



Quality Improvement in Teacher Through ICT Awareness

DR. MEHALI R. DESAI

Assistant Professor,

Swami Narayanswarup B.Ed. College, Ankleshwar

Gujarat--India

Abstract:

Today we do not need to go any further than our own home or even room, to see some form of ICT in our lives. Whether it be a computer, plasma TV, or mobile phone, we all have them in some part of our lives. In today's society, people as consumers of ICT, all strive for the one dream – the dream of a connected life. This makes ICT a lifestyle choice for much of the population. In addition, this lifestyle choice is changing the way we communicate, increasing the rate of consumerism, and changing how we interact and gather information (Sherringham, Dec 2008/Jan 2009). ICT has invaded and transformed many aspects of our lives to the extent that we live in an environment that is dominated by technology which itself is consumer-driven (Semenov, 2005). No matter how we perceive its presence, there is no denying that it is an important part of our lives and that it is here to stay.

Keywords: *ICT, Technology, Instruction, Information, Awareness*

1. Introduction

With the country going into a new millennium, the demand for original science and technology is increasing. In developing society, it is not just enough to provide student with more and more, but it is also important to develop scientific temper through proper instructional method. Instruction, as has generally been understood, involves both teaching as well as management. A teacher, for instance, when he tries to restrict mass answering and demands responses from individual students, is acting the role of a manager while his very act of putting questions to the student on the content being taught is an act of teaching. As Hudgins (1971) notes, in instructional situations, the two are so inextricably intertwined that it is difficult to tell one from the other. While lecture, discussion, demonstration, questioning, illustration, using teaching aids, etc. belong to the domain of teaching, planning, organization, directing and controlling, etc. belong to management.

Instruction, thus, is composed of a large number of competencies pertaining to both teaching as well as management. Knowledge of subject matter, ability to analyze the content to be taught, skill in sequencing the content, ability to spell out instructional objectives in crystal. clear terms, selecting appropriate techniques, methods and media, encouraging active participation on the part of the pupils, giving the required reinforcement, ability to communicate fluently and with clarity, achieving effective closure, ability to assess pupil achievement, etc. are part of the repertoire of instructional competencies in which every teacher trainee is expected to have mastery in order to be an effective and efficient teacher.

There is no royal road to effective instruction. Nor is there a set of competencies that could be used uniformly at all occasion to all kinds of learner groups. No two learning situations are alike and therefore any learning situation is unique. Hence, to deal with any situation, an instructional design suited to that situation in question need to be evolved to be effective and efficient. This is possible only when sufficient awareness of instruction is present in the teacher.

Every successful teacher, therefore, needs to have the required insight over his tools of the trade - a repertoire of techniques-that can be called upon when needed. A proper tool in the hands of a talented artisan is an indispensable means for translating an inspired vision or a useful idea into something beautiful and practical. Like an artisan, teachers need both models and tools. In addition to the essential theory, aims and goals, they require the vision or pattern or what is to be created. They must gain such visions and patterns through study, reflection, trial and error. etc. In short, every teacher needs to build up essential instructional awareness so that he would be in a position to use his tools successfully and with expertise in making his craft a success.

2. Different ways of creating awareness among the teachers

So far, we have noted that building up a strong instructional awareness in every teacher is necessary to enable him do his task in the most effective ways possible. Now let us proceed to find some of the ways through which this can be done.

Gebhard (1992) explains some of the approaches for building up such awareness in teachers especially in those who are novices in this field. According to her, (1) self -observation, (2) observation of other teachers teaching, (3) action research and (4) teacher journals are some of the fine approaches to awareness raising with regard to instruction. Now let us discuss at length and see how each of these approaches could bring about instructional awareness in teachers.

3. Self-Observation

It may not be possible all the time for a teacher to observe himself while he is engaged in teaching. However, he can video or audio-tape his own teaching and review the tape. In doing so he might take, the help of a tally sheet or may resort to taking descriptive notes or make short transcripts of the classroom interaction for study. This will provide the teacher with the requisite insight into his own teaching behavior. However, this method of awareness building is not without its own limitations. As Jersild (1955) points out learning about oneself as a teacher can be threatening for many reasons and this can result in the kind of anxiety that blocks teachers from looking at aspects of their teaching that are problematic.

Despite this limitation, the importance of self-observation as a tool for awareness building cannot be overlooked. Remember that, as a teacher, you possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. You can be a tool for torture as well as an instrument of inspiration. You have the power to humiliate or honor; hurt or heal. Your ways of blaming and shaming, preaching and moralizing, ordering and bossing, ridiculing or belittling, diagnosing or prognosing, as Ginott (1972) puts it, can brutalize, vulgarize and even dehumanize children. Observing your own teaching "behavior would tell in terms unambiguous whether or not with your acid tongue and caustic comments you deflate the self-esteem of your pupils and block their learning; whether or not you label and embarrass them. in public; whether or not you give them gloom warning and doom predictions, etc. It would again tell you whether or not you resort to power-talk and issue commands; whether or not you invite collaboration and reduce resistance; whether or not give them greater autonomy and freedom and whether or not they are made to feel accepted and respected, etc.

Your own observation of your instructional behavior will tell you in unambiguous terms whether or not you need to unlearn your own habitual language of rejection and acquire a new language of acceptance. In short, it may be noted that no small is the gain that you attain as a result of the awareness you have acquired as a result of your self -observation of your own instructional behavior.

4. Observing Other Teachers' Teaching

Another way through which you can gain awareness is by watching other teachers in action. This may sound a little paradoxical initially. However, as Fanselow (1988) points out, teachers can see their own

teaching in the teaching of others and when teachers observe others to gain self-knowledge, they have the chance to construct and reconstruct their own knowledge.

While observing others in action, you may use a checklist in which you check off behaviors as they occur or you may use a schedule that "tally" behaviors. The latter works like a checklist except that each time a behavior is observed, a tally mark is used. With the help of such tools, you can note the instructional habits of other teachers. For example, take the behavior of putting questions. As you watch, you can note the number of questions being asked, whether they are being directed to the whole class or to individual students, whether these were responded by individual students or groups, whether or not the responses were made by a few venturing ones seated in front of the class or more pupils participate in the process. This again enables you observe whether or not the questions asked mainly belong to the recalling type or they pass beyond this area to the still higher realms of the cognitive domain such as application, evaluation and appreciation, etc. and whether or not the questions asked are mostly of the convergent(closed) type or of the divergent(open) type, etc.

Thus, by observing others in the process of instruction, you as a teacher can attain deeper insight into the various competencies involved and their nature and utilization. The awareness being gained can gradually and steadily lead you to be a fully-pledged and seasoned teacher.

5. Action Research

Action research is yet another approach to awareness building. Gebhard (1992) defines action research as a "Self-reflective inquiry initiated by teachers for the purpose of improving their classroom practices!

Action research involves several steps. According to Strickland (1988), it involves

1. Identification of an issue
2. Seeking knowledge,
3. Identification of action,
4. Implementing the action,
5. Observing the action,
6. Reflecting over your observations and
7. Revising the plan.

Action research involving these steps, as Allwright and Bailey (1991) point out, can allow those of you who wish to investigate events in your classrooms to take constructive steps towards solving immediate problems by systematically reflecting on the outcome.

Any of us who are concerned with instruction is likely to confront several problems related to our instruction. For example, students may complain that your instruction is boring, that it lacks clarity, that you dominate the classroom so much that they get hardly any opportunity to talk, etc. Similarly, you may notice that your students are not receptive, that they are vociferous, that they are undisciplined, etc, all such problems are fit enough to be subjected to action research.

When several problems such as the ones mentioned above crop up simultaneously, you may have to deal with them on priority basis and not all at once. That which needs immediate solution should be given prior consideration. While taking decisions about what to investigate, you may be tempted to take up issues that allow easy observation, counting and recording. As Allwright and Bailey (1991) emphasize, it is important for teachers to go beyond simple tasks and to address real issues and problems in teaching even if they are difficult.

Now, let us take one of the problems mentioned earlier, namely that your teaching lacks clarity, that you are boring and see to some extent how you will go about with action research related to it. Try to reflect over the issues for quite sometime and then come out with a list of questions pertaining the issue

which you hope to solve. You may, for instance, jot down such questions related to the issue as :Am I word poor? Do my words run together that they fall to communicate? Are there several errors in my pronunciation and grammar? Is my speech stumbling and hesitant reflective of confusion? Or is it clear and confident, expressive of mastery? Is my pitch too low to be heard? Is the volume of my speech sufficient enough to be audible to all? Is my use of inflection (variation of pitch within words spoken) helpful in communicating what I speak? Is the quality of my tones appropriate to the situation in question? Do I enunciate properly? Do I deal with topics that are pertinent and interesting to students? Do I use the language appropriate to their level of understanding? These and several other questions related to the issues may be raised for consideration.

After having made a list of questions related to the issues such as above, the next step is to outline a plan that you believe will give you satisfactory answers to your questions and help you solve the problem. Once these done, put the plan into action and see how it works.

6. Teacher Journals

Maintaining a journal or a diary report of your daily instructional behavior also can help you gain awareness. Bailey (1990) defines a teaching journal as "a first-person account of teaching experience documented through regular candid entries... and then analyzed for recurring of salient events." Bailey points out that teacher must feel free to reflect, criticize, doubt, express frustration and raise questions in the journal. In the absence of these, she feels that the main benefits personal development and insight about instruction would be negated. The teacher should not only make entries in the journal soon after teaching and also systematically analyze the entries at an interval of every few weeks.

According to Bailey (1990) a teacher who seeks the help of journal entries to gain awareness may follow such steps as follows:

1. Provide an account of personal learning and teaching history,
2. Systematically record events, feelings etc. about the current teaching experience,
3. Revise the journal entries for a public version of the journal, clarifying meaning in the process,
4. Study the journal entries looking for patterns and significant events,
5. Interpret and discuss those factors identified as being important.

As Bailey puts it, "in reworking, rethinking and interpreting the entries, teachers can gain powerful insights into their own classroom behavior and motivation.

7. Importance of Instruction Awareness Building

We have so far discussed some of the approaches that may be resorted to for the purpose of awareness building. Now let us have a brief sojourn over its importance.

- It is generally experienced that teachers do not often do what they think they do in their classrooms (Fanselow 1988; Gaies and Bowers 1990; Richards 1990; Swaffar, et al 1982). By proper means of awareness building, teachers can experience and see whether or not this is true. When they realize that there is gap between what they actually do as opposed to what they think they do in the classroom, they will be in a position to narrow the gap by conscious effort. For this instructional awareness is very important.
- Teaching awareness can provide the teacher with the required insight that would help him find the relationship between his teaching behavior and consequences of these behaviors upon A pupils. As Gobhard (1992) notes, the more the awareness a teacher has about impacts, the greater the control he can put over his teaching so that his pupils could gain better.
- Reflection is an important component in the development of teaching skills (Bartlett (1990; Zeichner 1982). Awareness provides the teacher with the required insight to reflect critically on his teaching. As Richards (1990) notes, this will allow him to move from a level where he is guided mostly by impulse, intuition or routine to a level in which his actions are guided by critical thinking.

- Awareness about instruction can help a teacher grow into a fine professional. As Allwright and Bailey (1991) note, awareness about instruction on the part of the teacher can direct him "for the sake of improving learners' chances of making good progress! More or less the same view has been expressed by Eills (1986) too. To her, the assumption that underlies the use of awareness raising practices is in that the practice of actual teaching can be improved.

8. Conclusion

Instruction, as conceived here, is composed of competencies pertaining to both teaching as well as management. To be a good instructor or teacher, therefore, means to have adequate awareness over these competencies. A teacher, as already noted, can gain awareness of instruction by using such approaches as self-observation, observation of other teachers teaching, action research and teacher journal. Awareness as envisaged here, means empowerment. The more interest a teacher takes in gaining awareness of how he teaches, the more informed he becomes, and as a result the more capable he becomes in directing his own instructional practices toward successful student learning. What is, therefore, expected of every teacher is to take up any of these approaches as the situation in question demands and build up as much awareness as possible so that he can translate his inner visions into reality thereby helping his pupils achieve maximum of their talents.

Reference

1. Allwright, D. and Bailey, K.M. (1991). Focus on the language Classroom. New York : Cambridge University Press.
2. Bailley, K.M (1990). Diary Studies in Teacher Education Programs. In Second Language Teacher Education ed J.C. Richards and D. Nunan. New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Bartlett, L (1990). Teacher Development through Reflective Teaching. In Second Language Teacher Education, ed C.J. Richards and D. Nunan. NewYork; Cambridge University Press.
4. Ellis, R. (1986). Activities and Procedures for Teacher Preparation, *ELT Journal*, 40, 2, pp.92-99
5. Fanselow, J.F. (1988). 'Let's see': Contrasting Conversation about Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 1, pp 113-20.
6. Gaies, S and Bowers, R (1990). Clinical supervision of language teaching: The Supervisor as Trainer and Educator. In Second Language Teacher Education Od. C.J. Richards and D. Nunan. New York: Cambridge University Press.
7. Gebhard, J.G (1992). Awareness of Teaching: Approaches, Benefits and Tasks, *Forum*. Vol.30.No 4, pp2-7
8. Ginott, H.G (1972). *Teacher and Child*, Avon Books, New York.
9. Hudgins, B.B.(1971). *The Instructional Process*. Rand McNally and Company, Chicago.
10. Jesild, A.T. (1955). *When Teachers Face Themselves*. S,NewYork: Teachers College Press.
11. Richards, J.C. (1990). *The Language Teaching Matrix*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
12. Stricidand, D.S (1988). The teacher as researcher: Toward the Extended Professional Language Arts, 66, pp 754-64.
13. Swaffar, L.K. et al (1982). Teacher Classroom Practice: Redefining method as task hierarchy, *Modern Language Journal*, 66, 24-33.
14. Zeichner, K.M. (1982). Reflective teaching and field- based experience in teacher education. *Interlanguage*, 12,pp. 1-12.