



Using Activities in Teaching: A Study of Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) Teachers in India

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: With the use of activities in classroom, a teacher can motivate students to learn theory, enhance learners' ability to recognize multiple perspectives, develop critical thinking and help in retention and application of activity.

Materials and Methods: This paper is based on the feedback given by the 22 Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) regarding activity-based teaching at Higher Secondary Stage in different subject areas from four states during a 10 Day In-Service Programme at NCERT. To assess the usability of activities, a feedback form was administered to teachers. The questions were both quantitative and qualitative. Focus group discussion with the teachers was held so that their true feelings may be recorded.

Results: 97 per cent teachers responded that activity based method was better than lecture for retention and application of activity. Activities illustrate the practical application of theories and, most important, the relation between theories and practical results. 85 per cent teachers were of the opinion that the use of activities will enhance students' ability to recognize multiple perspectives.

Conclusion: The findings of the study have ascertained and supported to the activity based method for better application/teaching. The classroom discussion that activities stimulate is highly rewarding. The use of activities is able to change the classroom environment from the passive listening of lectures and writing notes into the exchange of ideas. The evidence from the study suggests that the use of activities does more than stimulate academic discussion. The teachers take more interest and are motivated to teach the subject with the activities. They feel that the use of activities are interesting and adding interest to the subject and makes the classroom more real.

Key Words: Critical thinking, Inquiry, Discussion, Multiple views

INTRODUCTION

Active engagement involves enquiry, exploration, questioning, debates, application and reflection, leading to theory building and the creation of ideas/positions. Schools must provide opportunities to question, enquire debate, reflect, and arrive at concepts or create new ideas. An element of challenge is critical for the process of active engagement and learning various concepts, skills and positions through the process (NCF 2005). One video on 'Auctioning out Event' activity for Economics subject was shown to the teachers and they were motivated to use this activity in the classroom for teaching-learning during the training programme. The teachers actively watched the video. Majority of the teachers were of the view that teaching through activities will be able

to infuse critical thinking and inquiry among the students as they provide at one side opportunities for active participation in the discussion & questioning and in turn improving their communication skills and on other side they help in bringing out the multiple

Perspectives on the various topics like economic systems, poverty, rural development, and organic farming etc. in developing the nature of inquiry & critical thinking. Research shows that traditional lecture based method, where the students sit passively and a teacher talks has dominated in school education till date. 'Having the instructor provide all the materials to the passive student is the old paradigm. The new paradigm is to actively engage students with the material and one another'.¹ 'Engaging students in learning

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is one of the many goals that educators face.² The rationale for using this methodology is that it helps students remember and apply abstract concepts; it is successful with students of different ability levels; it promotes social growth as well as economic understanding; and because it is fun, students are more interested in the subject matter.³ An activity provides a very nice change of pace. As with anything, the constant use of activities would become trite, but well timed, well placed activities can provide a nice spark to class, and make the classroom a more enjoyable place for both students and the professor.⁴ There is a need to move away from the traditional chalk and talk to more childcentred pedagogy, which means “giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy requires us to plan learning in keeping with children’s psychological development and interests.”⁵ Economics is taught by teacher-centred activities in schools of India that emphasizes the memorization of facts and concepts. She also noted that using activity definitely increases the engagement, participation, retention and development of skills like problem solving and critical thinking in students.^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11} The typical characteristics of active learners are- they ask questions for clarification, challenge ideas procedures and content, connect current learning to past learning, attach what is learned with skill development, discuss what is known with others and remain enthusiastic about learning.¹² Through guidance students learn to understand the perspectives of others, without always believing that there is only one view. Students question the own actions in the activity which helps them understand principles and reach conclusions. Classroom environment becomes co-operative and collaborative rather than individualistic and competitive.¹³

Need for the study

The present study looks into when students do not understand the purpose of learning theory in subjects like Economics, the process is more dry and difficult than it needs to be, and they often fail to grasp the tools they need. Activities are well suited and better than lecture, for addressing this issue which is discussed in this paper. The school is the only platform to motivate the learners especially first generation learners and from economically weaker sections of rural areas whose parents are not literate and learners stay more at home compared to school and there is no guidance at home. Simply telling learners that they will get good marks if they write the same things learnt through lecture method/guide book is not an effective motivator. Learners get opportunity to share their thoughts in class freely in activity based method. The available researches in the area established the fact that the activities enhance learners’ ability to recognize multiple perspectives, develop critical thinking and are helpful for retention and application of activity.

Research questions

1. Do activities motivate the learners to learn theory and seek the required information?
2. Does the use of activities enhance learners’ ability to recognize multiple perspectives?
3. Do activities develop critical thinking among the students?
4. Are activities helpful for retention and application of activity?

Objectives of the study

1. To know that the activities are able to motivate the learners to learn theory and seek the required information.
2. To know the use of activities and impact for enhancing learners’ ability to recognize multiple perspectives in teaching learning process.
3. To know the activities develop critical thinking among the students.
4. To know the learning with activities is useful for retention and application of activity.

Hypothesis

1. The activities motivate the learners to learn theory.
2. The activities enhance learners’ ability to recognize multiple perspectives.
3. The activities develop critical thinking among the students.
4. Learning with activities is useful for retention and application of activity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, the session is designed in two parts. In Part I, video on the

Activity ‘Auctioning out Event’ was shown to teachers. In Part II, their feedback was obtained.

Target group

22 Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) of Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) of Economics, Commerce, History, Geography, Mathematics, Biology, Physics, English and Tibetan Language were taken for the study.

Selection of states

The teachers play an important role in improving the quality of teaching learning process directly and the teacher educators indirectly. Until the teachers are exposed to the innovative pedagogies like use of activities in teaching learning, they are not be able to transact in the class in the same spirit. Therefore, the Post Graduate Teachers of Economics, Geography,

History, Commerce, Biology, Physics, English and Tibetan language are needed to get enrich about innovative teaching methods to teach at higher secondary stage to make teaching learning process more engaging, participatory and effective. A sample of 22 Post Graduate Teachers of these subjects from four states i.e. Utrakhand, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal was selected for the study.

Development of tools

The present study involves the use of the following tools: To assess the usability of activities, a feedback form was administered to teachers. The questions were both quantitative and qualitative. Focus group discussion with the teachers was held so that their true feelings may be recorded.

RESULTS

The results of my endeavour were as under:

Question 1: Do you think this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching and develop critical thinking among the students?

Table 1: Reported fruitfulness of the activity for qualitative teaching by teachers

Responses (number of teachers)				
	F	M	T	
(i) Yes, this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because it will motivate the students to take part in discussion and activities which will develop their questioning skills leading to critical thinking skills, knowledge and experience regarding economic and social issues. It is based on the real situations.	01	18	19	
(ii) Yes, because through this, students could understand the social issues of our society and how much these issues were related to their daily life.	01	02	03	
Total	02	20	22	

Question 2: How does the activity reflect the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005?

Table 2: Responses of teachers regarding reflection of the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 by this activity

Responses (number of teachers)				
	F	M	T	
(i) Yes. Because through this activity we can or student can understand the various economic and social issues and it will improve their all round development.	02	17	19	
(ii) Yes. The objective of real education and the way of implementation, the code and conduct etc were dealt very seriously.	00	03	03	
Total	02	20	22	

Question 3: How does this activity reflect the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009?

Table 3: Responses of teachers regarding reflection of the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 by this activity

Responses (number of teachers)				
	F	M	T	
(i) Yes. Activity will fulfill the aims and objectives of NCFTE 2009 i.e. knowledge based on understanding and application.	02	15	17	
(ii) Yes. NCFTE 2009 objective is to impart the basic idea among students. It is successfully achieved by the activities.	00	05	05	
Total	02	20	22	

Question 4: Would you recommend this method to other Economics teachers? Yes / No All teachers said yes.

Question 5: What constructive criticism you would like to offer to the resource person to improve the quality of activity? Give details.

All the teachers said that even though the activity based method was very effective, still more time should have been given for the detailed discussion and presentation. It will be effective if all are involved effectively.

Question 6: Activity was used for demonstration. Kindly rate this activity in terms of its objective, presentation and coverage of issues.

Table 4: Rating of activity in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues by teachers

		Responses (number of teachers)		
		F	M	T
(i)	Not Satisfactory	0	0	0
(ii)	Below Average	0	0	0
(iii)	Average	0	01	01
(iv)	Good	01	15	16
(v)	Excellent	01	04	05
Total		02	20	22

Question 7: How does the activity help you to make informed decisions in organizing your Economics classes?

Table 5: Rating of the activity in terms of making informed decisions in organizing Economics classes by teachers

		Responses (number of teachers)		
		F	M	T
(i)	Not Satisfactory	0	0	0
(ii)	Below Average	0	0	0
(iii)	Average	0	0	0
(iv)	Good	01	18	19
(v)	Excellent	01	02	03
Total		02	20	22

Question 8: Do you think that this activity “auctioning out event” will be able to increase the knowledge, application, presentation, analysis & overall personality of each and every student? If yes, why?

Table 6: Teachers responses regarding usefulness of “auctioning out event” for increasing the knowledge, application, presentation, analysis & overall personality of each and every student

		Responses (number of teachers)		
		F	M	T
(i)	Yes, it gives the idea of a topic from different perspectives, all the learners get chance to clarify the doubts and also to give their opinion about the concept.	01	18	19
(ii)	Yes, it will increase the knowledge, application, presentation, analysis and overall personality development each and every learner by interaction, basic problems of students are solved, and it is easy to maintain each and every student’s profile.	01	01	02

(iii)	Yes,	0	01	01
Confidence will boost up.				
Participation in any activity of the school will be increased.				
All around development increases.				
Total		02	20	22

DISCUSSION

Teachers were unequivocal in their perception that the use of this activity had contributed to their learning. The study reveals that 86 per cent teachers responded that this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because it will motivate the students to take part in discussion and will develop their knowledge and experience regarding economic and social issues. It is based on the real situations. 14 per cent teachers responded that this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because through this, students could understand the social issues of our society and how much these issues were related to their daily life (Table 1). 100 per cent teachers responded that activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching. 86 percent teachers thought that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 because through activity we can or students can understand the various economic and social issues and it will improve their all-round development. 14 per cent teachers thought that activity reflect the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 because through activity, the objective of real education and the way of implementation, the code and conduct etc. were dealt very seriously (Table2).

18 per cent male teachers were of the view that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 because through activity, the objective of real education and the way of implementation, the code and conduct etc. were dealt very seriously. 100 per cent female teachers thought that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 because through activity, we can or students can understand the various economic and social issues and it will improve their all-round development. 77 percent teachers thought that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 because will fulfill the aims and objectives of NCFTE 2009 i.e. knowledge based on understanding and application. 23 per cent teachers thought that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of NCFTE 2009 because NCFTE 2009 objective is to impart the basic idea among students. It is successfully achieved by the activity based method (Table 3). 100 per cent female teachers thought that activity reflects the concerns and perspectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005

because through activity we can or students can understand the various economic and social issues and it will improve their all-round development. 100 percent teachers said that they will recommend this method to other Economics teachers. 100 percent teachers said that even though the activity was very effective, still more time should have been given for the detailed discussion and presentation. It will be effective if all are involved effectively. 72 percent teachers assessed that the use of activity is “good” in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues. 5 percent teachers assessed “average” in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues. 23 percent teachers assessed “excellent” in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues. 50 per cent female teachers assessed that the use of activity is “good” in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues. 50 per cent female teachers assessed that the use of activity is “excellent” in terms of objective, presentation and coverage of issues (Table 4). 86 percent teachers assessed that the use of activity is “good” in terms of making informed decisions in organizing Economics classes. 14 percent teachers assessed “excellent” in terms of making informed decisions in organizing Economics. 50 per cent female teachers assessed that the use of activity is “good” in terms of making informed decisions in organizing Economics classes. 50 per cent female teachers assessed that the use of activity is “excellent” in terms of making informed decisions in organizing Economics classes (Table 5). The study reveals that 86 per cent teachers responded that this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because it gives the idea of a topic from different perspectives, all the students get chance to clarify the doubts and also to give their opinion about the concept. 09 per cent teachers responded that this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because it will increase the knowledge, application, presentation, analysis and overall personality development each and every student by interaction, basic problems of students are solved, and it is easy to maintain each and every student’s profile. 5 per cent teachers responded that this activity is fruitful for qualitative teaching because confidence will boost up. Participation in any activity of the school will be increased. All around development will be enhanced. 100 per cent teachers responded that auctioning out event is fruitful for qualitative teaching (Table 6).

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

The researcher organized focus group discussion with the teachers so that their true feelings may be recorded. The researcher asked following five questions:

1. What do you think about the traditional lecture method?
2. What do you feel about the activity based method which I used?
3. Do you think activity based method is better than lecture method? If yes, why and if no, why?

4. Will you ask the other subject teachers to teach with this method? If yes, why and if no, why?
5. Any other thing regarding the activity based method which you want to say, feel free to tell me.
 - Most of the teachers were of the view that the lecture method is not interesting and it does not motivate students to learn theory as it lacks real life situations, it is teacher centric, and some students felt isolated in the classroom.
 - 98 percent teachers responded that the activity based method will help in motivating the students to learn theory and seek the required information.
 - 97 per cent teachers responded that activity based method was better than lecture for retention and application of activity. Activities illustrate the practical application of theories and, most important, the relation between theories and practical results. 85 per cent teachers were of the opinion that the use of activities will enhance students’ ability to recognize multiple perspectives.
 - 95 per cent teachers told that they will ask the other subject teachers to teach with case method.
 - 97 percent teachers told that activity based method is better than lecture method. It will create interest, motivate to learn and help students to relate the textual activity with the real life situations. Teachers believe that activities, when used along with lectures and readings will contribute more to the students learning.

The teachers provided qualitative feedback for improvement to the present level of learning of the teachers. Teachers were motivated by the researcher through activity based method and personal interactions.

- The study supports that a better understanding of the structure of the activity will allow teachers to have more informed post-activity discussions and will provide insights about how to deal with anomalies that might arise. In this way, activities used to teach Economics will effectively demonstrate the economic way of thinking while engaging students in the process of learning Economics and classroom environment becomes co-operative and collaborative rather than individualistic and competitive as are also the findings of Mukunda (2009).
- The rationale for using this methodology is that it helps students remember and apply abstract concepts; it is successful with students of different ability levels; it promotes social growth as well as economic understanding; and because it is fun, students are more interested in the subject matter as are also the findings of Lopus, Morton, and Willis, (2003).

CONCLUSION

The broad objective of this study was to differentiate and appreciate lecture vs activity based method. However, the

findings of the study have ascertained and supported to the activity based method for better application/teaching by the researcher. Researchers' experience with the activities in the classrooms as she began to use activity based method teaching reinforces teachers' observations and interests remarkably. From the point of view of a teacher, the classroom discussion that activities stimulate is highly rewarding. The use of activities is able to change the classroom environment from the passive listening of lectures and writing notes into the exchange of ideas. The evidence from the study suggests that the use of activities does more than stimulate academic discussion. The teachers take more interest and are motivated to teach the subject with the activities. They feel that the use of activities are interesting and adding interest to the subject and makes the classroom more real. Teachers believe that activities, when used along with lectures and readings, contribute more to students' learning.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Training of teachers is the need of the hour. But the training should not be in mechanical way, it may have package-printed as well as audio visual that the teachers may see and co-construct the meaning and usefulness of activity based teaching methods.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted among 22 PGTs of 9 subjects. So it can't be generalized that the activity based method will give the same result in another sample. It needs research in a large sample to make generalizations. However, some practising teachers of KVS and NVS are also using this method and their responses are positive.

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Abbreviations

NCF-National Curriculum Framework

PGTs-Post Graduate Teachers

CTSA- Central Tibetan Schools Administration

NCFTE-National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education

FGD-Focus Group Discussion

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