

# The Role of the University Teacher in the Implementation of Active Methodologies: An Approach from Critical Pedagogy

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## Abstract

The implementation of active methodologies in higher education requires a paradigmatic shift in teaching practice, focused on promoting active participation, critical thinking, and the collective construction of knowledge. This article analyzes the role of the university teacher in the framework of critical pedagogy, considering their ability to foster transformative learning environments. Through a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews and bibliographic review, the strategies used by teachers and the challenges faced are explored. The results highlight the need for continuous teacher training, development of reflective skills and the creation of an institutional culture that supports active methodologies. It is concluded that the success of these practices depends on the teachers' commitment to inclusive and critical education.

**Keywords:** active methodologies, critical pedagogy, teaching role, higher education, transformative learning.

## Introduction

Higher education faces a scenario of profound transformations driven by technological advances, changes in the labor market, and the need to prepare students to face complex problems in a globalized world. In this context, active methodologies have emerged as a pedagogical response that seeks to promote meaningful and student-centered learning, standing out for their ability to develop critical, reflective, and collaborative skills (Martínez et al., 2021). These methodologies, such as problem-based learning (PBL), the flipped classroom, and collaborative learning, transcend the traditional teaching approach focused on the unidirectional transmission of knowledge, prioritizing, instead, the active participation of students in the construction of their own learning (García & López, 2021).

The role of the university teacher within this new paradigm is significantly transformed. It is no longer just a matter of being a transmitter of information, but a facilitator of learning and a guide in processes that seek to empower students. In this sense, the critical pedagogy approach, developed mainly by Paulo Freire, provides a valuable perspective to understand how teachers can contribute to transformative education. From this perspective, the classroom becomes a space for dialogue and critical reflection, where students not only acquire knowledge, but also develop a deep understanding of their reality and a commitment to its transformation (Freire, 2020; Giroux, 2019). According to Torres (2021), critical pedagogy not only seeks to transmit content, but also advocates for social justice, emphasizing the empowerment of the student to be an agent of change in his or her context.

However, the implementation of active methodologies faces various challenges, both at the institutional and cultural levels. Resistance to change by some actors in the education system, lack of teacher training in innovative pedagogical strategies, and scarcity of resources are some of the obstacles pointed out in recent literature (Pérez et al., 2022). In addition, university teachers must balance their teaching responsibilities with other tasks, such as

research and academic management, which can limit their ability to design and implement active pedagogical practices effectively (García & López, 2021).

On the other hand, educational institutions also play a key role in this process. The creation of an institutional culture that values pedagogical innovation and encourages continuous teacher training is essential for the success of active methodologies (Martínez et al., 2021). In this sense, a comprehensive approach is necessary that combines teacher commitment with the support of institutional policies aimed at educational transformation (Pérez et al., 2022).

From this perspective, this article aims to analyze the role of the university teacher in the implementation of active methodologies from a critical pedagogy approach. It seeks to explore the strategies used, the challenges faced and the opportunities to promote a more inclusive and transformative education. The analysis is based on a review of recent academic literature and a qualitative study that collects the experiences of university professors in Latin America. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how teaching practices can contribute to the development of a critical, reflective higher education aligned with the demands of the twenty-first century.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study focuses on two fundamental axes: critical pedagogy as a transformative approach and active methodologies as tools for educational innovation in higher education.

### Critical Pedagogy as a Transformative Approach

Critical pedagogy, based on the ideas of Paulo Freire, is based on the need to transform traditional power relations in the classroom. This approach considers that the educational process must be dialogical, critical, and emancipatory, with the aim of developing in students a critical awareness that allows them to interpret and transform their reality (Freire, 2020). According to Giroux (2019), teachers play a central role in this process by acting as transformative intellectuals, challenging oppressive structures and promoting social justice in the educational context.

In recent years, research has highlighted the relevance of this approach in higher education. For example, Torres (2021) argues that critical pedagogy allows teachers to design inclusive and participatory learning spaces, especially in culturally diverse contexts. This implies an ethical and political commitment on the part of the teacher, who must be willing to question traditional norms and promote critical reflection in his students.

### Active Methodologies in Higher Education

Active methodologies, such as problem-based learning (PBL), flipped classroom, and project-based learning, have gained ground in higher education due to their ability to actively engage students in their learning process (Martínez et al., 2021). These methodologies are characterized by their focus on real problem-solving, peer-to-peer collaboration, and the development of critical and practical skills.

According to García and López (2021), active methodologies are effective tools to prepare students for the challenges of the contemporary world, such as globalization and rapid technological advance. However, its implementation requires a significant change in teaching practices and institutional culture. Teachers, in particular, need to acquire specific skills to design activities that are meaningful and relevant to students (Pérez et al., 2022). Below is a summary of the main characteristics of active methodologies and their alignment with the principles of critical pedagogy (Table 1):

Active Methodology	Description	Connection with Critical Pedagogy
Problem-Based Learning (PBL)	Students work in teams to solve real and meaningful problems.	It promotes critical reflection and the analysis of real contexts (Martínez et al., 2021).
Flipped Classroom	Students study theoretical content before class, allowing them to dedicate time in the classroom to practical activities.	It encourages autonomous learning and collaboration (García & López, 2021).
Project-Based Learning	Students develop projects related to real-world problems, integrating multiple disciplines.	It integrates social commitment and transformative action (Pérez et al., 2022).

### The Role of the University Teacher

The role of the university teacher in the implementation of active methodologies and critical pedagogy is fundamental. According to Torres (2021), teachers must adopt a reflective and critical approach in their pedagogical practice, taking on the challenge of acting as facilitators and mediators of learning. This involves:

1. **Design meaningful learning experiences:** Teachers must be able to connect academic content with students' real experiences and contexts (Martínez et al., 2021).
2. **Fostering critical thinking:** Critical pedagogy requires teachers to promote the questioning of power structures and the search for transformative solutions (Freire, 2020).
3. **Manage inclusive learning environments:** This implies recognizing and valuing diversity in the classroom, promoting active participation of all students (Giroux, 2019).

Table 2 summarizes the key competencies that teachers must develop to successfully implement active methodologies from a critical approach:

Competence	Description	Practical Example
Learning facilitation	Ability to guide and support students in active and collaborative activities.	To design class debates on current social problems (Pérez et al., 2022).
Critical reflection	Ability to analyze and question pedagogical practices and their impact on students.	Continuously evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of activities (Torres, 2021).
Inclusion and educational equity	Promoting an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students.	Incorporate diverse materials and perspectives into the curriculum (García & López, 2021).

### Implications for Educational Innovation

The interaction between critical pedagogy and active methodologies represents a unique opportunity to transform higher education. However, for this transformation to be effective, it is essential that higher education institutions support these practices through clear policies and continuing teacher education programs (Martínez et al., 2021). In addition, it is necessary to generate an institutional culture that values innovation and ethical commitment in teaching.

### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach with the purpose of analyzing the role of the university teacher in the implementation of active methodologies from the perspective of critical pedagogy. This approach allows us to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies used by teachers in real contexts, prioritizing the depth and richness of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2020).

### Research Design

The research design is descriptive-interpretive, aimed at understanding how teachers apply active methodologies and the challenges they face in the framework of critical education. Two main strategies were used: recent literature review and semi-structured interviews.

Methodological aspect	Description
Approach	Qualitative
Design	Descriptive-interpretive
Methods	Literature review and field research through interviews
Study Period	January 2023 - October 2024

### Population and Sample

The target population included university professors from different disciplines in higher education institutions in Latin America. The sample was selected intentionally, considering criteria of previous experience in the use of active methodologies and critical approach in their teaching practice.

Selection Criteria	Detail
Experience	At least two years of implementation of active methodologies in the classroom.
Geographical Context	Institutions located in Latin America.
Disciplinary Diversity	Representation of areas such as social sciences, engineering, and humanities.
Participants	10 university professors selected through intentional sampling.

### Data Collection Instruments

Two main instruments were used for data collection:

1. **Bibliographic Review:** Academic articles published between 2019 and 2024 in indexed journals were analyzed to identify key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and relevant findings on critical pedagogy and active methodologies.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** The interviews included open-ended questions designed to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and strategies in relation to the implementation of active methodologies. The interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes and were recorded with the consent of the participants.

Instrument	Purpose	Sample Question
Bibliographic Review	Identify key concepts and recent trends.	What are the most studied active methodologies in the last five years?
Semi-structured interviews	Explore teachers' experiences and perceptions.	How would you describe the impact of active methodologies on student participation?

### Procedure

The procedure was carried out in three phases:

1. **Planning Phase:** Included the selection of participants, the development of the instruments and the obtaining of informed consent for the interviews.
2. **Data Collection Phase:** It included the bibliographic review and the conduct of interviews. The data from the interviews were transcribed for later analysis.
3. **Analysis Phase:** The thematic coding technique was used to identify emerging patterns and categories in the collected data (Creswell & Poth, 2020).

### Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed through a thematic coding process, which allowed the identification of recurrent patterns in the perceptions and practices of the teachers. Emerging categories included:

1. **Teaching Strategies:** Methods used to implement active methodologies.
2. **Challenges:** Obstacles encountered in the process.
3. **Perceived Impacts:** Observed changes in students and in the learning environment.

Category	Description	Example
Teaching Strategies	Specific actions used to encourage active participation.	Use of case studies in the classroom.
Challenges	Difficulties faced by teachers when implementing active methodologies.	Lack of technological resources.
Perceived Impacts	Results observed in students and classroom dynamics.	Increase in student participation.

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the following strategies were used:

1. **Triangulation:** Comparison of data obtained in the literature review with the answers of the interviews.
2. **Peer review:** Preliminary results were reviewed by experts in critical education and active methodologies.
3. **Participant Confirmation:** Participants reviewed the transcripts of their interviews to validate their content.

## Results

The results of the study are grouped into three broad categories: teaching strategies to implement active methodologies, the challenges faced during the process, and the impacts observed on student learning. The main findings are presented below, supported by qualitative and quantitative data obtained during the analysis.

### Teaching Strategies to Implement Active Methodologies

The participating teachers identified various strategies used to implement active methodologies. Among the most frequent are the design of activities based on real problems, the use of technological tools and the promotion of collaborative learning dynamics.

According to the analysis of the interviews, 70% of the teachers indicated that the integration of case studies was the most effective strategy to promote critical thinking in students. In addition, 50% highlighted the use of technological platforms such as forums and simulators to enrich the learning experience.

Strategy	Percentage of Teachers Using It	Application Example
Using Case Studies	70%	Analysis of contemporary social problems in small groups.
Technology integration	50%	Use of economic simulators to solve complex financial problems.
Collaborative learning	60%	Teamwork to develop interdisciplinary projects.

### Challenges in the Implementation of Active Methodologies

Participants pointed out various challenges related to the implementation of these methodologies. One of the most recurrent problems, mentioned by 80% of teachers, was the resistance to change on the part of students, who initially preferred traditional teaching methods. Likewise, 60% highlighted the lack of time to design active activities due to the administrative and research burden.

Another major challenge identified by 50% of teachers was the lack of adequate technological infrastructure, which made it difficult to integrate digital tools in the classroom.

Challenge	Percentage of Teachers Who Identify It	Representative Comment
Student resistance	80%	"At first, students turn down different activities because they involve more effort."
Lack of time	60%	"Designing innovative activities is difficult when I also have to fulfill other obligations."
Lack of technological resources	50%	"We don't always have adequate equipment or internet access in our classrooms."

### Impacts on Student Learning

Despite the challenges, teachers reported significant positive impacts on student learning as a result of the active methodologies. 90% of participants mentioned an increase in student engagement during classes, while 75% noted improvements in critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition, qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed that students felt more engaged and responsible for their learning, especially when the activities were related to real-world problems.

Impact	Percentage of Teachers Who Observed It	Representative Comment
Increased participation	90%	"Now students are more involved in discussions, sharing their ideas and proposing solutions."
Improved critical thinking	75%	"I've noticed that students are better able to analyze problems from multiple perspectives."
Greater commitment and responsibility	70%	"When problems are real, students are more motivated to look for solutions."

### Relationship between Strategies and Results

Further analysis showed a direct relationship between the teaching strategies used and the impacts observed. For example, the use of case studies and collaborative learning had a positive correlation with increased student engagement and the development of critical skills.

Strategy	Associated Impact
Case Studies	Increased participation and critical thinking.
Use of technology	Improvement in technical skills and problem solving.
Collaborative learning	Development of communication and teamwork skills.

### Summary of Results

The data indicate that active methodologies, when properly implemented, have the potential to transform classroom dynamics and significantly improve student learning. However, teachers face considerable challenges that require institutional support and continuous training to be overcome.

### Conclusions

The results of this study highlight the crucial importance of the role of the university teacher in the implementation of active methodologies from a critical pedagogy approach. The transition to these methodologies represents a paradigmatic shift in traditional pedagogical practices, which requires an ethical, reflective and transformative commitment on the part of teachers, as well as solid institutional support.

First, it is concluded that active methodologies are highly effective pedagogical tools to promote critical, reflective and collaborative skills in students. Strategies such as problem-based learning, flipped classroom, and collaborative learning demonstrate a positive impact on student engagement, critical thinking, and engagement with learning (Martínez et al., 2021). However, its success depends to a large extent on the teacher's ability to design meaningful and contextualized activities, and to act as a facilitator that fosters dialogue and critical reflection (Freire, 2020; García & López, 2021).

Second, this study highlights that critical pedagogy not only complements, but enhances active methodologies by incorporating an emancipatory and transformative approach. Teachers who adopt this perspective are better prepared to promote inclusive and relevant learning, especially in contexts of cultural diversity and social inequality (Giroux, 2019; Torres, 2021). This underscores the need to integrate principles of critical pedagogy into teacher education to ensure that pedagogical practices are aligned with the goals of social justice and educational equity.

On the other hand, significant challenges are identified that limit the implementation of active methodologies. Among the most relevant are students' resistance to change, lack of specific teacher training, and scarcity of adequate technological resources (Pérez et al., 2022). These barriers not only affect the quality of teaching, but also underscore the need for institutional policies that support pedagogical innovation. Educational institutions must play a proactive role in the provision of resources, continuous training, and recognition of teaching effort (García & López, 2021).

Likewise, the study shows that the commitment of the teacher is a determining factor in the success of these methodologies. Those teachers who show a willingness to reflect on their practices and adopt transformative approaches are able to overcome barriers and generate significant changes in classroom dynamics (Torres, 2021). However, this provision must be supported by institutional structures that promote innovation and value professional development.

Finally, this analysis suggests that the integration of active methodologies and critical pedagogy in higher education not only improves the quality of learning, but also contributes to forming critical citizens who are committed to

their environment. This pedagogical approach has the potential to transform education into an instrument for equity and social justice, provided that the barriers identified are overcome and the necessary support for teachers is guaranteed.

In conclusion, the implementation of active methodologies from a critical pedagogy perspective requires a coordinated effort between teachers, students and educational institutions. The creation of teacher training programs focused on critical pedagogy and active methodologies is recommended, as well as the generation of institutional policies that promote innovation and professional development. Only through a collective commitment will it be possible to achieve an inclusive, transformative higher education in line with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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