teaching practices better. The most challenging aspect is putting theories into practice. In light of this, more training and guidance need to be organized to show how to integrate all active learning techniques in the classrooms (Baumfield & Butterworth,2007). Peer support and forming teacher communities could also contribute to their professional development (Lomos et al.,2011).

Conflict of Interest: The author reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The author did not obtain any funding for this research.

Declaration for Human Participants:
This study has been approved by Cambridge Education Corner, Tbilisi and the principles of the Helsinki Declaration were followed.

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