ENRICHMENT OF THE TEACHING PROCESS THROUGH THE 'TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING' FRAMEWORK

M. SHARADA MANI

Assistant Professor, KMIT, India

ABSTRACT

Nurturing understanding has always been the primary aim of education. A close observation of the educational system reveals that the system in the present times is focusing more on knowledge enrichment than on deep understanding. Understanding was being capable to carry out a difference of concept provoking things with a topic like explaining, generalizing, applying, finding evidence and examples, analogizing and representing the topic in fresh methods. In 1988, three faculty members of the Harvard Graduate School of Education-Howard Gardner, David Perkins and Vito Perrone, drafted a five year research project, known as the 'Teaching for Understanding', (TfU) project. The project's mission has to progress a study oriented, classroom-tested approach. TfU structure was an instrument for designing, conducting and reflecting of classroom applications which sustain the intellect of students. This structure was discovered to be extremely productive in English teaching application. The paper will aim on how the structure gives a set of recommendations to assist English teachers plan, teach as well as evaluate units of work more successfully.

KEYWORDS: *understanding, framework*

Received: Nov 07, 2020; **Accepted:** Nov 27, 2020; **Published:** Dec 18, 2020; **Paper Id.:** IJESRDEC20208

INTRODUCTION

In an extensive study on Brain and Education, Renite Numnela Caine and Geoffrey Caine, educators in California, mention that if we turn to be more known with brain's potential to look for and discern patterns, make meanings, combine sensory experience as well as create connections, we turn to be more expert at decoding practical issues, like setting suitable techniques, successfully evaluating learning, designing schools as well as managing education. Brain study founds and guarantees that several complicated as well as solid experiences were necessary for meaningful learning as well as teaching. Brain's infinite capacity to make connections can be used optimally by making content inseparable from context. Each complicated event embeds details in the brain as well as connections what was being learned to the rest of the learner's present experiences, past understanding and future conduct.

For the emergence of learners who could indicate a high level of principal complexity and learners who can deal with complexity and change, improvement in teaching and learning is needed. For this we need to distinguish between surface knowledge and meaningful knowledge that students can acquire. Surface knowledge is information on tap, where the students bring forth the information on demand. Meaningful knowledge goes beyond knowing. It is what we call understanding. The loftiest and the more difficult to find desire of education was bringing up understanding. Knowledge was a matter of being capable to carry a variety of idea that gives rise to things with a topic, like describing, discovering proof as well along with instances, generalizing, applying,

analogizing and representing the topic in fresh methods.

Understanding was the capability to think as well as act adjustability with what one knows. (David Perkins). To understand a topic is to describe, justify, extrapolate, relate and apply in methods which move beyond knowledge as well as routine skill. Understanding was flexible performance capability. It is using knowledge in complex tasks exploring more applications and connections. Understanding of a topic must allow the student to conduct several actions as ‘performances’ through utilizing knowledge in new method. To foster this kind of understanding has long been endorsed as a primary educational goal of schools. An enduring search for pedagogy of understanding could be initiated after studying the educational background. During the end of the 20th century a renewed interest in teaching for understanding could be found as a reaction to the domination of narrow skills –oriented Curriculum in schools and colleges. Apart from this there was considerable evidence that students were not successful in being critical thinkers, problem posers and problem solvers and had difficulty in living productively in this rapidly changing world.

Keeping all these criteria in view in 1988 three faculty members of Harvard Graduate School of Education- Howard Gardner, David Perkins and Vito Perrone, using their perceptions as well as dedications planned a five year research project, called the Teaching for Understanding project with a group of school as well as university based teachers. The TfU Project was launched after decades of work conducted by these three principal investigators. The project’s aim is to progress a study based, classroom–examined application to teaching for understanding. (Tina Blythe). The project aimed the middle along with high school years and concentrated on teaching as well as learning four subjects (English, History, Math and Science) and interdisciplinary researches. Since the establishment of the project, researchers as well as practitioners were joined to develop, refine and examine the pedagogy.

More than sixty school based along with thirty university based educators as well as researches wrestled with the complex issues of assessing understanding by designing curriculum units, carrying them out, and reflecting together about what worked and what had not. From their effort resulted the TfU Framework, an instrument for planning, managing and reflecting of classroom applications that sustain the understanding of students. The T f U Structure gives explanations to question like

- What topics are worth understanding?
- What about them must students understand?
- How can we foster understanding?
- How can we tell what students understand?

The T f U structure has four key elements answering the above queries associated to ‘four corner stones of pedagogy’ (David Perkins). These four primary thoughts are:

- generative topics,
- understanding goals,
- performances of understanding
- Ongoing assessment. (The order is arbitrary)

1. Each framework element focuses attention on particular aspects of practice, collectively creating structure for

most important educational purposes.

GENERATIVE TOPICS

Generative topics or themes lay out the subject matter the students will explore or the overarching objectives for the unit of study of course which were given to students as “through lines” that assist students to view how the topics or themes within a course weave together (Erstwhistle, 2001). The teacher has to identify a set of generative topics which were problems, themes, concepts, ideas and so on which give sufficient depth, signification connections and diversity of perspective to assist students enhancement of strong knowledge. The primary characteristics of Generative Topics are they were central to one or more disciplines or domains, they are interesting both to the learners and to the teachers, they are attainable to students and there are multiple resources accessible to assist students follow the topic. These topics must form the basis of the curriculum. This helps in drawing the attention of students to rich concepts.

UNDERSTANDING GOALS

The next step is for the teachers to identify specific understanding goals for a topic. The teachers should set two types of understanding goals one is unit long understanding goals and **overarching** understanding goals which state explicitly what students should understand. Unit long objectives explain the understandings that the teacher feels are most significant for the students to take away from his/her **class**. **Overarching** understanding goals are the aims set by the teachers which were presented to students as through lines that assist them view what they are going to understand by the end of the course. It is the most elusive element of the framework. These goals are different from academic goals which may be important but do not lead directly to developing students’ understanding. Understanding goals are publicly posted which helps students to focus on the main agenda. Overarching goals should be related to the unit long goals. Both should be central to the subject matter. For the full range and depth of understanding, teachers can develop, critique and refine goals.

PERFORMANCES OF UNDERSTANDING

The fundamental element of the TfU framework is called ‘Performances of Understanding’. The framework is based on the conception of understanding as a performance. These performances “go beyond the information given” and extend and synthesize or otherwise utilize what one has in creative and novel methods by explaining, interpreting, analyzing, relating, comparing and making analogies. This focuses the attention on what students do rather than what teachers do. It helps teachers analyze how far students have understood by making students undertake a varied range of activities as part of their school work that is different from typical assignments. It demonstrates their mastery of understanding goals. There are three progressive categories of performances that are common:

- **Initial performances:** These usually come at the beginning of the unit. They help students see the connection among the generative topics and their own interests as well as earlier experiences. Teachers should design these to engage students in performing their initial understanding. Initial performances are usually open-ended and are approachable at multiple levels.
- **Guided enquiry:** After understanding preliminary goals through early performances, students are guided by teachers to perform increasingly sophisticated understanding which needs the integration of their knowledge with application.
- **Culminating performances:** These performances typically demonstrate the mastery of designated understanding goals. These are similar to exhibitions and projects which put the students in demanding situation where they have to work independently and synthesize whatever they have learnt throughout the academic year.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

According to the TfU framework the process of assessment is more than just of evaluation. Assessments help students and teachers know what students understood and how to proceed with subsequent teaching and learning. Assessment both enhances and evaluates learning. The learners constantly get feedback from their teachers at regular intervals which help them know where they stand and where they need to go. Assessment is done at different stages and in different ways.

Though each element of the TfU framework can be used for analyzing particular aspects of educational practice, the power of this framework derives from the coherent integration of all four elements (Martha Stone Wiske). The TfU framework supports teachers as continuing learners.

Teaching for Understanding framework can become very useful to teach English because this process involves cognitive and affective dimensions that allow teachers to develop

CONCLUSIONS

The framework is found to be exceedingly successful in English teaching practice. The framework provides a set of guidelines to help English teachers plan, teach and assess units of work more effectively. The framework respects the integrity of the subject, allows English teachers to explore significant issues in depth, often by making connections beyond the traditional boundaries of the subject. But most importantly, English teachers who use the TfU framework will help students to develop the dispositions to become powerfully literate members of contemporary society. (Martha Stone Wiske)

Multiple intelligences theory is closely related to TfU. The framework is a universal design for learning which is developed by people who studied brain science and implications for learning. This framework leads teachers to revisit age-old queries about what to teach and how to teach. It is all about putting understanding up front. The education for understanding puts the priority of education on where it can be: on people's ever-rising grasp of the globe. TfU approach is successfully being implemented in places like US, Scotland, Singapore as a professional development tool and curriculum planning aide.

REFERENCES

1. Tina Blythe (1997), *The Teaching for understanding Guide*
2. Alka Behari , "Understanding Children's Construction of Knowledge: Processes and Approaches ", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IJHSS)*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 229-234
3. Martha Stone Wiske (1998), *Teaching for Understanding-Linking Research with Technology*
4. Martha Stone Wiske, Lisa Breit (2004), *Teaching for Understanding with Technology*
5. Ekua Tekyiwa Amua-Sekyi , "If Teachers Don't Read, How Do Students Learn? ", *BEST: International Journal of Humanities, Arts, Medicine and Sciences (BEST: IJHAMS)*, Vol. 3, Issue 12, pp. 189-202
6. 4. Ron Ritchhart, Tina Blythe (2008), *Teaching for Understanding unit Vs Traditional unit*
7. 5. *Educational Leadership*, Volume 51/ February 1994/Number 5 *Teaching for Understanding* pg 8-10
8. 6. Charles Kivunja, *ResearchGate* (2015), *Teaching for understanding: spotlighting the Blythe and Associates Pedagogical Model*
9. Dahlan R P Sitompul & Poltak Sihombing , "Designing Learning Media of Control Based on Micro Controller 8051 by Using the MCU 8051 IDE to Support the Implementation of Active Learning in Higher Education-ALFHE (Active Learning for Higher Education) ", *International Journal of Electronics, Communication & Instrumentation Engineering Research and Development (IJEIERD)*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, pp. 9-14
10. 7. Howard Gardner (1993) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, New York: Basic Books
11. Sarath W. Samaranayake , "The Best Method In EFL/ESL Teaching ", *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, Vol. 5, Issue 5, pp. 73-80
12. 8. David Perkins. (1998) *Understanding understanding in Blythe, T, & Associates, The Teaching for Understanding guide* (9pg 9-16)