FLANDERS INTERACTION ANALYSIS CATEGORY SYSTEM : A TOOL TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER

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Introduction

Teaching as a system of an activities is an observable phenomenon. There are many other facets of the classroom which can be subjected to the process of empirical observation and scientific probe. Earlier, the alert, well prepared teacher used to observe pupil characteristics, classroom events and interactions depending largely on the emotional reactions to independent, isolated incidents rather than substantial, systematically collected samples or participation and performance. But recently the researches of Withall (1949). Flanders and Amidon (1960). Medley and Mitzel (1948).Galloway (1968). Richard Ober (1967), and Bentley and Miller (1970) have pioneered the utilization of systematized approaches in the study of teacher verbal and non-verbal behaviours in an interactional setting of the class.

This has given rise to the concept of "systematic observation" of teaching which implies "the method of organizing observed teaching acts in a manner which allows any trained person who follows stated procedures to observe, record, and analyse interactions with the assurance that others viewing the same situation would agree, to a great extent, with his recorded sequences of behaviours. Furthermore, the observer would know that he or others would record the same behaviours in the same way through viewing in a wide variety of classroom or interaction setting."(Ober, Bentley and Miller. 1971).

It may, thus, be seen that the concept of 'systematic observation' of teaching is a relatively new entry and it implies a strategy for observing and monitoring of teaching behaviour. The basic

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ingredients of a class, as we have noted earlier consist of the teacher, the pupil, the content, the plan, and the interactions. In order to study the interplay among these elements, observation of the classroom teaching learning situation has been considered mandatory. It is partly in this context, that the 'systematic observation' as a concept, has been introduced. Let us first find out the background leading to the emergence of this concept.

The use of 'observation' as a tool of empirical research has been in vogue for about a century now. But its application in respect of educational phenomena, specially that of teaching has been a comparatively recent development. Wrighstone's study of schools in New York using 'Newer Practices' in 1935 illustrates the first attempt at systematic observation. Later in 1945&46 H.H. Anderson studied 'integrative' and 'dominative' teacher contacts through systematic observation. Three years later in 1949 , withal made a study of teacher bahaviour in social-emotional climate through observation and a year later in 1950 Bales conducted an interaction study in respect of individual behaviour in selected social and psychological situation. All these studies employed category method of systematic observation. The method implied a classification of behaviours which the observer learns and is required at regular intervals within the observation period to determine in what category the observed behaviour falls and to record the category number.

Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC)

Flanders interaction analysis categories were developed at the University of Minnesota between 1955 and 1960. The system consists of ten categories which may be indicated as follow:

1. **Accepts feelings-** Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a pupil in a nonthreatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting and recallings are included.

2. **Praises or encourages**- Praises or encourages pupil action or behaviour. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head, or saying "Um uhm! Or "go on" are included.

3. **Accepts or uses ideas of pupils**-Clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher entensions of

pupil ideas are included but as the teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift to category five.

4.   **Asks questions**-Asking a question about content or procedure based on teacher ideas, with the intent that a pupil will answer.

5.   **Lecturing**- Giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his own ideas, giving his own explanation, or citing an authority other than a pupil.

6.   **Giving directions**- Directions, commands, or orders to which a pupil is expected to comply .

7.   **Criticizing or justifying authority-**Statements intended to change pupil behaviour from nonacceptable to acceptable pattern: bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.

8.   **Pupil- talk response-** Talk by pupils in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits pupil statement or structures the situation. Freedom to express own ideas is limited.

9.   **Pupil- talk- initiation-** Talk by pupil which they initiate. Expressing own ideas; initiating a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.

10. **Silence or confusion-** Pauses, short periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

A look at the above matter may reveal that seven categories are used when the teacher is talking two are used when any pupil is talking and one category is used to indicate silence or confusion. The total classroom communication in this system can be described in terms of three possibilities: teacher talk, pupil talk, and silence or confusion. Since these three categories exhaust all the possibilities, the system becomes totally inclusive of all events and hence allows coding at a constant rate throughout the observation f an interactional transaction.

Advantages of FIAC :-   The characteristic features of Flanders' ten category system may be indicated as follows:

(1)   Analysis of initiative and response- To initiate means to make the first move, to lead, to begin, introduce an idea or concept for the first time, to express one's own will. To respond means to take action after an initiation, to counter, to amplify, or react to ideas, which

have already been expressed, to conform or even to comply to the will expressed by others.

The FIAC analyses the interaction between two or more persons in terms of the balance between initiative and response. In the teacher talk, the 'initiative' is indicated by categories 5, 6 and 7 which are lecturing, giving directions and criticizing or justifying authority respectively while in the pupil talk it is indicated by category 9. The concept of 'response' in teacher talk is represented by categories 1,2, and 3 which are acceptance of feelings, praise or encouragement and accepting or using student ideas respectively while in pupil talk it is represented by category 8 .

According to Flanders, an accurate estimate of the initiative-response balance of classroom interaction can be reached by comparing the teacher tallies in categories 1,2 and 3 with those in 5,6 and 7. He also maintains that there is a complementary and logical relationship between the initiative-response balance of teacher statements and the same balance expressed by the pupils thus, an above average use of categories 5,6 and 7 is more likely to be associated with a higher incidence of category 8, and an above average use of 1,2, and 3 is more likely to be associated with category 9.

Another aspect of the balance of initiation and response for the teacher, as well as the pupils is that it may change from one ---activity the next , even with the same class, also in terms of the teacher's preferred style of instruction, in subject matter being taught, the age and maturity of the pupils, and various other characteristics of the 'tracing this variation provides us with knowledge about teaching behavior and about relationships between what a teacher does and how pupils react

(2)   Direct Vs Indirect influence in teaching behaviour-Another characteristic of the system is that it helps in describing the direct and indirect influence patterns available in a teaching behaviour. The direct influence consists of stating the teacher's own opinion or ideas, directing the pupil's action, criticizing his behaviour ,or justifying the teacher's authority or use of that authority (categories 5,6 and 7). The indirect influence consists of soliciting the opinions or ideas of the pupils, applying or enlarging on those opinions or ideas, praising or encouraging the participation of pupils, or clarifying and accepting their feelings (categories 1, 2, and 3).

Flanders conceptualized that direct influence patterns have different but predictable effect in situations in which the goal is unclear, the goal is clear with a positive valence, and the goal is clear with a negative valence. the concept of positive and negative valence has been borrowed from Lewin . In the present context, positive valence is assigned to goals that satisfy the interests of pupils and require goal activities that match their abilities; the negative valence in assigned to goals that fail to satisfy the interests of pupils and / or require activities that do not match their abilities.

(3)   Emphasis on teacher verbal behaviour- The FIAC is meant primarily for studying teacher behaviour in an interactional setting. It is for this reason that there are seven categories assigned to categorization of 'teacher talks' behaviour and only two categories are assigned for 'student talk' behaviour.

(4)   Feedback application of the system- In order to modify or change teacher behaviour. The FIAC can be safely employed. The training of teacher in the ten category system has been imparted with a view to providing feedback. It has been found that the system can be effective in respect of both preservice and inservice teachers for purposes of introducing changes in their influence patterns. The system is also useful in so far as it may be employed by a teacher either as he observes someone else teach or as he categorizes a tape recording of his own classroom behaviour.

5-Scientific technique- It is a scientific and objective technique of class-room observation.

6-   Systematic recording- Events that occur within every three seconds are recorded systematically. **Analysis of class-room behaviour-**The structure of class-room behaviour and flow of events can be analyses and studied.

7-   Observation technique for class- room teaching- It can be used as an observation technique for class-room teaching in teacher-education programme. It is used as a research tool for analyzing and studying class-room teaching and behaviour.

8-   Evaluative device- With the help of normative of behaviour it can also be used as an evaluative and supervisory device.

9-   Supplementary device- It is used as a supplementary device with other mechanism of feedback devices like micro-teaching and simulated social skill teaching for the modification of teacher-behaviour.

10-   The use of the system in researches on teaching- The FIAC is one of the most frequently used system in researches pertaining to classroom verbal behaviour of teachers, and allied teaching –learning processes. In the past twenty years almost more than a thousand of systematic researches in the field of teaching have employed FIAC. This is mainly because the technique provides a method of quantifying concepts which refer to spontaneous behaviour and which heretofore could be measured only indirectly. As Flanders states, 'when measures of teaching behaviour are associated with pupil attitudes and achievements, it is possible to start building primitive theories of instruction.'

Precautions in the Use of Flanders' Interaction Analysis

Trained observers- Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories may be used by trained observers only. The class room encoding work should be done by the trained observers who is familiar with entire process and knows its limitations.

Avoiding value judgments- It should be noted that Flanders' interaction analysis is an observation and not an evaluation device of class-room teaching. Hence value judgments about good and bad teaching behaviours are to be avoided.

Two observers- It is advantageous to engage two trained observers after estimating their reliability. They encode the classroom interaction for analyzing teaching and teacher behaviours.

Inspecting the matrix table- The questions regarding classroom teaching can only be answered by inspecting the matrix table. the observer cannot answer the questions relating to teacher behaviours.

Comparison between matrices- A comparison between the two matrices can be made in terms of behaviour rations, interaction variables and percentages of frequencies in each category and calls frequency but value judgement is not possible.

Class-room recording- The accuracy of the observation depends on the reliability of observer.

Number of observations- Keeping the rate of observation as one for each three seconds the observers may record 20 observations per minute.

Indicating sequence of events - The observations are to be recorded in a vertical column from top to bottom indicating the sequence of events that occurred.

Underlining code number- to indicate an important change or event, the code number may be underlined with double lines.

Limitations of Flanders' System of Interaction Analysis

Not useful for non- verbal behaviour- Interaction analysis -technique is used for observing verbal behaviour of class-room teaching while non-verbal behaviour is equally important. It overlooks non –verbal interactions in the class-room. It does not describes the classroom interaction or teacher behaviour in its totality.

Narrow structure of teaching behaviour- All the class-room teaching activites are encoded forcedly into ten categories. Hence there is no scope to go beyond the ten categories prescribed by Flanders's system of interaction analysis. Thus it narrow down the structure of teaching behaviour.

No balance in categories – In Flanders' system of interaction analysis the categories are not equally distributed between teachers and students There are seven categories for teachers, where as only two categories for students. Hence there is no balance between the teacher and student categories. Moreover only one category has been provided to silence and attempt has been made to classify silence as purposive or non-purposive which is a serious short-coming.

No information about content- It is content free technique of observation. It does not provide any information about the quality of content. It confines only to verbal communication of teaching.

No place for pupil-pupil interaction- In this system there is no place for class-room interaction in the form of pupil-pupil interaction.

No place for recording reactions- In this system, only of teacher and students are recorded but not their reactions. It is not related to intensity of behaviours.The teaching effectiveness concerns with force and intensity of the teaching events.

No value judgments- It does not provide value judgments about good and bad teaching behaviours.

No classification for certain activities- Certain activities like model reading in language, map and chart reading in social sciences, demonstrating an experiment in sciences, do not find proper classification in this system .

Not economical- In Flanders' system of interaction analysis, the process of tallying, constructing matrix and interpreting of matrix prove uneconomical in terms of time, labour and money.

Non-availability of trained observers- Its use requires highly trained' reliable and competent observers or interpreters which are generally not available.

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