



A DEEP DESIGN VERSUS A SHALLOW DESIGN IN TEACHING

Yazid Rabahi M.ED. for MoroccoEnglish.com

Designing a lesson plan is one of the most crucial skills that any teacher should acquire as early as possible if they choose to take teaching as a professional career. In fact, teachers should be familiar with such a vital skill during their teaching training using micro-teaching. Among the best ways that empower teachers in learning about teaching skills while gaining self-confidence in managing students and contents is micro-teaching. Such strategy works from a different perspective and with a more powerful structure in which several teachers will take the lead in teaching a lesson, trading spots and sequences of the lesson and eventually debating the results. This significant skill demonstrates the steps that teachers should follow in general to design and present a lesson plan while acquiring the art of teaching.

However, while micro-teaching is a staged teaching, lesson plans are not for acting purposes. They are designed for the real world where teachers are confronted to all kinds of students. One main point that teachers should always raise while preparing a lesson is the key in keeping students engaged whilst learning. It is imperative that teachers pinpoint the learning points and outline ways to reach those points avoiding any downtime during teaching. In addition, teachers should always have plan B put aside just in case the unexpected may happen notably if technology is involved. In fact, while some teachers are good at improvising to keep things going in the classroom, other teachers are literally in need of plan B. Preparing such plan would help tremendously in minimizing a lot of trouble ahead.

Now, here is where the thin line of planning is drawn between deep design and shallow design. Here is where poor and rich scheme can be distinguished. Here is where the vision can be seen either clear or vague. Teachers who teach just for the sake of teaching can never establish a real love affair with neither the subject area they teach nor the strategies they intend to use to engage students. Indeed, shallow design put the teacher in a weak and fragile position because his focus is more on what he is teaching rather than who he is teaching. That connection cannot be established because the teacher's mind is busy to complete whatever he is teaching rushing through the curriculum without caring much not only on how he is teaching but who is learning as well.

As a consequence, the teacher with a shallow design in planning is tuning not only himself out of the joy of teaching but also tuning his students out of the very reason that brought them to school i.e learning. A shallow design can be seen in the brief and vague talk of the teacher. It can also be seen in the way teacher raises questions and their disconnection as well as the lack of harmony that exist between the questions. Even worse, the teacher himself often provides answers to the very same questions that he raised just to rush through the lesson setting a weak foundation and conveying the wrong message to his students. With a shallow design, the situation can get out of hands at anytime depending on the mood of the students. Teachers who take shallow design as a routine in preparing their lessons are likely to face problems at anytime especially when students feel demotivated and lose interest in learning.

These students are likely to disrupt the classroom in anyway they can.

As a result, it will take tremendous efforts from any teacher to regain their focus in learning. Deep design, on the other hand, takes totally a different path. As a matter of fact, before starting to plan any lesson, teachers have to visualize the big picture of the lesson plan. Such plan shapes itself like a roadmap going through a thinking process that has a beginning side, a middle and an end side. However, teachers should not plan a lesson for the sake of planning. Before heading to the classroom, teachers should take a lesson plan as a boost self-confidence that brings peace of mind and raises the morale of the teacher. All these three positive points will show on the teacher's face once standing in front of the students.

The energy of that positive side would immediately transfer to the students. If teachers lack such energy, something is wrong in the process. Therefore, having a deep design lesson plan would help the teacher shine in his teaching. Every word and every idea teacher is meant to teach has to be studied and analyzed finding the best way to introduce it smoothly and convey it through a simple gesture, a sentence, a picture, a song, a game, a joke or a story. When preparing a lesson, teacher is not only trying to teach contents, but also devising ways in which learners will retain and understand that content. When a teacher is required to prepare a

lesson, what kind of thinking process does he go through.

While the majority of foreign language teachers may identify their lessons and units in teaching using language form, my advice to them is that they focus more on the function of the language itself when preparing a lesson. Indeed, when teachers plan a lesson directing their perception towards language form, they tend not only to confine their thinking and their imagination in being creative but also they impound their students conception about the new language. Also, teachers have to be eloquent in using a language selecting the right word to be said at the right time and the right place. Teachers have to be an expert in explaining through simplification. Making more complex ideas look simple thanks to the simple format in structuring the language used to convey a message.

Finally, I must say that the process of deep design allows teachers to dissect any multiplex ideas and build an easy path and foundation towards understanding. Nothing is more important than understanding in the arena of teaching and learning. While preparing a lesson plan is considered to be a thinking skill, teachers need to understand that such skill goes through a process of different sections such as warm up, introduction, guided practice, free practice and assessment. As a result, teachers are required to pay attention to all these multifaceted sections of a lesson plan to reach a deeper approach.

Yazid. Rabahi M.Ed