

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER – STUDENT AND TEACHER – TEACHER INTERACTIONS IN A TEACHING/ LEARNING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper assessed the pattern of teacher's interactions in the teaching and learning process. It discussed the interactions involving teacher – student and teacher – teacher based on the related literature.

It was discovered that the pattern of teacher- student interaction in the classroom was mostly talking and that teacher did most of the talking at both secondary and tertiary levels. It was also discovered that teachers were most likely to interact with one another, both individually and within a team about administrative matters but they rarely interacted about teaching strategies or curriculum. It was recommended that in the classroom activities, teachers need to give chance and stimulation to the students to talk and not only interact with the students as a whole class but also with an individual student. By so doing, a silent student will be involved in the interaction, not just the active students. It was also recommended that teachers should not only interact about administrative matters alone but they should also interact about teaching strategies and curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

School is an institution that plays a significant role in the life of a child. Being an active employee in this institution and major implementer of the policies in the institution, a teacher should be democratic, tender, patient, reliable and humorous to his/her students during interaction and communication processes so that the teaching and learning processes are affected positively.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2007) defines interaction as

- 1) A process by which two or more things affect each other.
- 2) The activity of talking to other people, working together with them.

These two definitions of interaction have one thing in common that interaction involves two or more people. Hence interaction in educational system context can be defined as the process of working together of all the stakeholders in education in order to ensure that the objectives of educational system are achieved. Teaching and learning processes involve different patterns of interaction. These include teacher – student interaction, student – student interaction, teacher – teacher interaction, teacher – parent interaction and teacher – administrator interaction.

The focus of this paper is to discuss the interaction involving teacher– student and teacher – teacher based on the related literature.

TEACHER STUDENT INTERACTION:

Students are the most important component of education. Interaction between teacher and students is an essential part of teaching – learning process of education. According to Karadag and Caliskan (2009) “teachers’ interaction, ways of communication and verbal – non- verbal behaviors, class management and activities affect not only students’ behaviors but also teaching system directly”. They stressed that a teacher who always interacts with students is responsible for planning activities of teaching and application. They noted that interaction simplifies the process of communication between teacher and students and provides them with the formation of shared common areas.

Widyaningsil (2009) carried out a study titled "Classroom Interaction in the Teaching and Learning of English at the Twelfth Grade of MANZ Malang". The result showed that in English Classroom, the teacher speech dominates more in the interaction and that there were seven categories of teacher talk, namely

- 1) Dealing with feelings
- 2) Praising and encouraging
- 3) Using ideas of students
- 4) Asking questions
- 5) Giving information
- 6) Giving directions
- 7) Criticizing students' behaviour.

Among these categories, he noted, the fourth category occurs frequently due to the listening materials, which emphasise practicing and drilling of exercise. In responding to the teacher, students use some categories of student talk that includes:

- 1) Students' specific response
- 2) Students' open ended response
- 3) Silence
- 4) Confusion (work oriented)
- 5) Laughter
- 6) Uses of native language

Widyaningsil (2009) concluded that in the teaching – learning process, three patterns of interaction occur, namely

- 1) Teacher – whole class interaction,
- 2) Teacher – student interaction, and
- 3) Student – teacher interaction.

The first pattern of interaction, according to him, occurs frequently among the other patterns since the class activities are focused on the whole class.

He suggested that

- 1) In the classroom activities, the teacher needs to give more chances and stimulation to the students to talk.
- 2) The teacher was suggested not to ask questions to whole class, but to individual student. By so doing, a silent student will also be involved in the interaction, not just the active students.
- 3) The teacher also needs to apply pairs or group work activity so that students can interact with their friends, and do not shy to practice the language.

Hardman, Abd-Kadir and Smith (2009) carried out a study titled "Pedagogical Renewal: Improving the Quality of Classroom Interaction in Nigerian Primary Schools". The study reports on an investigation of classroom interaction and discourse practices in Nigerian Primary Schools. The purpose of the study was to identify key issues affecting patterns of teacher – pupil interaction and discourse. The findings of the study revealed the prevalence of teacher explanation, recitation and rote in the classroom discourse with little attention being paid to securing pupils' understanding.

Lawani and Ifamuyiwa (2008) investigated Interaction Patterns in Mathematics Classroom in some selected Secondary Schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to investigate teachers and students' patterns of interaction in the course of teaching mathematics in some selected secondary schools in Ogun state, Nigeria. The result of the study indicated that the teaching of mathematics has no completely divorced itself from the historical antecedents in which mathematics classroom was dominated by teacher instructions with little or no student participation in the verbal interaction and skill demonstration.

David (2007) carried out a study on "Teachers' Questioning Behaviours and ESL Classroom Interaction Patterns". The study investigated the impact of English Language Teachers' use of Display and Referential Questioning on Teacher – Pupil Interaction in ESL Classroom in selected Secondary Schools from Oyo and Osun States of Nigeria. The results revealed that teachers used Display questions (85%) than Referential question (15%). The results also revealed that Referential questions created less classroom interaction than Display questions.

Inamullar (2005) carried out a study on “Pattern of Classroom Interaction at Different Educational levels in the Light of Flander’s Interaction Analysis”. He used Flander interaction Analysis (FIA). FIA was designed to categorise the types and quantity of verbal interaction in the classroom and to put information on a matrix so that it could be analysed and interpreted. The main objective of his study was to explore patterns of classroom interaction of secondary and tertiary levels in North West Frontier Province of Pakistan using Interaction Analysis System. To achieve the objective, he formulated six hypotheses in the light of Flander two third rule of teacher – student classroom interaction, both at secondary and tertiary levels, namely

- 1) About two-third of classroom time is devoted to talking,
- 2) About two-third of this time the person talking is the teacher, and
- 3) Two-third of the talk is talk.

In order to compare the interaction patterns at secondary and tertiary levels, three additional hypotheses were framed, namely, there is significant difference between teacher talking time at secondary and tertiary levels, there is significant deference between silence time at secondary and higher level. Thus a number of hypotheses were nine.

The results of the study revealed that all the nine hypotheses were supported and it was concluded that both at secondary and tertiary levels, more than two-third of classroom time was devoted to talking, thus talking dominated in classes. The results also showed that more than two-third of the classroom talking time was devoted to teacher’s talking at secondary and tertiary levels, thus the teacher plays the dominant role. More than two-third of teacher’s talking time was devoted for direct talk, which showed the directive role of the teacher at secondary and tertiary levels. Students talk time at secondary and tertiary levels differed in favour of secondary level classes where students talk time was greater than at tertiary level. The talk time of teacher at tertiary level was greater than that of teacher at secondary level. Silence at secondary level was significantly greater than at tertiary level.

Mahlous (2006) investigated “Effects of Teacher-Student cognitive style in patterns of Dyadic Classroom Interaction. He administered a test of cognitive style- field dependence- independence to 47 fifth grade and sixth grade teachers and 357 students. From these, 48 teacher-student dyads were formed so that teachers and students were matched or mismatched on cognitive style and sex. Each dyad was observed for two hours, from which 31 process measures were derived. The result showed that cognitive similarity or dissimilarity in and of itself did not appear closely associated with the interaction patterns. Rather, dyadic interaction seemed to be affected by a combination of factors including cognitive style and sex of both teachers and students, as well as certain contextual factors, the most important of which being whole class versus individual instruction.

Inamullar, Hussain and Nseer Ud Din (2008) carried out a similar study on “Teacher – student Verbal Interaction at Secondary school level using Flander Interaction Analysis”. The sample of the study consisted of 15 randomly selected classrooms at the secondary school level and the number of observed students was 600. The total number of teachers observed was 25. three hypotheses were tested, namely:

- 1) About two-third of classroom time was devoted to talking at the secondary level.
- 2) About two-third of talking time, the person talking was the teacher at secondary school level.
- 3) About two- third of the teacher’s talk was direct at the secondary school level.

The result of the study supported the three hypotheses. They concluded that more than two-third of the classroom time was used in teachers’ talk in the observed classrooms.

Kalu (2006) carried out a study titled “classroom Interaction Patterns and the Students’ Learning Outcomes in Physics. The purpose of his study was to observe and code the interaction patterns during physics lessons and to relate the identified patterns to students’ post-instructional attitude towards physics and achievement in low and high academic tasks. He found out that a significantly positive relationship exists between interaction patterns and students’ post instructional attitude and low academic task achievement.

According to Effandi and Zanaton (2006), two pedagogical limitations have been identified as the major shortcomings in traditional secondary education: lecture-based instruction and teacher-centred instruction. Lecture-based instruction emphasized the passive acquisition of knowledge. In such environment, students become passive recipient of knowledge and resort to rote learning. Majority of work involved teacher talk using either a lecture technique or a simple question and answer that demand

basic recall knowledge from learners. Lecture-based instruction dominates classroom activity with the teacher delivering well over 80% of the talk in most classrooms. Generally, the teacher accepts only correct answers and incorrect answers are simply ignored. Student seldom ask questions or exchange thought with other students in the class. The traditional classroom is also characterized by direct demonstrations and activities to verify previous introduced concepts. Instruction is therefore not conceptual understanding but rather for memorizing and recalling of facts. It must be noted that students who develop conceptual understanding early perform best on procedural knowledge later. Furthermore, students with good conceptual understanding are able to perform successfully on near transfer task and develop procedures and skills they have been taught.

Learner-centred instructional approaches, according to Banon (2008), involve instruction where the teacher is a facilitator (or guide) as the learners construct their own understanding. Examples are:

- 1) Cooperative learning: This involves small heterogeneous student groups working together to solve a problem or complete a task. All students in the group must actively participate with each student maintaining some independence. This teaching method promotes active participation, individual accountability, students' ability to work co-operatively and improvement in social skills.
- 2) Discussion method: This is designed to encourage thinking skills. It allows learners to increase interpersonal skills. Discussion may occur in the classroom or outside the classroom.
- 3) Discovery method: Discovery learning is an inquiry-based learning method in which learners use prior knowledge and experience to discover new information that they use to construct learning. This method is the most successful if the students have prerequisite knowledge and the experience is structured.
- 4) Simulation method: Simulations are used to put the student in a real situation without taking the risks. Simulations are meant to be realistic as possible where students are able to experience consequences of their behaviour and decisions. They are commonly used in social studies and sciences.

In traditional teacher-centred education, the dominance of the teacher takes the stage. The students rely on their teachers to decide what, when, and how to learn. According to Banon (2008), teacher-centred teaching approaches include instruction where the teachers' role is to present the information that is to be learned and to direct the learning process of students. The teacher identifies the lesson objectives and takes primary responsibility for guiding the instruction by explanation of the information and modeling. Examples are:

- 1) **Demonstration method:** This involves the teacher showing students a process procedure such as science process, a cooking procedure or a computer procedure.
- 2) **Direct instruction method:** Direct instruction is used to help student learn concepts and skills. There are various models of direct instruction but all include similar steps, namely,
 - i) introduction and review
 - ii) presentation of new information
 - iii) guided practice
 - iv) independent practice.
- 3) **Lecture method:** Lecture is the most criticized of all teaching methods and the most commonly used because
 - i) planning time is limited
 - ii) lectures are flexible and can be applied to any content
 - and iii) lectures are simple. The most critical fact about lecture is that it puts students in a passive role.

These approaches of instruction work relatively well. However, it is not clear that students are learning at higher conceptual level of thinking.

TEACHER-TEACHER INTERACTION:

Exchange of ideas between teachers and collaborations are vital in teaching and learning process. Collaboration in schools can help to institute team-based and cooperative work structures in both private and public schools.

Little (1990) identifies four areas where teachers interact with each other. These include:

- 1) Informal conversation
- 2) One-on-one assistance
- 3) Routine sharing of materials, methods and ideas

4) Actual joint work.

Little (1990) noted that interdisciplinary teaming and school-within a school arrangement provide opportunity structures for increased teacher collaboration.

Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1995) remarked that collaboration occurs when teachers share instructional strategies and techniques, make decisions about instructional issues, and come up with ideas that enhance learning for all members of the school community. They emphasized that the purpose of all action in a professional community should be the growth and development of all students. Robert and Pruitt (2005) noted that it is through interaction among teachers that professional relationships are developed that encourage teachers to share ideas, learn from one another and help out their colleagues.

According to Legters (1999), studies on teacher-teacher relations reveal however, that sustained and meaningful interaction among teacher is extremely rare achievement in schools. He stressed that in addition to being rare, teacher collaboration is a very complex phenomenon. He reported that there many ways in which teachers may interact in a school, many sites where those interactions may take place and many different topics about which teacher may interact. What constitutes collaboration, and, in particular, what constitutes desirable collaboration, according to Legters (1999) is not a straightforward question. Legters (1999) asserted that collaboration might be distinguished from the broader notion of collegiality. Collegiality denotes the extent to which teachers perceived their colleagues to be generally helpful, supportive, and willing to discuss and work together on substantive matter. Collaboration, on the other hand, is an aspect of this more general concept of collegiality and implies actually working together on a joint project or toward a common goal.

Legters (1999) carried out a case study on “Teacher Collaboration in a Restructuring Urban High School”. The study attempts to deal with high level of complexity that is inherent in concepts of teacher collegiality and collaboration by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the relationships between structural reform and teacher-teacher interactions. The analysis in the report examine a broad sense of collegiality among teachers in schools, as well as more concrete acts of joint work or collaboration. Survey from the case study operationalised teacher-teacher interaction in terms of teachers’ perceptions of their colleagues and school environment. Items include the extent to which teachers feel they can count on colleagues to help out, whether general cooperative effort and cordiality exist among the school staff, and the extent of agreement among faculty about school over all mission. These data also address teachers’ collaboration in terms that ask teachers to characterize how they interact with other during a typical week. Response categories for this set of items are patterned after Little’s (1990) four types of teacher interaction – informal conversation, one-on-one assistance, routine sharing of materials, methods and ideas, and actual joint work.

The result reveals that an upward trend in the frequency of interaction among teachers at Harbor also is dramatically evident in the “very often” category. For one-on-one assistance, nearly three times as many teachers selected “very often” category in the spring (14%) as against in the fall (15%). Routine sharing increased from 15% to 30% and joint work increased from 8% to 20%. The proportion of teachers who “never” or “rarely” held informal conversation with their colleagues dropped from nearly a quarter in May 1995 to only 1% by May 1996, with nearly all of this drop occurring from fall and spring of implementation year. The drop of teacher who “never” or “rarely” participated in one-on-one assistance or routine sharing also dropped below 10% by spring 1996. the result also shows that over half (55%) of teacher respondents at Harbor “never” or “rarely” engaged in joint work with the colleagues prior to restructuring. This proportion decreased to less than one-third by the end of the first year of reform.

The summary of the result revealed that although there has been a general increase in teachers’ general sense of collegiality and in weekly interactions in different ways it appears that the reforms influence the frequency of different types of interactions in different ways. Secondly, the results revealed that instituting the reforms does influence with whom teachers interact and to some extent, the tone of those interactions. In general, teachers tended to turn to the nearest veteran teachers for content guidance and supplies. Thirdly, the teachers were more likely to interact with one another, both individually and within a team, about administrative matters related to activities, grading and credits. Teachers rarely interacted about teaching strategies and curriculum.

CONCLUSION:

Effective teacher-student interaction is vital in teaching-learning process. It simplifies the process of communication between teacher and students and provides them with the formation of a shared common area. Based on the studies reviewed, it can be concluded that the pattern of teacher- student interaction in the classroom was mostly talking and that teacher did most of the talking at both secondary and tertiary levels. The students rely on their teacher to decide what, when and how to learn. It can also be concluded that there is no meaningful interaction among teachers. Teachers only interact about administrative matters and informal conversation but they rarely interact about teaching strategies and curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to make teaching-learning process more effective and productive, teachers need not only to have a good command of the subject but must exhibit a good interaction between the students and among other teachers especially in the area of teaching strategies and curriculum.

In classroom activities, the teacher needs to give more chances and simulation to the students to talk. Students should be given individual attention even when asking questions so that a silent student will be involved in the interaction no just the active students.

Teachers in both secondary and tertiary institutions should adopt constructivism approach to teaching whereby students are expected to be active in the learning process by participating in discussion and collaborative activities.

Teachers at secondary and tertiary institutions should embrace collaboration whereby teachers share instruction strategies and techniques, make decisions about instructional issues and come up with ideas that enhance learning. It is through interactions among teachers that professional relationships are developed that encourage teachers to share ideas, learn from one another and help out their colleagues.

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