

TEACHING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES AS ENHANCEMENT AND INNOVATIONS IN THE PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

John Bassey Okimedin

Abstract

There has been a lot of concern over the performance of students over the years. Several reasons are responsible for this but the instructional processes and school setting prevalent in the last decade may account for this short coming. This paper therefore tempts to look at some teaching skills and strategies as enhancement and innovations in teaching at the pre-primary and primary for the betterment of education in Nigeria.

The desire of every school setting is to have teachers who will make lesson presentation interesting, alive and lasting for their learners. Most lesson presentation in schools and most especially teachers' pay lip services to these issues and spend more time on mere presentation of information to learners rather than figuring the best communicate and more effective skills for quality results. Thus Gagne (1968), opined that after many years of research on learning, there has been little impact on instructional processes in schools. He also noted that there has been little or no research on the processes or procedures of lesson delivery which the class teacher can use for the benefit of teaching and learning. This paper therefore seeks to look at teaching skills and strategies available for use in the pre-primary and primary education as enhancement and innovation for teacher education in Nigeria.

Teaching Skills and Strategies

Teaching is the work of a teacher. It is the act of giving or passing out information for the main purpose of learning. Teaching is the process of educating others. It can be seen as giving information or directing instruction for the purpose of effecting a change for the benefit of all. A teacher as postulated by Maduewesi, Aboho and Okwuede (2010), is an educationist who underwent pedagogical training possessing a good knowledge of the subject or discipline. Skill refers to the ability to do/perform well in a particular task either due to training one had and the passion one attached to his duty to enable him achieve a plan that is intended to achieve a maximum result. Thus Curzon (1980) saw skills as "an organized and coordinated pattern of mental and/or physical activity in relation to an object or other display of information usually involving both receptor and affector process. He went further to state that skills are gradually built up abilities in the course of repeated training or other experience. It is in stages and each stage is dependent on the last and influences the next. To be skilful in anything, one need to be attentive, respond to, ignore and select immediately those appropriate and accurate time movement from the repertoire acquire and available result of previous learning. To be skilful therefore teacher require total devotion from training to practice. Arends (2010), advanced that skills are the learned abilities that brings about pre-determined results within the minimum out lay of time and energy. While strategy is a plan/steps one takes to achieve a particular purpose. Teaching skills and strategies therefore refer to that special attention/passion in the job that enables the teacher to teach and carry out his responsibilities perfectly well. It is the extra mile the teacher attaches to his teaching that earn him the Title "Born Teacher" or "Teacher Made".

A teacher can be born or made. If the teacher makes good use of skills and strategies very well in his teaching. This can only be possible if teachers engage in a thorough study and planning before going into full scale practice. For the teacher to do this perfectly well, he must ask himself some questions as: what am I to teach? What time is available for teaching? What are the necessary things on ground for me to teach? What time is available for teaching? Why am I teaching? Whom am I teaching etc. these and many more questions will guide the teacher to develop skills and strategies that will guide and direct the teacher to teach.

Types of Skills

Skill is the ability to do, it is having enough tactics ability through training, experience and knowledge to be able to do. It is having a particular ability to carry out a particular task through training. Curzon (1980:136) writing about skills, identify five types that are relevant to teaching and a firm that “an organized and coordinated pattern of mental and/or physical activity in relation to an object or other display of information usually involving both reciprocal effect or processes.

The philosophy behind this approach is based on the assumption that with practice and mastery of the skills, the teacher will acquire more skills and strategies as an enhancement and innovation for teaching in the pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria. Some skills identified by Allen and Ryan (1969:15) as captured by Dopernu (1990) as ingredient for enhancing innovation in pre-primary and primary education include: Beginning the lesson, set induction, Question skill, planned repetition and stimulus various.

In subsequent paragraphs, attempt will be made to show how the skills may be applied in some class room lesson. Such skills may be used as examples to be as an instructional options available to the teacher. These skills can also be used to encourage discussions about teaching.

1. Beginning the Lesson

It is often said that the way a teacher starts a lesson determines the outcome of the lesson. For a lesson to be successfully accomplished, the teacher can plan and prepare his lesson and use appropriate instructional material in such a way as to motivate his students in the desired direction. There are a number of excellent ways to start a lesson. The important thing is to identify and choose a topic that will best suit the lesson to be taught. For example,

Lesson – Types of toilet in our community/environment

Teacher – present large drawing of toilet systems (water system, pit and bucket system).

Teacher – ask pupils to observe and discuss the toilet system in the pictures in terms of difference and say which one they prefer and ask from their reaction, the teacher proceed with the lesson.

In teaching this lesson, the teacher may present to the class three large drawings toilet system (water, the bucket and the pit systems) currently used in the country. The teacher will then ask the student to state the observed differences and say why they will prefer one to the other. After some

discussions, the students would have listed a number of observed differences. The teacher can then proceed on the lesson after generating the student's interest.

Example II

The revision of previous lesson and preparing the stage for current lesson. For example:

- i. Previous lesson – Air pollution- the teacher ask question based on the lesson he taught previously.
- ii. Current lesson – Water pollution – at the end of the questioning, teacher introduces the current lesson.

Example III

The presentation to the students of an idea or a concept that they can integrate subsequent materials: for instance:

- iii. Concept – Love
- iv. Subsequent materials – love for mankind, love for one's country; love for animals etc.

2. Set Induction

Set induction is pre-instructional techniques designed to capture the students attention and their immediate involvement in the lesson. Set induction goes beyond mere lesson presentation. Its main function is that it serves as a point of references around which the pupils and the teacher communicate.

A weak set will attract a weak pupil's response. For example, if a teacher says to the pupil "As home work against tomorrow lesson read chapter three of your history textbook", the chances are that half of the pupils will not read. The reason is that the teacher's direction lacked motivation, information, and guidance. Suppose chapter three were on the Nigeria Civil war, the teacher could take a different approach saying "As home work against class discussion, read chapter three of your history textbook'. Look for the cause of the Nigeria Civil War and compare them with the American Civil War you have learned. Equipped with such instructional goal, the pupil, are better informed and prepared for class discussion the following day. Usually set induction occurs at the beginning of the lesson, but it may also occur during the session. For example:

a. Lesson-Density and Specific Gravity

Teacher: Puts a cube of ice into two of the beakers filled with a clear liquid. In one beaker the cube floats, in the other it sinks.

Pupil: Show surprise and ask the teacher the reason for the phenomenon

Teacher: Throws back the question at the pupil and ask for their possible explanation of the observation. After a few trials, discussion leads to lesson on Density and Specific Gravity.

b. Lesson – The Good Samaritan

The teacher ask his pupils what they would do if, on travelling to their village, they should see a sickly dejected person lying on the way side. After a few response like-

- a. I will give him alms
- b. I will take him to the hospital, etc. the teacher can then introduce the lesson on Good Samaritan

From the given example, it is seen that in each case, the lesson topic is introduced after the teacher's set induction. The remarkable feature in this style of instructional approach is that the pupils are unconsciously subscribing for a lesson they anxiously wait to know. They know half of the teachers job have been done, and students interest in what they see as their own lesson, is most like to be sustained throughout the period of the lesson as an enhancement and innovation in teaching and learning in the pre-primary and primary education.

3. Questioning Skill

As instructional techniques a teacher may ask questions to find out how much pupils remember about a subject, or to ascertain whether or not they have read an assignment. He may even ask questions to generate interest in a topic or prepare his student mind against classroom activities. There are a lot of reasons for classroom questioning but its main effect dependent on the way and the extent to which it causes pupils to think. However, once a teacher identifies what kind of thinking he wants his pupils to do, he can by a skilful questioning techniques, lead his pupils along the desired direction. There are many types of questioning skills. Examples of some of them are probing, higher order, divergent questions etc. These are explain thus below;

- a. **Probing Questions:** Very often, teachers ask question which require 'Yes' or 'No' answer from their pupils. Such very narrow questions demands a very little thought from the pupils. Unlike other questions, probing questions depend on the pupils? Responses which mean that rarely are the prepared ahead for the lesson. Once the teacher has obtained a pupils response to his first question, he probe the question to see how well the pupils can justify his answer. For example

Lesson – Death

Teacher: Class; define death? Yes Audu

Audu: Death occurs when the brain ceases to function

Teacher: (probe Audu's response) well done Audu, what of when a person has a stroke and is not able to think but his is alive?

This probing go as beyond telling Audu that his first answer is not correct but prompt him to respond by relating the issue of brain with stroke to show that life can exist even when the brain is not functioning.

- b. **Higher Order Question:** There are questions which cannot be answered from mere recall of information or facts contained in the teachers' lesson or in a textbook. They are intended to prompt

pupils to perceive causes and effects, to compare and contrast, to use ideas rather than remember them, to make inferences and/or to solve problems among others.

Higher order questions perform four specific functions namely evaluation, inference, comparing, and problems solving. Higher order questions are understood and used appropriately, will serve as ingredient of enhancement and innovation in teaching quantitative and verbal reasoning that is found in pre-primary and primary school today.

c. Divergent Questions

Sometimes called creative questions, divergent questions are characterized by the fact that there is no one correct answer to them. These types of questions require pupils to use both abstract and concrete thinking to determine for themselves an appropriate response. Pupils are free to explore the problem in whatever direction they prefer. They are asked to think creatively, to live the uncomfortable confines of the known and reach out for the unknown. This is often less comfortable for the teacher than it is for the pupils, since the answers he receives cannot be classified as right or wrong. This aspect of divergent questioning is perhaps the most fascinating and challenging since both the teacher and the students free themselves to explore hypotheses and possibilities. Some examples include the following:

- a. What might happen to our bodies if we drink dirty water?
- b. What might happen if there are no leaders in our schools?
- c. If you were the head boy of the school what will you do to stop late coming in the school?

4. Use of Examples

An abstract idea is easier to understand when it is related to concrete illustration. If the teacher cannot provide an illustration, the pupils may be unable to comprehend the idea, and they may wonder if the teacher himself understands it. Because concrete images are necessary for understanding new and difficult concepts using examples as teaching skills and strategies will help to concretize thereby promoting good teaching and learning in the pre-primary and primary education.

There are two main approaches to the use of examples – the deductive and the inductive approach.

Deductive approaches consist of three basic steps. In the first step, the teacher states the idea or the principles he wants his students to understand. Next he gives examples which illustrate or clarifies the idea. This may be done orally by way of analogy or metaphor, or by way of written or visual aid, experimenting, or solving of a problem and finally, relate the examples back to the idea.

a Deductive Analogy

Suppose the teacher's idea is armoured car. He defines armoured car as a battle or combat vehicle with metallic protective covering, but still his pupils do not understand. The teacher's question revealed that all his pupils have either seen or handled tortoise or lobster before. By analogy, he states the similarity between tortoise or lobster shell and armoured car, and then relates the example back to

the idea (armoured car). It should be noted that an analogy usually highlights' similarities between a thing that is already known or understood and a thing that is not, thus bridging the gap between the known and the unknown as per example giving above.

b. Deductive Metaphor

The teacher in his example to show how brave a soldier was in a battle may state metaphorically – “He was a lion in the battle of Dunkirk”.

Other examples are –

- a. His hand is a hammer (as hard as)
- b. He rules with an iron hand (with authority of an autocrat)
- c. She is a dynamite (will explode at the slightest provocation).

A metaphor suggest resemblance and it is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable

c. Inductive Approach

In the inductive approach use of example, the teacher does not start with the idea, rather he starts with the example illustrating the idea. After studying the idea, the pupils try to generalize and make inference. If they fail to arrive at the idea, then either they may have not induced correctly or the examples were misleading. This illustrated below:

Teacher: Makes a rough sketch of a problem he wants his pupils to solve

Teacher: Now class, listen to sound of the generator as we use it on a photocopier and answer the *question*. A paper placed on the photocopier and the bottom is pressed the second of the generator increases. Once the paper is remove, the sound of the generator becomes normal. If place another paper for photocopying, the sound will increase. When you remove the sound is normal. What would you say causes the sound to increase?

Abubakar: When you are photocopying

Teacher: that's correct Abubakar

In this example it can be seen that Abubakar's induction on the observed fact that the generator sound increases you are photocopying if not the sound of the generator remain constant. This induction, reasoning from observed experience to general truth

5. Planned Repetition

Teachers are surprised and sometimes annoyed that despite their time and their effort pupils hardly remember even the important ideas or points emphasized in the class. A teacher, who feels that mere reminding the pupils of the lesson or discussion will inspire recall, some will assume that learning apparently, did not occur. The question then is why? Could it be that he did not communicate clearly and completely or that the pupils were not attentive? But among other possibilities could also be the fact that “over learning” did not take place. For example, the teacher has asked his pupils to memorize a verse in the holy book, against the following week. If by then, they can all memorize

without a mistake, they can be said to have learned the memory verse, but if one in the class continues to memorize from the verse beyond the initial point of memory, he has excelled the rest in the class by over learning the memory verse. A pupil who adopts this practice in his study material will obviously retain such materials longer than if he stops after the first mastery.

Over learning should not be construed for rote learning. It is best applied and useful when a teacher plans to repeat main ideas, the key facts or concepts to enable his pupils over learn the materials. Repetition can be applied in a number of situations and in different ways. In a mathematics class, it can be used in solving similar problems. However, there are four patterns of literal repetition which will be treated here.

a. Simple Repetition

Simple repetition occurs when ideas or statements are repeated immediately after initial lesson presentation. This can be illustrated as follows:

Lesson – Measurement of heat of neutralization of a strong acid against a strong base 1

Teacher: The most important point to remember about this process is that, first you take initial temperature of the solution, secondly, you mix the solutions, and thirdly, you take the final temperature of the mixture. Amina, what is the first thing you will do?

Amina: I will take the initial temperature of the solution

Teacher: Good Amina, Fatima what is the next thing to do?

Fatima: I mix the solution

Teacher: right, now than Dan what is the last step?

Dan: I take the final temperature of the mixture

Teacher: That's fine, let's begin

b. Spaced Repetition

This is introduced at different intervals during a lesson by repeating the key words or concepts periodically during the lesson. By this process, the teacher increases the chances that the pupils will remember them and that relearning them will occur. For example

1. Lesson – Demand and Supply

Teacher: In the wage theory of demand and supply, an increase in the wage rate of labourers reduces the number of labourers demanded for labour

Teacher: The main reason why the wage rate falls is that the supply of labour is greater than the demand. The primary reason why the wage rises is that the demand for labour is greater than the supply.

c. Cumulative Repetition

Cumulative repetition of all previous facts or concepts in the sequence before new ones is introduced. It is mainly useful when the teacher is treating the advantages or the disadvantages or the

main idea of event. However, cumulative repetition should be used sparingly. If applied often, it can be extremely monotonous. This can be illustrated as shown below:

I. Lesson: Factors affecting population distribution in the far Northern Region

Teacher: A number of physical features affect the distribution of population in the far Northern Region. The first and the most important is desert encroachment. Besides desert encroachment, is the effective communication network. Thus far we have talked about desert encroachment and effective communication. A final factor is the soil fertility.

d. Massed Repetition

In massed repetition, all the main facts or ideas are repeated together as a sequence. It may be used by the teacher as a summary to conclude the lesson or whenever he feels a summary is necessary. The following illustrations are presented for more clarification:

i. Lesson – Group Served by Vocational Agriculture

Teacher: In our lesson today, we have discussed the three well recognized groups served by Vocational Agriculture for Farming. First is the secondary school youth preparing for farm Second, the out of school young men or women employed or engaged in farming; third, the absorption of food; and fourth, the elimination of waste food materials

ii. Lesson: - Digestion in Humans

In our discussion today, we have talked about four steps in digestion. First was the intake of food, second, the breakdown of food, third, the absorption of food: and fourth, the elimination of waste food materials.

6. Stimulus Variation

Teachers have at one time or the other been put to sleep by at least a lecturer/teacher who will rigidly stand behind a table to read his lecture. Unless his lesson was particularly interesting, he held no one's complete attention. Teachers should understand that most youngsters cannot sustain their attention for long, and do lose interest after a certain period of time. The reason is that most often the stimulus is too weak to keep them awake. Good teachers will vary learning activities and teaching style with new stimuli to keep their students interested.

Here are some skills and strategies as postulated by E. E. Nkana in Ibe-Bassey (1986). Those varieties of action-producing patterns if incorporated into their teaching style, teaching and learning in the pre-primary and primary school will be enhanced for higher education.

A. Movement Highlight

If one sit or listen for too long, one gets bored. To overcome this, sometimes we pace up or down for a while or interact with others before returning to our seat. But before the listening pupils, the situation is different. The teacher must provide some kind of the variety to dispel this boredom. He can move from the front to the side or back of the class, such movements will create some sensory

adjustment within his pupils and keep their attention level high. Other examples include gestures such as hand, head and body movements which are considered important in oral communication. By occasionally writing on the board, pointing to an object with verbal emphasis, the teacher is enhancing his communication with these gestural cues and cracking jokes and tapping of pupils.

B. Interaction

There are three main interaction styles the teacher can use during any teaching/learning activities. They are:

- a. Teacher – group
- b. Teacher – student; and
- c. Student – student

While the three may be used during one lesson presentation, excessive use of one may make the lesson dull

- a. Teacher/group: The teacher/lecturer demonstrate to all the student, and when he ask questions, he ask them as whole group, and not specific students
- b. Teacher/student: The teacher directs a statement or a question to individual student. He may probe the student's response to make him justify his answer, thereby prolonging the interaction
- c. Student/student: The teacher refrains from commenting on a student's response by redirecting it to another student for comment or clarification or he may ask one student to explain something to another student

Careful and proper use of this interactive style will vary the context within which the material is presented, thus increasing student attention level for enhancing and innovating pre-primary and primary education higher education in Nigeria.

C. Pausing

Most public speakers use silence to draw attention from their listeners, but fortunately teachers does not use this device as often as they should because perhaps they are afraid of it. Effect of silence varies with circumstances and may accomplish different desirable objectives. When silence is deliberately introduces into lesson presentation, student become more attentive. Silence acts like a fresh stimulus, and as a distinctive pause, it prepares the student for the statement by the teacher. For example, if the teacher purses after stating a principle for solving a problem say in arithmetic, his student will strain for cues as to what is coming up next. Silence can be used to affect order or attention in a class. The teacher's pause, coupled with facial expression, will prompt students to pay attention as they cannot predict the teachers' next move.

D. Focusing

Very often during lesson demonstration teacher may want the pupils to think towards a specific direction point. The act of doing so is called "focusing". Examples of verbal focusing are:

- a. Pay special attention to this
- b. Look at the picture on page 6 of your English text book4
- c. Listen very careful to this

d. Now there is something really important

E. Shifting modes of Communication

When a teacher moves from verbal communication to gestures, the students must naturally switch from ears to eyes. When this occurs the adjustment will induce a high level of attention. It should be noted that the above cannot be achieved if proper Micro-teaching during training is not conducted. Proper micro-teaching is done if only the student/teacher is drilled thoroughly through mini-teaching (MT) and actual teaching practice. Researcher such as Cooper and Allen (1995), Adams & Bridle (1970), Gardner and Rotlan (1969), IB- Bassev (1986), Ohucher and Izuwah (1998) Agusiobo Udegde (2002) and a host of others have all asserted that a well conducted micro-teaching is of great relevance in helping a teacher acquire skills and strategies.

It is generally said that teaching is an art. This is very true in the sense that, the complexities in the teaching art are not only so challenging but tasking. This paper therefore tries to bring out some teaching skills and strategies that will enable teachers in the act of teaching in the pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria.

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