
TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL CHOICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains about the instructional strategies used by the teachers handling the middle grades. Though there are lots of instructional strategies available for teaching, the choice of teaching method basically depends on how much creative a teacher is. Based on a quantitative survey this paper analyzes the different teaching methods used and the preference of a teacher in using certain strategies in teaching. To measure this, the researcher used a Likert Scale with four points. This paper concludes that the teachers' most preferred methods of teaching are definitely the methods that include student involvement.

Keywords: *pedagogy, middle level education, instructional strategy.*

PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING

Today pedagogy is defined in a number of ways. Previously pedagogy was greatly seen as the teacher's perception of handling children. But today there has been a great shift in this. Pedagogy provides a wide range of teaching and learning methods. The approach to teaching greatly depends on the changes in the concept of education. The creativeness of a teacher plays a great role in determining the instructional strategy used.

Due to the development of science and technology, there has been a vast replacement in the use of instructional strategies. Simply transmitting non problematic facts into the minds of people that was done earlier is slowly changing. Memorizing and rote-learning were primarily used strategies for teaching and learning. 21st century education is seeing a vital growth which is mainly supported by the information and communication technology.

Constructivism in education showers a lot of solutions when it comes to educational reform. The status of a teacher must change from instructing students to facilitating or guiding them. This constructivism in a teacher enables her to assist and guide the student to achieve greatest possible

developments. The teacher must enable the student to examine the pre-conceived images and help them to integrate new information which is the only way to acquire knowledge.

As said earlier, pedagogy is viewed differently and possessed different perspectives. Teachers' view of pedagogy is different from that of a policy maker. The interaction between a teacher and the student in the classroom received attention in the next phase. Urban classroom life was detailed in many research works. Kounin(1977) highlights the complexities in a classroom life that remained influential over the next few decades.

Instead of functioning like a learning factory, schools and colleges must function like a learning organization. Only then pedagogy will be considered as the conscious activity in one person influences learning part in the other person, Mortimore(1997).

But Alexander(2000) criticizes that pedagogy is not only limited to the action of teachers. Teaching is an act but pedagogy is both act and discourse. Pedagogy encompasses the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape it. Over a period of time there were many definitions coming up for pedagogy. Toplis (2011) says that there is no established teaching method of approach that can be followed or adopted since explaining or forecasting certain phenomena is a mixture of logical thinking and imagination.

Cerghit, Cristea and Panisoara (2008) A teaching method is an effective way of organising and guiding learning, a common way of procedure that unites a teacher's and a students' efforts. Manak and Svec (2003), a teaching method represents a dynamic element in teaching, which compared with the content and organizational forms changes relatively rapidly and adapts to new circumstances and objectives. Harmer (1998), talk about teaching methods as a specifically didactic activity of the subject and object of teaching, developing the educational profile of a student, while acting educationally, in terms of training and educational objectives and in accordance with teaching and educational principles.

Kumar (2004) says that the traditional classroom with one teacher teaching students was mainly one way of communication is no longer effective in modern times due to dynamic nature of society. The change should be brought in teaching learning situation. So there is a need to introduce modern teaching learning process through improved means of educational technology.

Kosar (2003) investigated the effects of cooperative learning on the achievement of 7th class students in the subject of Social Studies. The sample comprised 40 students of 7th class equally placed in experimental group and control group on the basis of scores obtained in the social studies annual examination. In this experiment of two weeks, cooperative learning resulted in higher achievement as compared to routine method of teaching social studies.

Lee (1997) studied the effects of group learning on student academic achievement. A sample of 66, fifth grade female students were randomly assigned to two experimental groups: a co-operative learning group and a traditional learning group. Results showed that the co-operative learning group had greater gain in achievement and had positive attitude towards school than the traditional learning

group. Cooperative instructional methods may thus be viable for changing traditional methods of instruction.

Spurlock (2001) made an attempt to study the impact of student centered instructional approach on high school students' motivation, academic performance and autonomy. The teacher participants used discussion method in teaching learning process. The findings indicated that students felt a sense of autonomy and were likely to score high marks in exam. Thus the student centered teaching approach helped students to develop positive school experiences and being motivated in the class and feeling competent in their abilities.

A study on "Exemplary Social Studies Teachers Use of Computer-Supported Instruction in the Classroom" conducted by Acikalin (2010) in U.S. This study was designed to examine the use of exemplary social studies teachers' computer-supported instruction in the classroom. Case study methodological approach was used for this study. Four exemplary social studies teachers who use computer-supported instruction in their teaching practices were selected as participants. It was found that all the participants agreed that the computer is a powerful research tool which facilitates students' to learn faster and easier. The participants used various types of computer supported instruction in their classrooms. The use of the Internet and software programs such as Microsoft Power Point, Word, and Excel were the most common use of computer-supported instruction in the classrooms teaching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is designed using a quantitative survey. The sample consisted of 50 middle grade teachers. The teachers handling classes 6th, 7th and 8th were the respondents from Karur union schools. Random stratified sampling was used to select teachers from this geographic location so as to obtain teachers from medium and large schools. A self designed questionnaire was used that comprised of more than thirty teaching methods listed. The preferences of teachers on the various teaching methods were rated on a four point Likert scale ranging from most preferred to least preferred.

From the results obtained we could see that the preference of teachers was high for the student oriented activities. The methods that included the involvement of students triggered more response from the teacher's side. We can understand that the strategies followed constructivist approach. Comprehensive teaching strategies were likely to be utilized. Lecture method was least preferred by teachers. The most preferred instructional strategies that teachers used were Demonstration, Role Play, Project and Simulation. Parallel to these methods Experiment and Discussion were also highly preferred by teachers.

Teacher’s preferred choice of instructional strategies

<i>Instructional Strategies</i>	Preference	Preference in %
Lecture	3	7.1
Demonstration	6	11
Question & Answer	5	10
Problem Solving	4	7
Observation	4	7.2
Debate	3	3.6
Brainstorming	3	2
Role Play	7	10
Experiment	6	17
Memorization	2	4
Projects	7	17
Discussion	6	12
Future’s wheel	3	6.4
Buzz group	3	5
Simulation	6	12

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the results obtained we could see that the teachers prefer strategies that are in line with the 21st century teaching methods. The choice on the instructional strategies shows us that they are aware of the current trends in teaching. But from the data obtained from several other researches proves that the methods practiced while teaching are not in par with the preferred methods of teaching.

This is mainly because of the pressures from the society and the examination system followed in this Karur district restricts the teachers from using their preferred methods in teaching. If methods that include adequate student participation are employed in teaching then the outcome will be quality

education in this zone. For this school management and the society must understand that simply memorizing facts and reproducing them in the examination doesn't pave way students' enrichment of knowledge. One must encourage participatory and collaborative learning practices in schools.

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