

TEACHING THROUGH INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION



Introduction

The type of teaching I advocate is Instructional Conversation (IC). In this method of teaching, discussion based lessons are geared towards creating opportunities for learners. The teacher encourages the expression of students, their ideas, their knowledge and their concepts. The Teacher then builds upon the reference provided by the learner.

This method of teaching to me is - leaving an impact on the mind of the learner. This impact is knowledge which provides the students various skills. So I see myself as a facilitator who guides the students about various aspects of knowledge.

Knowledge, today is just a click away. What then is the role of a teacher? I consider the teacher as a catalyst in this regard. The teacher should change the monologue style classroom to a noisy classroom - full of activity and enthusiasm. This heterogeneous blend of ideas and expressions brings in development.

Teaching Through Instructional Conversation

'Instructional Conversation' is a term that I have been using for the past two decades of my teaching career.

I am basically an Instructional Conversation Teacher (ICT). This is in sharp contrast to the directive form of instruction. So far, when we as teachers teach, we only make the student adapt to our ideology and understanding, which could be top sided or obsolete but when we make the students talk, expressions and ideas are varied. Conversations that instruct and stimulate thinking are the best form of education. IC to me is the best way to achieve the ambitious but elusive goal long held by many educators. Now, let see how I do it!

- ▶ **Have Thorough Knowledge of your Topic:** here the teacher has to do a lot of reference work for the chapter being taught. In my experience, teaching my subject through IC's is very challenging. It means that I must know all that could be in the head of a student.
- ▶ **Assign the Topic for Discussion:** after having floated a topic among the students, divide the class into groups and ask them to make presentations on the task assigned. When the

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students put their heads together, the concept is much better understood.

- ▶ **Allot Adequate Time:** the time factor plays a vital role and hence should not be ignored. Give them time to discuss the topic and then give them a stipulated time to complete their presentation. I have always believed that when students deliberate, a whole lot of current of ideas are generated which usher in high levels of productivity.

Best Practice for Instructional Conversation

Let us see the different steps to a good Institutional Conversation Class:

- ▶ Select a theme / topic / idea for discussion beforehand.
- ▶ Provide pertinent background knowledge, if necessary, give a direct teaching.
- ▶ Elicit more information from students by using various techniques like - tell me more about that, what do you mean, ...in other words, etc.

“Conversations that instruct and stimulate thinking is the best form of education.”

- ▶ Promote the basis for statements or positions.
- ▶ Let the discussion center on question and answers for which there are more than one correct answer.
- ▶ A challenging, but non-threatening atmosphere.
- ▶ Encourage general participation.
- ▶ Intervention at the right time, brings in quality output.
- ▶ Sectionalise the text for optimum understanding of topics.

The Impact of Instructional Conversation

The impact of the IC method of teaching pedagogy reaches its culmination in the form of Comfest. After two years of IC teaching, the senior secondary students of my school organise this event annually. Comfest is the annual techno-cultural literary festival of Seth Anandram Jaipuria School and its uniqueness is accentuated by the fact that each year, it is solely conceived, planned, and organised by the students of the Jaipuria Computer Club, with teacher involvement being negligible.

PEDAGOGY



At the fest, students compete in an array of diverse events that test a multitude of their skills, be it mental aptitude, literary prowess, technical proficiency, or creative expertise. The students manage everything and the outcome generated is of superior quality. Some of the key benefits for the students, include -

- ▶ A great learning experience for them.
- ▶ The bonds that they develop with one another is outstanding.
- ▶ It motivates them to be more dedicated and disciplined towards the output.

Promoting Instructional Conversation

It is an urge to the likes of me, that the most meaningful learning for students happens through the development of their own knowledge and meaning from the subject matter presented.

Instructional conversation is the only mantra for a modern style of learning - let us be mediators in keeping with the concept and enable students to learn and present through their understanding of subjects in an organised manner.



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