Interactive and all Inclusive Teaching as a New Methodology of the Modern Curriculum

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to focus on analyzing and providing answers to the following research questions: How applicable are the new methods of teaching? Why, in some cases, teachers do not apply these modern methods? What must be done to overcome the obstacles and practice interactive teaching? The results of this research are taken through the analysis of interviews conducted with 10 English teachers and questionnaires with 300 students in five high schools in the city of Elbasan, Albania. The schools use Albanian as the medium of instruction and English as a second language. Interactive and all inclusive teaching is increasingly seen as a priority to be applied entirely in Albanian schools because it is not only regarded as an important method for increasing teaching quality but also for the fact that Albania has already entered the irreversible way of the all portfolios implementation approved by the Council of Europe.

Keywords: Curriculum, English language, Interactive Teaching & Learning

1. Introduction

For years in our schools is applied traditional teaching which has been teacher-centered where the teacher was the decision maker and the class manager without taking into account the students' individual characteristics. With the technology advancement, globalization that has included Albania, the teacher does not remain the only source of information for students as it used to happen in our educational system. Then, the teacher was seen as the only source of information but today s/he can not be in the limelight. This way of thinking and acting was in full compliance with the ideology of the country and the need the system had to reproduce personalities who do not think individually and do not openly express their opinion. In terms of a journey of no turning back, a system that requires personalities that have their own voice in the society and think to express themselves freely, management and training is required in interactive and all inclusive teaching. This methodology takes into consideration the fact that how different students are from each other. Each of them has special requirements: perceives, hears, speaks, and thinks differently; therefore each should be given the opportunity to unveil him/herself.

Teachers must create an environment that facilitates students' learning through the implementation of appropriate and various strategies of teaching methods and forms that make students' role to be changed, so the student becomes the main actor and not a mere spectator. To achieve interactive teaching it must necessarily exist the cooperation between teachers and students and take into account both parties' interests. Through interactive teaching, education is faced up with various changes. Nowadays, the school is not only creating but is also facing with generations who require information by themselves, aiming to solve the problems - often faster and better than the teacher. Teachers feel unprepared for the so-called "digital natives" generation. It is proved that students are able to do more than 3-4 actions at the same time. Today, it is the teacher's need to increase capacity, not to suppress them, to stir the desire to be researched in the field and doing the role of the regulator in the class to help students research and select the information they need - bypassing aggressive information.

The moderated teacher makes possible the fulfillment of interactive teaching and learning in the classroom by managing properly, adapting teaching methods and strategies with student in the center and taking into account their individual abilities. Teaching and interactive learning is assessed as highly effective for lifelong learning, but being in its initial steps it is facing a number of difficulties; which are felt on school environments and in teachers' qualifications. In order that interactive teaching can be practiced in the best way, it is needed a relatively long period of time to overcome several difficulties and gain adaptability not only by teachers but also in the existing premises of our schools.

2. Literature Review

According to the researchers, teaching process is an action plan that aims to help one or more individuals, an interpersonal relationship that includes all forms of communication to support in the learning process. Teaching as an action itself tends to give students new knowledge and information about various fields, in order that the student can be able to solve situations in his/her life and make important decisions in a proper way. Then, students were seen as "tabula rasa ". John Lock emphasized that the human mind at birth is like a white board without rules and their knowledge is formed along life experiences and perceptions. So, to some point of view students were seen as objects which could be constructed as one wished. Today, we need to educate students to be free citizens of a democratic society and if we want to achieve this we must treat them as such since they are born. It is not required to exist a stimulus-response phenomenon as the constructivists think; learning requires settlement and construction of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction and not giving them formulas for granted.

How might this way of learning be achieved? - Precisely through teacher-student interaction.

Interaction is a two-way process in which it is important to take into consideration the actual situation and partners' feedback in communication. Interactive teaching is a special form of teaching method. To learn through collaboration is an issue that creates a lively atmosphere in the classroom where students, as a result of cooperation with each other, learn new knowledge and gain experiences through the use of various techniques. Furthermore, in some cases they learn best by cooperating with each other rather than teachers' actions.

Teaching and learning are in function of one another. Certain conditions should be fulfilled in order that this operation is more productive:

- Teaching and learning are student-centered.
- Teachers take into account the interests, trends, and potential development of each student.
- S/He creates opportunities for all children to develop their skills further.
- The teacher's role is that of the manager and facilitator of the learning process.
- The work focuses on the individual, small groups or the whole class.
- Teaching is aimed at developing the knowledge, argued skills and attitudes of the students.
- The teacher helps students construct meaning and new ideas for the basic knowledge they have.
- The student thinks and learns going through several processes such as: recognition, understanding, concentration and application, imagination and creation.

Interactive teaching and learning are urgently required to be spread in our entire education. Researching all of the new school regulations drafted by MAS in these last two decades appears that there is a great priority of the curriculum adaptation with EU standards. In addition to this, as it is emphasised in the National Education Strategy, exactly student centered - active teaching.

A group of interactive teaching elements developed are:

a. Less teacher-directed students.
b. Inclusive teaching.
c. Teaching for learning.
d. Cooperative learning.
e. Learning as a process where knowledge and values are gained.
f. Lifelong learning.
g. Contemporary teaching.

2.1 The teacher's role in interactive teaching

Given that today student-centered teaching is applied, it does not mean that the teacher has lost his/her previous functions. S/he also does not simply stay as "a figure" in the class but now his/her role is more important and difficult than ever. Unlike a traditional teacher who has to teach the lesson most of the time and ask the student to explain what was the lesson about the previous class. Today, the teacher who practices the student-centered method should have much more ability to fulfill the roles. The teacher should have good communication skills and be patient when faced up with a variety of questions coming up from students with different academic level. S/he should know perfectly the subject s/he teaches because students given numerous information would increase their interest to explore further. Besides that, s/he should have general knowledge for other sciences in order to establish connections between them.

Furthermore, the teacher should have good management and leadership skills because in a student-centered

class in which the student must work with different teaching methods, especially in groups, the teacher should be able, within the allotted time, to get all of the students organized. The teacher selects carefully groups of students, plans interactive learning activities, defines teaching & social objectives for a certain group work and controls students' individual progress. The main and more important roles a teacher takes in the learning process are: the lecturer, lesson organizer, teaching leader, partner in communication, motivational and assessment. Some elements one should consider when organizing activities to achieve interactive learning are:

- *Planning activities*: The teacher decides how many skills or concepts should be explained and how to be better learnt in collaboration or individually. S/he should provide the necessary tools to teach the class properly.
- *Monitoring and evaluation progress of the students in a group or individually*: the teacher assesses subject progress, productivity, emotional status of the students and social functioning of the working groups.
- *Supporting faith spirit, unity and responsibility*: the teacher helps to reduce their stress levels and workload, teaching them to help each other in learning and organizatinal tasks enabling them to control each – other's progress.

The teacher's role in interactive teaching classes is related to the requirements, questions, tasks and feedback that the teacher has and does to promote interaction in the teaching environment. Some of them are:

- The teacher asks a question, gives verbal or non-verbal messages and answers them.
- Gives opinions, judgments and encourages students to express their opinions and judgments.
- Provides advice for the carried out activities in the classroom or as required by the students themselves.
- Encourages, pushes teacher - student and student-student interaction.
- Facilitates class discussions and plays a specific role in the discussion.
- Matches the curriculum content with current knowledge and experience of the students.
- Accepts students' feedback regarding to the subject and enables them to be free in asking, building and experimenting with the new curriculum.
- Leads further students' opinions.

2.2 Students' role in interactive teaching and learning

Students are the main participants in the learning process. Teaching and interactive learning are in function of them to be well educated and informed. This is the reason why attention in interactive learning is mostly concentrated in interactive methods and techniques leading to the fulfillment of the educational activities for their learning. Some of the students' activities are:

- *Questions of the students* - special form that shows students' initiative. In particular, questions that are reproductive and informative are a positive indicator of their thinking partecipation.
- *Students' decision making* – the indicator students' desire and dependency against the subject. The teacher deliberately makes such planning of the lesson that students can be placed in a situation or a dilemma in which they have to make a decision.
- *Students' appreciated behaviours* - good indicator of student activities because they demonstrate personal attitudes of the students, likes, dislikes, etc
- *Independence of the students during the activities* – fulfilled when the teacher make the student perform in the initial activities, giving them chances within the framework of conditions but also monitoring their work.
- *Students' interaction* - is the clearest and direct indicator that shows the involvement of the students in activities such as: argumented dialogue, role-playing, intellectual confrontation and conflict, cooperation, exchange etc.

In a student centered - interactive teaching class, students' role is inevitable and occupies a primary role in the learning process. Through this way of learning students:

- are included actively in the learning process
- have the right to take initiatives
- join initiatives
- speak on behalf of the group
- make decisions about possible outcomes expected
- create new communication relationships with each other and their teachers

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

- How applicable are the new teaching methods?
- Why, in some cases, teachers do not apply these methods?
- What must be done to overcome the obstacles and practice interactive teaching?

3.2 Setting and participants

This study was undertaken in five high schools of Elbasan, Albania. There were 300 students and 10 English teachers' part of this study. The schools use Albanian as the medium of instruction and English as a second language.

3.3 Instruments for data collection

Instruments for data collection include questionnaires administered to high school students and interviews for teachers. Interviews and the questinnaires were a major source of data in this study.

3.4 Data analysis

In the first stage of data analysis, data are first presented in relation to students'centered classroom. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected from questionnaires and teachers' interviews are presented following this framework. To answer the research questions: "How applicable are the new teaching methods? Why, in some cases, teachers do not apply these methods? What must be done to overcome the obstacles and practice interactive teaching?", data was extracted from the interviews conducted with teachers and questionnaires administered to high school students.

3.5 Instruments

The data collection instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire, which included 11 structured and not structured questions, prepared by the researcher and administered with high school students. The interview was prepared and a pilot study was conducted with 7 female and 3 male teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience.

3.6 Procedure

The aim of this study is to create a general view of the interactive teaching and learning, to give several opinions of the students and teachers and provide statistics about the use of this kind of methodology in the high school today, in Albania. In order to do so, the following steps were taken. After a pilot study of the questionnaire prepared by the researcher, DAR was contacted to provide permission in order that the questionnaires being administered and interviews to the teachers being accomplished. The questionnaires were collected a few days later so that the participants would have enough time to reflect on them. Later these survey results were quantified and analyzed in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, interview answers were collected and analysed.

4. Results

Research questions raised, after being analyzed, provided the following results:

4.1 How applicable are the new teaching methods?

Many teachers are trying to change their traditional practices to support interactive and all inclusive teaching. They want their students not to be simply reproductive, but to ask, examine, create, select, interpret and debate facts, ideas or data provided by the given material. Anyway, teachers say in the interviews that they know enough about the new teaching methods, somehow apply group work, discussions, role-playing, try to use an active approach to 27%. Difficulties of this methodology application are larger because desks' setting in the classroom is not suitable, superiors think teachers are

not teaching efficiently through this kind of methodology as they're still not aware of the benefits students may have, parents also do not support new teaching methods. Students mostly like discussion and role-playing. Discussion and role-playing take 2% to 5% of the lesson and 25% to 27% takes the info provided by the teacher.

Although the teachers almost accepted unanimously (90%) that interactive teaching and learning is the best practice, by the administered questionnaires to the students turned out that 70% of students felt that:

1. their teachers are away from the application of the active methods
2. teaching is boring
3. info is still the basis and not skills creation
4. teachers speak most of the time during the lesson
5. students do not partecipate 100% during the classes
6. there is lack of assignments and research projects in class
7. it is not worked in a different way with the talents or/and learning disability students
8. teachers are the ones who interpret the text
9. games are rarely part of the lesson
10. the insights gained are far to the everyday needs
11. much less work with groups / role- playing
12. teachers know and use little or none IT in the class

4.2 Why, in some cases, teachers do not apply these methods?

From the interviews with teachers, it is shown that the opinion inside and outside school has not yet reached maturity and appropriate training to achieve a student-based teaching because: although they have started to implement new methods, they face up difficulties due to various material constraints, time and the environment faced; often puts it in a difficult position to implement modern methods of teaching. They use interactive methods of learning which are little more complicated and require less material. There are only a few cases when a certain subject is taught/demonstrated with film recording, video projector which is liked by many students.

Teachers have generally understood that the use of modern methods is the near future and they want to be trained in order to be much more successful. They insist that the implementation in the classroom would make students more interactive, active, most of them freely to ask questions and to express themselves easily for the thoughts that have, participate more actively in solving classroom problems, or in making decisions for various activities. It would make active citizens for tomorrow by providing an active citizen of tomorrow that nowadays lacks in Albania.

Teachers also expressed that the students themselves prefer much more innovative methods of learning than the traditional one.

4.3 What must be done to overcome the obstacles and practice interactive teaching?

From questionnaires administered to the students, it seems that teachers should be empowered more in the use of ICTs and this would make them more competitive; whereas teachers claim for a deeper understanding of the implementation of the curriculum, the improved textbooks, lower number of students in their classrooms, superiors' awareness and their education with modern methods will be the ways of fulfilling interactive teaching successfully.

5. Conclusion

We have had very important results through the treatment of some issues regarding teaching and interactive learning in this research and moreover, the interpretation of the students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews. The conclusions drawn through all the issues described in this research are:

- Interactive and all inclusive teaching is a method which has had a great support from the students and teachers as well. This is considered as a long-term learning method and can also be adapted to students with different levels - concerning their needs and interests. Through interactive and all inclusive teaching, teachers would be enthusiastic for their profession, would prefer to be skilled in the use of various methods to avoid becoming monotonous for their students.
- Among interactive learning methods: group work, role-play, discussion, debate seem to be the most successful and used. Through it, students not only communicate much more with each other but also their

communication skills, leadership and creativity emerge more easily.

-   Interactive and all inclusive teaching requires professional and well qualified teachers for the subject, to be in touch with new information, to know how to adjust information regarding students' level, and have knowledge about the use of new technologies while having lessons. Some teachers continue to pursue further training courses to use new teaching techniques easily.
-   Another conclusion is the fact that despite that the students and teachers were supportive of interactive and all inclusive teaching, today the traditional methods are still used in those subjects such as foreign languages and in particular part of our study English that gives the largest spaces for the use of modern teaching methods. Despite continuous trainings developed by school administrations and educational directories of the respective regions of the city, still there are teachers who consider the traditional method as the best way for teaching their subject.
-   It is also a necessity the careful preparation of the plan on module basis, in which planned methods are used, goals and objectives are set, and tasks are defined in accordance to the students' level.
-   Finally, there is a need to equip schools with the necessary tools to fulfill interactive learning. The students' number in the class is enormous, there is only a video projector in the school and computer labs are small. In appearance it seems like schools have all the facilities to implement interactive teaching, but teachers are actually facing up many difficulties to successfully realize the interactive learning.

Regarding the fact that interactive and all inclusive teaching is indisputable necessity of the time, the only way to success is the one to the acquisition by the teachers of these models.

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