Teaching Strategy:
The Key to Maximising Personal and Professional Outcomes

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the challenge of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population is harder than ever. Yet, unless this challenge is met, teaching institutions are likely to fail in their objectives of maximising engagement and producing personally fulfilled and professionally effective social workers. A key element in addressing this challenge is teaching strategy. This must not only fulfil the primary purpose of preparing students for the workplace but must encourage students to understand the intrinsic value of learning: to see its benefits from a wider personal and professional perspective. Such a strategy must help students understand that they are not passive 'objects' of the teaching process but can play an active role in their own development, by engaging fully with the process and their fellow students, and by being constructively critical of the conventional teaching paradigm. To help facilitate this understanding, the teaching community needs to recognise that many students – especially those who are financially or emotionally challenged - see their course in purely pragmatic terms: as a way out. They come to the learning table with a 'just tell me what I need to know to pass' attitude. A mutually respectful and trusting relationship is needed to help counteract this attitude and produce optimum outcomes for all stakeholders. This presentation highlights how module design, and adopting different approaches and strategies to teaching, can help maximise student engagement, participation and positive professional outcomes by encouraging the development of emotional intelligence, critical reflection and practical social skills.

The inspiration for my style of teaching unconsciously came from my first hobby, movies, I started collecting movie reviews from the Radio and TV Times as a child. My story replicates many of those of the people in these movies, a working-class girl, from a single parent household. My mother left school at 14 – but encouraged and ensured all her 4 children went to university.
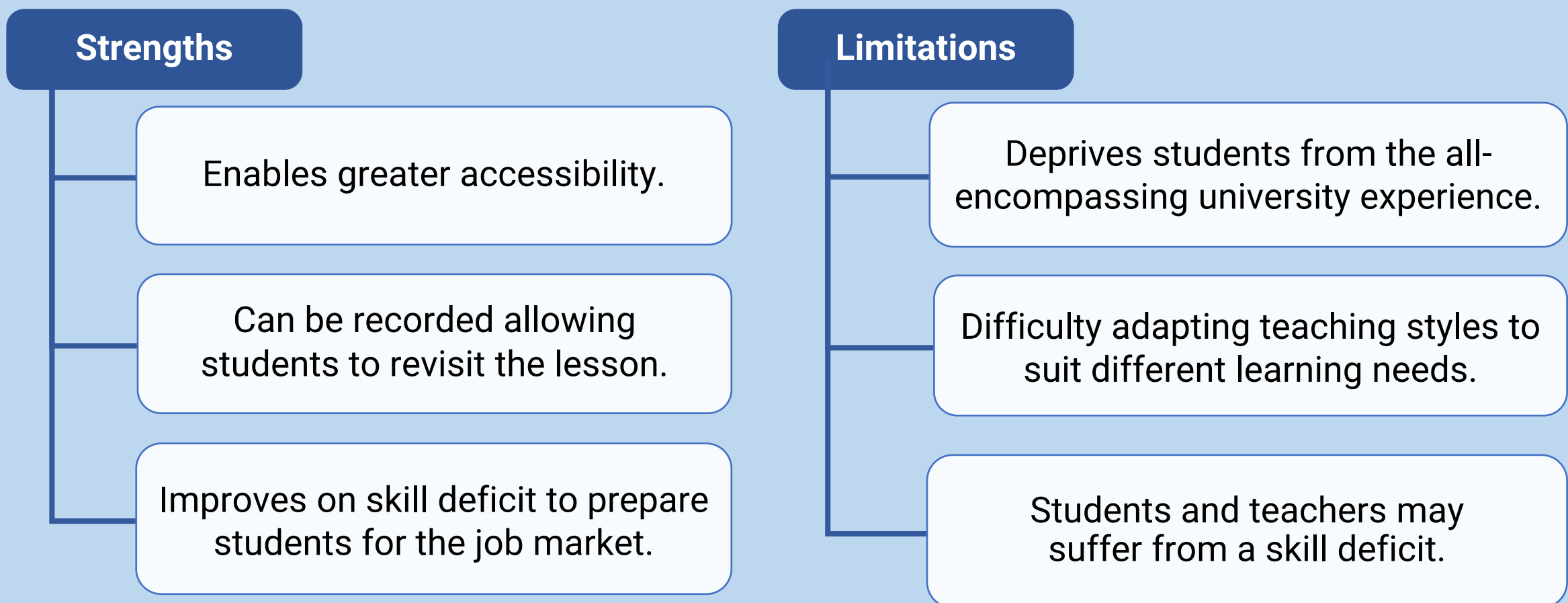
The teaching strategy included a variety of different methods, techniques and processes which I utilised during lectures:

- Reading: journals and books.
- Decolonising the curriculum.
- Roleplays.
- Class debates.
- Podcasts
- Movies.
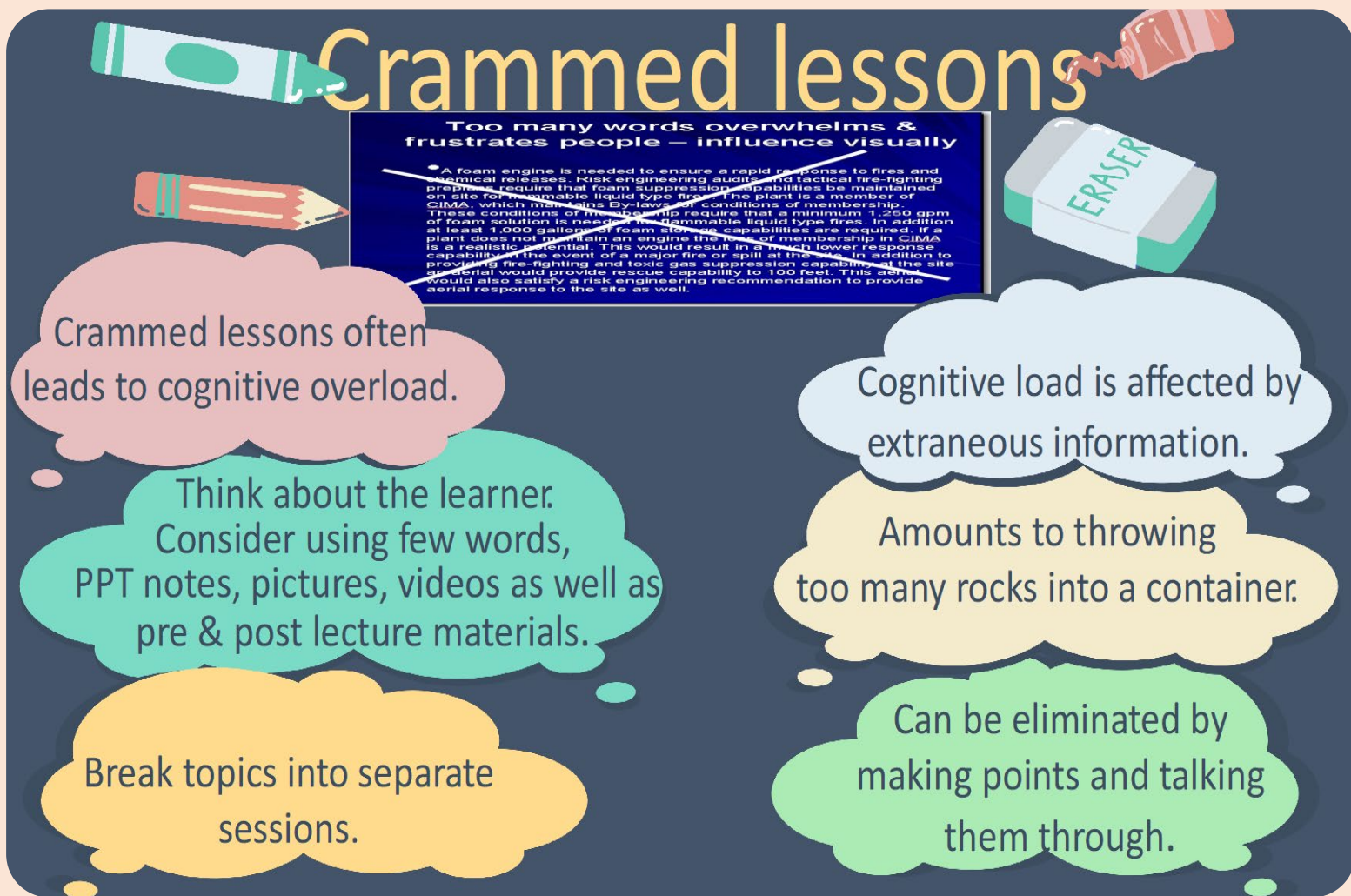- Lectures.
- Small groups.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Virtual learning aims to extend educational opportunities beyond the four walls of a classroom, albeit not designed to be a replacement for traditional learning. Virtual learning environments, should enable student to access resources such as recorded lectures; as well as providing an opportunity for students to schedule group work at more convenient times.
For virtual learning to be effective, it is important that lecturers/teachers and learners, understand and have appropriate technical skills. Lecturers/teachers need to think through how to maximise students' engagement and participation. It is also important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of virtual learning and adapt lectures accordingly to suit the audience.

How has virtual learning impacted on students' learning experiences?

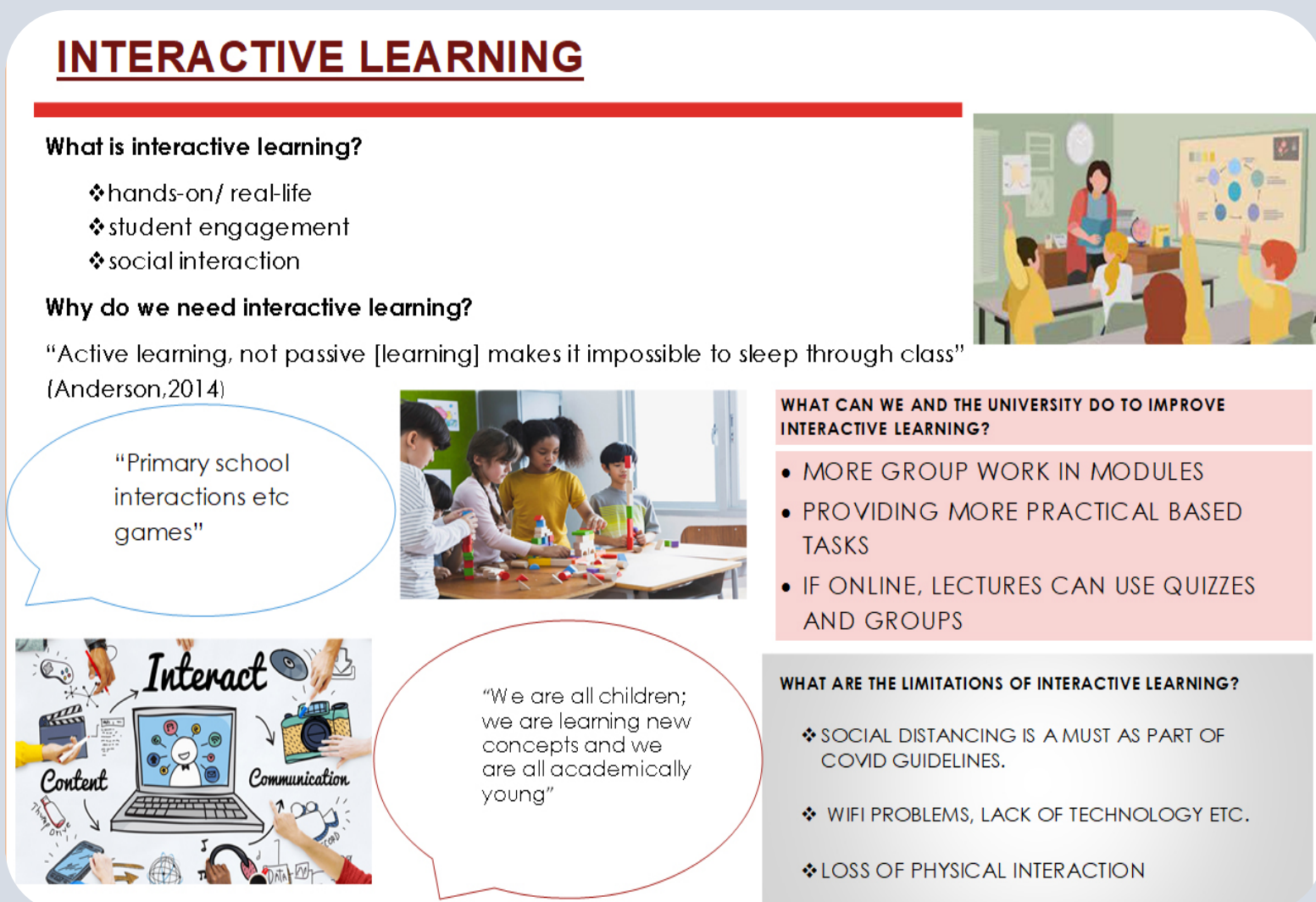| Strengths	Limitations
Enables greater accessibility.	Deprives students from the all-encompassing university experience.
Can be recorded allowing students to revisit the lesson.	Difficulty adapting teaching styles to suit different learning needs.
Improves on skill deficit to prepare students for the job market.	Students and teachers may suffer from a skill deficit.

CRAMMED SLIDES

Lecturers and teachers need to consider how crammed slides are experienced by the learner. Specifically, the impact that a loaded slide has on students' engagement, understanding and concentration during their teaching or presentation. Additionally, lecturers and teachers need to consider the different learning styles of their students. Solutions to a crammed slide presentation include using bullet points instead of lengthy words, sharing lecturer (foot)notes, pre & post reading material being offered e.g., journal articles, YouTube clips, podcasts as well as adding visuals.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING

Many students prefer a classroom that is interactive that is, one that comes alive. It is important that lecturers and teachers reduce the impact of 'death by PowerPoint'. Interactive lessons address differing leaning styles; and is particularly beneficial in engaging kinesthetic learners, assisting the processing and remembering information.
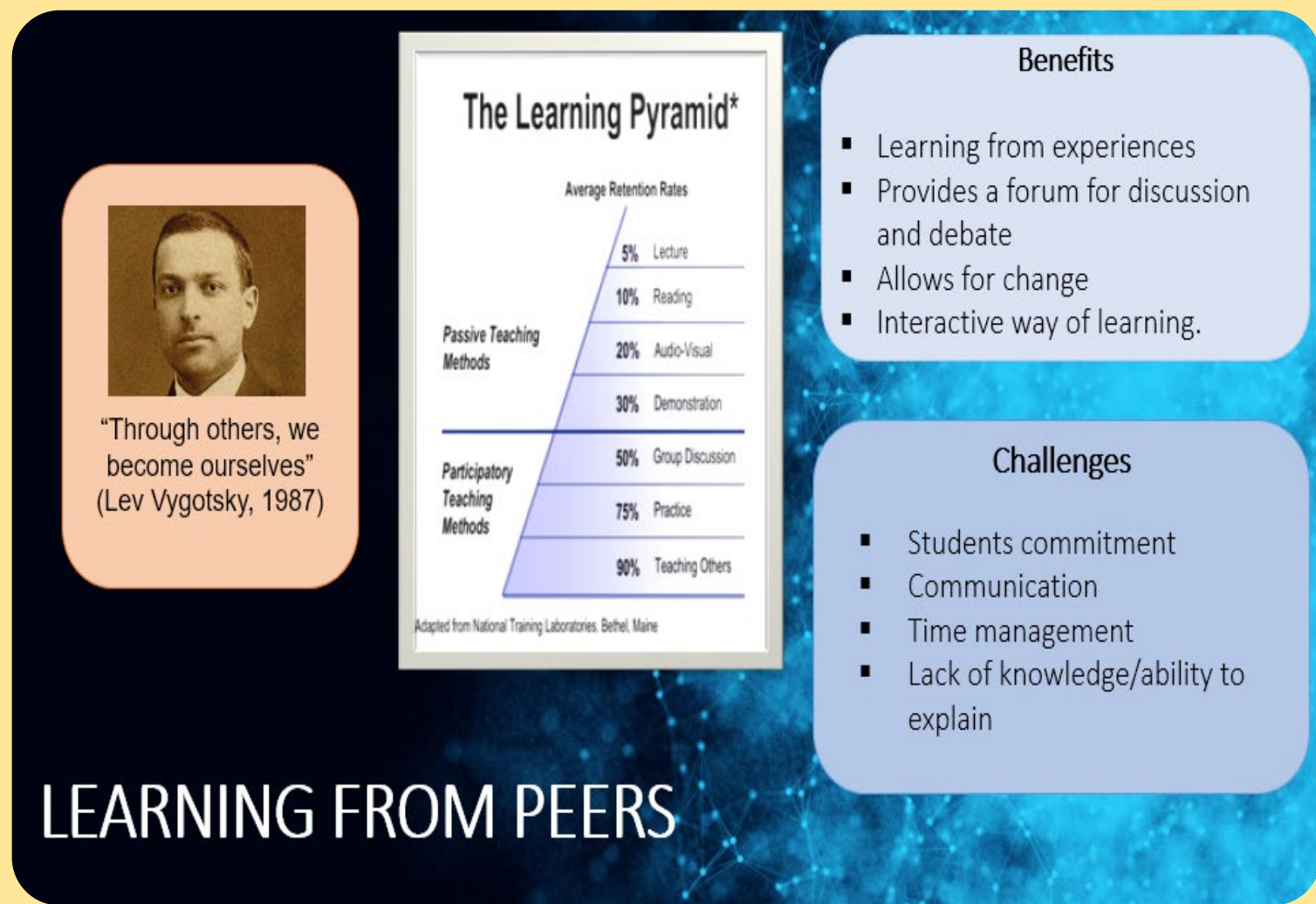
Other learning styles benefit from being provided pre and post lecture reading that addresses the theoretical knowledge gained after practice. Interactive lessons aid student learning through the inclusion of practical activities, exercises, role-plays games etc. Students in the twenty-first century want lecturers that are fun and creative and easily accessible, this help in the reaching out to students and encourages them to want to learn.

LEARNING FROM PEERS

It is important, that learning from peers is openly acknowledged. Learning from other students on course is important and value having an almost immeasurable impact on students' education experience, teamworking, and course satisfaction.
The National Training Laboratories' institute found that most students only remember 10% of what they read from textbooks but retain nearly 90% of what they learn through teaching others (see the learning pyramid that was develop in early 1960s by Edgar Dale). Therefore, it is important for lectures and teachers include group work, debates, and other activities so that students gain a better understanding of lessons. Whilst learning from peers is not with the inevitable challenges when working with others, for example difficulties in communication, all learners, taking part, equality of workload, overall, the benefits out way the disadvantages.

LEARNING FROM SERVICE USERS, CARERS AND PRACTITIONERS
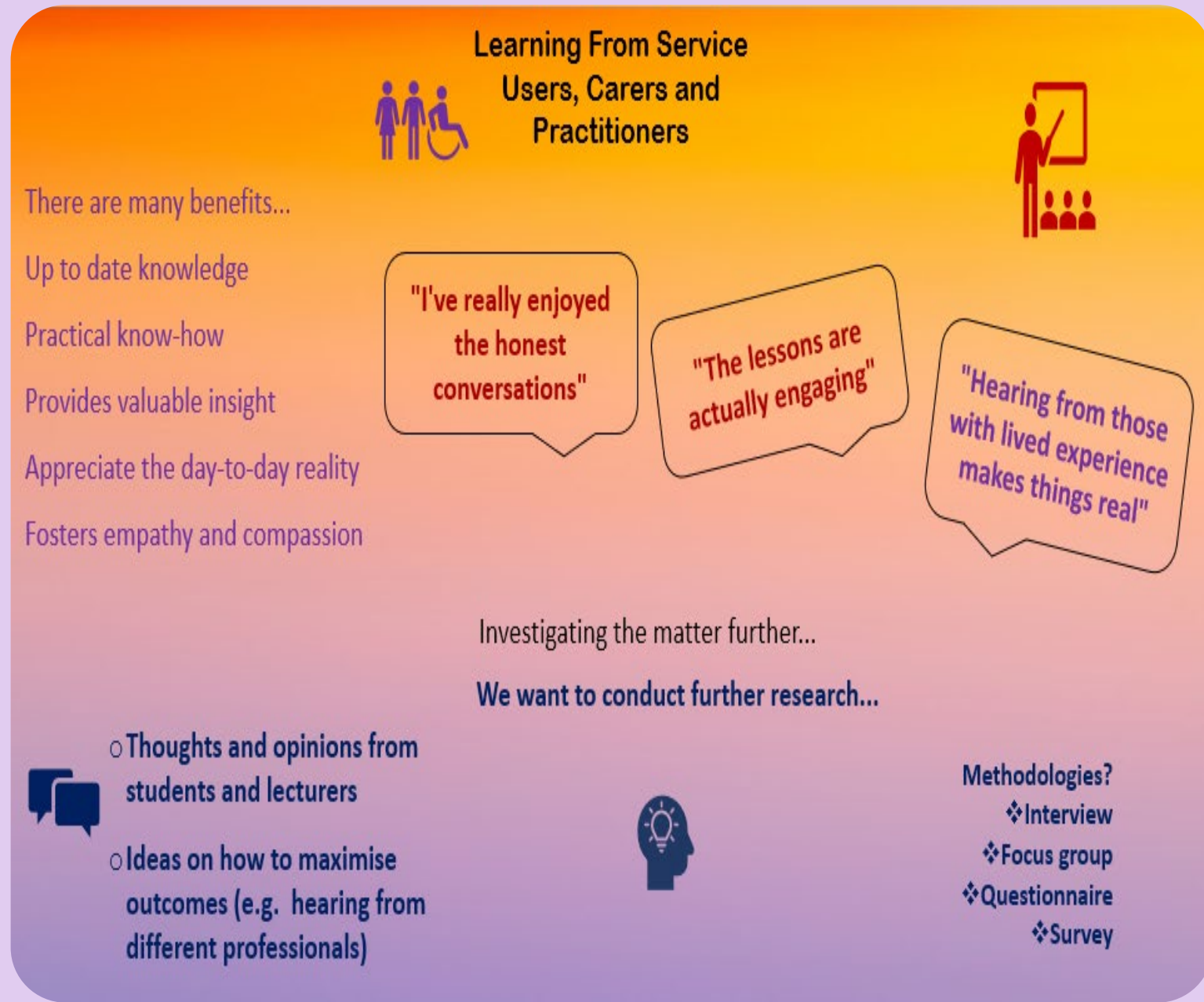
The classroom, should go beyond the walls of the institution, as such there is enormous benefits from including current practitioners and people with lived experience to teach through sharing their experiences. Examples of this include question-and-answer sessions, talks, videos The benefits of this is that it assists students to put theoretical knowledge into practice. Cementing understanding and allowing students to decide whether a given service/practice area will be right for them.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The puzzle pieces in the image symbolises connecting, engaging and promoting widening participation. Illustrating the importance of giving each marginalised group for example global majority ethnic groups, people with learning disabilities, care experienced and mature students, a voice by making them visible. Equally, the colour blue symbolises sensitivity, and the need to be sensitive towards these groups. The hope is that teachers and lecturers are challenged, inspired and encouraged to acknowledge the importance of students from different protected characteristics and be more inclusive in their planning and in the delivery of lectures. Additionally, that teachers, lecturers and universities implement appropriate support systems to assist students in their learning. All involved in learning need to be open to ensuring marginalised groups are represented at all levels of educational institutions, and include discussions and activities on topics of race, stigma and social injustice and how these impacted on students' academic life.

SUMMARY

- On practice-based courses remember it isn't just about passing assignments; a key component is preparing students to be practitioners.
- Involve others e.g. People with lived experience and practitioners.
- As a lecturer consider being a practitioner yourself, in some way, so you stay current.
- Lecturers to be mindful of what needs to be conveyed.
- Listen to your learners.
- Experiment with different strategies and teaching styles i.e., groupwork.
- Involve your students in their own learning
- As lecturers remain motivated and passionate about the subject being taught.
- Share PowerPoint notes with students rather than cramming information onto slides.
- Inclusivity - isn't just about adding books from a Global Majority lens and or recruiting students from different backgrounds.