

RE-CONSTRUCTING MICROTEACHING SKILLS FOR A CONSTRUCTIVIST CLASSROOM

Elizabeth Walling¹ & Bendangyapangla Changkiri²

1. Assistant Professor, State College of Teacher Education, Kohima, Nagaland
2. Assistant Professor, State College of Teacher Education, Kohima, Nagaland

Received : 22/10/2017

1st BPR : 28/10/2017

2nd BPR : 12/11/2017

Accepted : 20/11/2017

ABSTRACT

Scaled down micro-teaching has been used as a technique for modification of teacher behaviour for more than five decades. Student-teachers are conditioned to behave in a certain acceptable manner which is suited to the behaviourists approach. However, with shift in the paradigm from the behaviourist to constructivist approach to teaching-learning, student-teachers are required to master another set of new skills more suitable to constructivist Techniques and Strategies. While it is important that a teacher exhibits behaviours that are conducive to the teaching learning process, it is equally imperative that he/she possesses the skills and abilities to facilitate learning in a constructivist environment. This concept paper is an attempt to foster the idea of modification of micro-skills in accordance with the constructivist approach.

Introduction

Micro-teaching is a teacher education technique developed by the School of Education at Stanford University and first applied as a combined training and diagnostic tool in Stanford's teacher intern programme in the summer of 1963. Since then Micro-teaching has continued to take centre stage in the preparation of teachers all over the world. The scaled-down teaching encounter provides student teachers to adopt and practice behaviours/skills that are essential to teaching. The practice of skills in simulated conditions enables the interns to achieve specific behaviour which are highly controlled. It is based on the Behavioural models of teaching which perceives human behaviour as a function of the immediate environment. The practice of micro teaching skills is founded upon the thought that undesirable or maladaptive behaviours can be controlled or reduced whereas desirable behaviours can be increased through appropriate stimulus.

Student-teachers' participation in micro-teaching enhances their awareness of the environment in which the students learn. It, also, increases self confidence as well as learn to control the self and the environment. Behaviour modification is the aim of micro teaching. While the skills of teaching associated with the behaviourists approach is significant in an environment which has absolute control of the teacher, its relevance in a contemporary teaching-learning setting needs to be examined.

Micro Skills In Light Of The Constructivist Approach To Teaching

The National Advisory Committee on Learning without Burden (1993) drew attention to the need for involvement of teachers in curriculum and text book preparation and training teachers in fostering learning through activity, discovery, observation and understanding. The same attention is refrained in the National Curriculum Framework, 2005, when it mentions that the teacher's role in children's cognition could be enhanced if they assume a more active role in relation to the process of knowledge

construction in which children are engaged. Further, it goes on to say that allowing children to ask questions that require them to relate what they are learning in schools to things happening outside, encouraging children to answer in their own words and from their own experiences, rather than simply memorising and getting answers right in just one way – all these are small but important steps in helping children develop their understanding. 'Intelligent guessing' must be encouraged as a valid pedagogical tool.

It is, therefore, clear that the skills of teaching need to be visualised with a renewed perspective. The scheme of micro-teaching in teacher preparation programmes appeals for changes vis-a-vis the changes recommended in the various curriculum frameworks and, also, the new teacher education curriculum.

Looking For Continuity Of Behaviourist Micro Teaching Skills

Will the micro-teaching skills be still relevant in a situation where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator and the learners are active players? Such a question demands consideration as to what skills would be appropriate and relevant in the preparation of teachers for the classroom. Will this mean that the teaching skills traditionally employed will be obsolete? Not at all! Their place in the scheme of preparing and developing the personality of teachers cannot be undermined.

So then, what are some of the skills that would still be applicable to teachers in the contemporary instructional design? Although it is a point to be mooted the following skills may come into play in a constructivist teaching learning setting –

SKILL	JUSTIFICATION
Questioning	Questioning is an integral part of teaching learning process. At every stage of the teaching- learning process for eg., employing the 5 E model, the teacher is required to put thought provoking questions to students such as - What will happen if.....?, What will it lead to? Etc.
Reinforcement	As learners put forward their ideas and construct meanings the teacher while doing process evaluation must encourage the learners using reinforcers such as 'Carry on', 'Good', 'That's a brilliant idea', 'Well done' etc.
Set Induction	Sets are used at the beginning of any activity. The teacher has to welcome the students, create interest and motivate and give them clear instructions about the activity coming up.
Use of chalk/white board	As learners present their ideas the teacher may quickly draw concept maps, flow chart or note down the points to show clear relationships between the concepts to give a holistic picture of the topic at hand. Thus providing clarity of ideas, contributed by the learners, and at the same time catering to the learning needs of various learners.
Variation in Stimulus	Attention of students and sustaining it through presentation of various stimuli, is an essential skill on part of the teacher in the teaching-learning process.

Skills For A Constructivist Teacher

If knowledge is constructed by the child and teaching should aim at enhancing the child's natural desire and strategies to learn, then surely, attempt is to be made in changing the way teachers are prepared in facilitating learning? Teachers need to move away from taking the center stage and allow students to experiment and explore the world around them and make sense of it all. Doing this would mean developing a new set of skills. Skills, which would help the teacher effectively aid or facilitate

students in their construction of knowledge. Skills, which would require to smoothly adopt the techniques and strategies in a student controlled classroom.

Therefore, micro teaching strategies may have to be planned from the perspective of the various strategies which will be used by the teacher and the engagement of the class in activities. Where traditionally the micro-teaching focussed on the act of the teacher, now it should focus on the organizing and facilitating skills of the teacher. Such an understanding has led the authors to present a few skills that would be required by the teachers in a constructivist classroom setting. These are just suggestive; any contest to such a view is welcome.

- **The components that would be common to all the organizing and facilitating skills, as mentioned above, may be as follows:**

Common components for development of organising and facilitating skills
<p>Appropriateness of grouping technique: Different activities require different grouping techniques. Use of inappropriate techniques creates confusion among learners and management of the activity on the part of the teacher becomes difficult. A technique which would facilitate maximum participation of the students should be used.</p>
<p>Clarity of instruction given for the activity: Instruction to the learners precedes any activity during a learning process. The teacher is required to give clear instruction on what is to be done, how Ideas or points are to be discussed, maintained and presented. To help learners explore and expand ideas direction in simple words should be given.</p>
<p>Appropriateness of TLM used : Teaching Learning Materials, be it in the form of text, objects, pictures etc. are a must in any activity based learning. A teacher needs to carefully Select prepare and use TLM appropriate to the level of the learners for worthwhile learning outcome.</p>
<p>Effectiveness of process evaluation : One of the teacher's most important roles is to carry out process evaluation when the activity is ongoing. This would help learners perform activity in the right direction and if there is any confusion, timely clarification can be given. A teacher is required to evaluate and provide guidance or put some critical questions if she/he finds that learners are doing well. Effective Process evaluation saves a lot of time and brings better achievement on the whole activity.</p>
<p>Use of provocative questions : Constructivism aims at developing higher thinking abilities. Learners are expected to think critically reflect, reason out or justify their findings. To facilitate such exercise, a teacher is expected to fluently and skilfully put relevant provocative questions to the learners.</p>
<p>Encouragement and prompts : In any teaching learning situation, individual differences are expected. To help learners participate and contribute actively, encouragements and prompts from teacher should be given. To give prompts, teacher needs a good content mastery and precision to enable learners continue with their work.</p>
<p>Pupils' participation : In many teaching - learning processes, teachers tend to listen to voices of a few responsive learners and proceed further with new instructions or activities without considering the ones who might be struggling to understand even the first instruction. The effectiveness of the whole learning process can be quickly observed by anyone based on pupils' participation in the class. Thus, the teacher needs to see that all pupils participate.</p>
<p>Sensitivity towards Inclusive ness: Inclusive classroom has been the emphasis of the present education system. Other than the normal usually expected individual differences among children, if there are special need children, how does the teacher attend to them requires to be observed. The knowledge of techniques for guiding them, the kind of encouragement given to all needs to be incorporated as a part of the teacher's skill.</p>

<p>Mastery achieved by pupils : Effective teaching-learning is determined by the mastery achieved by the pupils on the concept at hand. A teacher's ability to facilitate learning up to the achievement of mastery level needs consideration.</p>
<p>Ability to organize pupils' ideas: The learning activity given to the learners will, more often than not, culminate in a group discussion or presentation whereby the teacher is expected to re-define, rephrase and organize learners' varied ideas to give a clear meaning to the concept being learnt. The teacher is expected to efficiently organize the whole concept, linking all major and minor concepts, and bring clarity to the day's learning.</p>
<p>Time management: One of the problems in the use of constructivist teaching-learning strategies is time management. A teacher, who plans well, uses appropriate skill considering the nature of the children, TLM and the time available to him/her will surely be able to complete the planned activity within the given time. This is considered as an important ability of the teacher.</p>

• **Components specific to Technique/Strategy**

Technique/Strategy	Components
Scaffolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability of the teacher to assess prior knowledge of the pupils. 2. Appropriateness of the lesson structure provided. 3. Appropriateness of guidance given.
Snowballing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Efficiency in guiding pupils in establishing clear meaning of the concept 2. Ability of the teacher in articulating pupils' ideas.
Collaborative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriateness of task selected for pupils to work on 2. Appropriateness of guidance and encouragement given while pupils work 3. Relevance of task to the topic
Brain storming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to creatively organise points/ideas presented by pupils. 2. Ability in handling irrelevant ideas 3. Efficiency in establishing conclusion
Peer teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of peer members according to individual differences. 2. Ability to facilitate the peer teaching process
Using ICT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting up of ICT equipments 2. Clarity and conciseness of concept presented 3. Creative elements used 4. Appropriateness of concept presented 5. Relevancy of the task given 6. Monitoring and evaluation

Organising The Micro Teaching Programme

The traditional scaled down teaching encounter which lays the foundation for real time classroom teaching will, no doubt, be adopted for practice. Since the benefits of micro teaching process for the preparation of teachers cannot be underestimated, discarding it completely as unnecessary would be unwise. Therefore, while retaining the elements of the skills a few changes may be thought of in terms of:

- i) Time - 10-12 minutes to facilitate group learning

- ii) Participants in a micro group - 12-15 members
- iii) Strategy or Technique – as suggested above

Strategy For Introduction Of Micro Skills

Whereas, in a micro teaching programme where a skill is first introduced by a talk on a particular skill and followed by demonstration, now a new strategy may be adopted. In keeping with the constructivist approach, the introduction of each strategy (skill) will be done with a demonstration/ modelling class by the teacher educator. This would be followed by feedback and discussion (in groups) on observations made by the students on the demonstration. The components of the strategy (skill) will be introduced after the discussion which will be followed by lesson planning. The format for the lesson planning will consist of the strategy (skill) on a theme or topic and the components identified.

The status quo of the traditional micro teaching cycle (plan, teach, feedback, re-plan, re-teach and re-feedback) will be maintained to strengthen the ability of the student teachers in using the techniques/ strategies.

Observation Schedule

In rating the performance of the student teacher's micro skill the following tools may be used:

- 1. Rating scale of an appropriate range for example, 0 to 4; 1 to 5 etc.
- 2. A checklist

Given below is an illustration of the 'Observation Schedule' that may be used –

Observation Schedule for the Skill of organizing Scaffolding

Sl No.	Components	0 (Poor)	1 (Fair)	2 (Neutral)	3 (Good)	4 (Excellent)
1.	Appropriateness of grouping technique					
2	Clarity of instruction given for the task					
3.	Appropriateness of TLM used					
4.	Effectiveness of process evaluation					
5.	Use of provocative questions					
6.	Encouragement and prompts					
7.	Facilitating pupils participation					
8.	Sensitivity towards inclusiveness					
9.	Mastery achieved by pupils					
10.	Ability to organise pupils' ideas					
11.	Time management					
12	Ability of the teacher to assess prior knowledge of the pupils					

13	Appropriateness of the lesson structure provided.					
14	Appropriateness of guidance given.					

Conclusion

An overnight transition from the behaviourist micro-teaching skills to that which has been suggested in this paper may be impractical. Experience show that any change without trail and proper understanding is bound for disaster; and many innovative programmes have been shelved for sheer lack of appreciation. Therefore, if at all the thought is accepted, more discourse and in a larger scale, is essential.

During implementation a few points may be considered

1. The skills - Questioning, Reinforcement, Set Induction, Use of chalk/white boards, Variation in Stimulus, may be practised first by selecting only the relevant components
2. The 'common components', mentioned above, will be applicable to all the strategies/techniques.
3. The components specific to the strategy/technique will be merged with the 'common components' while preparing 'Observation Schedule'.
4. Topics/ themes may be supplied to the student-teachers for planning and practice.
5. Group division may be done pedagogy-wise for better interaction among the peer group and effective outcome.
6. Number of student-teachers in a micro group and duration may be enhanced to 10-12 and 10-15 minutes respectively to facilitate the use of group techniques.
7. A combination of skills may also be practised which may be as follows:
 - i) Scaffolding and Collaborative learning
 - ii) Snow-balling and Brainstorming etc.

References

- NCERT, National Curriculum Framework 2005. New Delhi
- Davis, B. (2009), Tools for teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Inc., Publishers, California.
- NCTE, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2010. New Delhi
- Jacqueline Grennon Brooks & Martin G. Brooks, In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms.
- <http://www.ascd.org>

