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Research Paper

EEDA, a post-method guideline for managing EFL educational settings

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Abstract

Though no method is the best and every educational situation invokes its unique requirements, getting provisional insights from suggestions is a justifiable policy. In the current paper, seeking to harmonize the post-method-era "learner autonomy", the social interactive theory of Max Weber and Burner's "discovery learning", we sought to propose an educational guideline termed "EEDA" for managing EFL educational settings and put it into SWOT analysis. EEDA's axiomatic components were first formulated in alignment with theories in the sociology, and the psychology of teaching and learning. Next, through self-introspection in a SWOT analysis, some positive and negative aspects of the protocol were alleged. Accordingly, its emphasis on learners' metacognitive development skills, goal-orientation, bilateralism of accountability, and synergetic network of participation were considered as worthy features whereas devising some solid validating routes for further executability and adopting a germane pace of policy change were claimed to be some areas of potential threat.

Keywords: interactionist, learner autonomy, exploration, emergent goals, SWOT analysis.

1. Introduction

As EFL teachers and students, we have been particularly inculcated by the vast majority of people disappointed in state-run EFL settings that learning English in a private-owned language institute is a guaranteed way of longtime attainment. Their indisputable plaints mostly teem with impracticality and unfruitfulness of teaching materials, or, at times, with unfavorable attitudes of teachers in state-run educational settings. To a dutiful instructor, then, the question may arise as to what are the instrumental components of a typical private language institute that are so welcomed and appreciated by quite a noticeable population. Although, for all intents and purposes, no list provided can meet the unique requirements of multitudes of settings and no imposed method may be "the best method", we can at least make allowance for a managerial guiding protocol for teachers and course designers so that their EFL programs fall less short of learners' demands and expectations.

In the present brief article, trying to work through some selective characteristics of post-method era, investing on social interactive theory of Max Weber and borrowing insights on discovery learning from Jerome Burner, we have ventured to propose a teaching-learning managerial protocol termed "EEDA" and put it into SWOT analysis. Though tentative, "EEDA" guideline may be a helpful reminder as it borrows its intellectual foundations from long-standing theories in the sociology, and psychology of teaching and learning. At the same time, it can be interestingly new as it addresses the reciprocal community of teachers-educators and learners.

2. Overview of the theories and concepts feeding "EEDA"
2.1. From Kolb and Gibbs to Kumaravadivelu

No fixed method can be taken as a panacea for our ailing EFL teaching system. This is what the whole literature on post method era unanimously advocates. On the contrary, no one of the new- era

proponents ever invites to immobility and otiosity when problems persist. According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), the most famous post-method spokesperson, a learner is supposed to be "autonomous" (p.454). The motto should be taken as a criterion for educators, practitioners, innovators, and an alarm for traditionalists who may think of the teacher figure as the sole enforcer. According to Kumaravadivelu, a teacher should endeavor to descry the unjustness of the existing educational programs in favor of a reflective rather than a mechanical mindless system. Hence, teachers should always be devoted to what good teaching is and adopt an "ongoing critical reflection" over imposed standards while pursuing the desired goal of being authentic (Weimer, 2011, p.2).In such doing, exploration and innovation tag along almost every step of education to ensure optimality and productivity. As Edge and Mann (2013) maintain, for actualization of the innovative phase of teaching-learning, an uninterrupted attention to different topics taught, tools applied, and methods adopted is necessary in varying contexts. Therefore, diverse emergent methods and designs should be constantly heedful of "learner autonomy, context sensitivity, teacher/student reflection" to encompass specific essentials fitted to use (Bell, 2003, p 333-334).

Assigning autonomy status to learners leads the teacher-learner dyad ineluctably towards reflective proceeding where any development becomes the product of discovery and engaging in new experiences. In this sense, post method teaching – learning advocates are in line with reflective pedagogies earlier propounded by such scholars as Kolb and Gibbs. Touching succinctly on Kolb's experiential learning theory of 1984, we can recognize four stages of "concrete experience", "reflective observation", "abstract conceptualization", and "active experimentation" that if transpire concurrently, the result will be developing an effective knowledge base (McLeod, 2010).

Similarly, Gibbs' reflective cycle proposition of 1988 invests on exploration and discovery as an indispensable part of a learner's progress. The reflective stages of the model incorporate "Description-What happened?", "Feelings – What did you feel about it?", "Evaluation – What were the positives and negatives?", "Analysis – What sense can you make of it?", "Conclusion – What else could you have done?", and "Action Plan – What will you do next time?"("Learning to teach", 2015). One evident privilege of the model is the reciprocity of its stages that can make the model applicatory by both parties of educators and students in different settings. In the following, we will further emphasize the bipartite nature of

teaching-learning process to fashion a more interactionist- constructivist tone.

2.2. Weberian social interactionist perspective

Perhaps, Max Weber in the late 19th century is not the only scholar who drew a link between meaning making and the interaction of people within a social group. There are equally reputable and credit-worthy psychologists in the literature like Vygotsky, Kelly, and Bruner, to name a few, who have accentuated the role of group interaction in exploring, constructing and developing new meanings. However, because any educational institution is a dynamic gathering of individuals rather than a static collection of individual inanimate objects, Weberian macro-level view of educational settings is worth elucidating as to how such social networks conduct en masse. Briefly explaining, Weberian perspective as a conformable idea to constructivism (Reggie, 1998) comprises several components for any social behavior such as learning or teaching ("Max weber", 2016):

a) An acting individual who is oriented towards a specific course of an action for a specific goal
b) Subjective-symbolic meaning making that is a phase through which a person perceives an action subjectively while interacting with others
c) Assigning every social action to the present, past and the future behaviors of other interactants
d) Constant cooperation and struggle between individuals and other members of the society

One signification of Weberian delineation for educational settings is that teaching-learning goals are interpreted in the light of dialectical collaborative discovery, progress, and assessment where the autonomy of members is a function of how they perceive other members' progress and how they form suitable evaluation of needs on a regular basis. Put it simply, the notice-worthy implication of interactionism for educators is that education in its refined sense of addressing the whole person does not materialize singularly by either learners or teachers.

2.3. Jerome Bruner

As a constructivist, Bruner also reconceptualized exploration in his "discovery learning" theory as promoter of learners' real-life empowerment and self-determination (Takaya, 2008, p.10-11). The concept presupposes that every learner is an autonomous active interactant in a learning situation rather than a passive teacher-dependent consumer. In Bruner's term "emphasis on discovery … helps the child to learn the varieties of problem solving, of transforming information for better use, helps him to learn how to go about the

very task of learning" (Bruner, 1966, p. 87). For sure, the role of any instructor in such an environment is not to transfer, but to facilitate and walk learners through "optimal level of uncertainty" to become able to choose proper channels of knowledge development by themselves (Bruner, 1966, p. 43). To this end, instructors should encourage learners to manage their learning; otherwise, the instruction may turn out fruitless.

3. Method and discussion
In this section, we will first lay out parts and parcels of the protocol and then relatedly conduct a concise SWOT analysis in self-introspection to bring to light those angles of the topic that could be further dealt with in similar researches.

3.1. "EEDA" protocol's components
Language learning for a beginner can be compared to a child's learning journey through developmental stages and for a teacher to a reflective process of management. On the other side of the coin, the very act of learning occurs within a dynamic network exerting its influence on all the members involved as put by Weber and Bruner. As a reformulation of the thoughts and theories related to interactionism and post-method learner autonomy, "EEDA" managerial protocol emphasizes Exploring, Empowering, Developing, and Assessing not as separate entities, but as interdependent conjoint web of requisites.

Exploring
This preliminary phase must be interpreted on both sides of teachers and learners. From a logical perspective, "teachers are learners of teaching" (Johnson, 2009). Hence, the two parties should try to get wise to their needs and expectations, discover the capacities a learning situation can offer, collaboratively negotiate, and continually fine-tune to the flux of possibilities for improvising new emergent goals.

Empowering
Empowering is once again a coactive objective reciprocally constituted by all members of educational settings. In other words, as soon as some common grounds of relationship are established through discovery and exploration, each side should devote effort to empower the other side through positive feedback and motivational encouragement.

Developing knowledge base
The term succinctly phrased "Developing" in the protocol, emphasizes the ontological aspects of teamship that can bring interactants on the go. Here, we have a tripod, a synergetic network of teachers, students and ideas in which the more committedly interactants exchange knowledge about their teamship and the process, the more valuable and functional their collaboration becomes for the objectives desired.

Assessing
Again, as a bilaterally coactive element, an effective assessment happens when it accompanies other components of Exploring, Empowering and Developing throughout the whole process of teaching-learning in an educational system and when interactants have a two-way channel for evaluating the tasks given and taken. This phase helps both parties improve themselves and the system as an entirety. The following diagram shows how each component of the protocol constitutes a direct link with assessment.
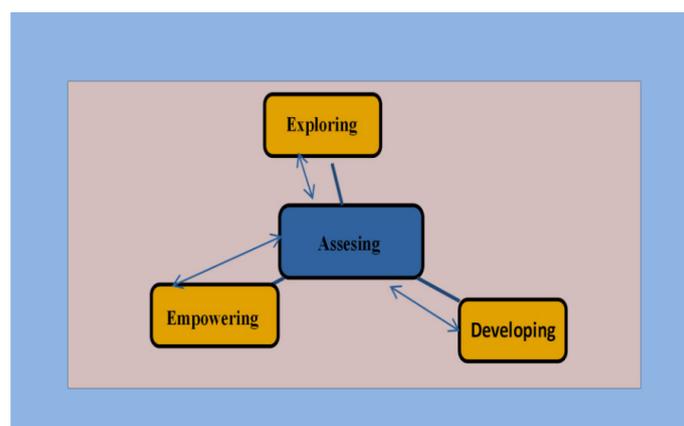

Fig 1: The directionality of assessment in "EEDA"

3.2. SWOT analysis Introspection
Strength(s)
The present straightforward protocol has repurposed several theories into an interactive guideline for literally all levels of language learning-teaching. The bilateralism of accountability, participation, and goal-orientation on the sides of teachers and learners assigns

further functionality to it for implementation in different contexts and gives a carte blanche to educators to bring their eclectic approaches into mainstream education.

Weakness (es)

Seeking to detach itself from any prescriptive material or method , "EEDA" seems to be very broad in scope . Therefore, the extent and the nature of time allocation, progres , knowledge exchange and continual assessment are some important questions that still need further explication. Apparently when asked about the quality of their teaching , almost all instructors believe they have actively employed "EEDA" in one way or another, but what kind of normative determines their actual application of the guideline is another area to be addressed. Moreover, teachers by the virtue of their higher status have normally some invested managerial power making them more motivated to follow the guideline. However, the story may take another turn since nobody can make sure that students religiously follow the protocol to help themselves.

Opportunit(y-ies)

Implementing the present protocol, students can align their cognitive skills with their higher-order metacognitive governance .Unfortunately, educators more attend to students' retention of teaching materials than their abilities to direct, monitor and keep their pace in control. Developing higher-order thinking and metacognitive skills can turn students to goal-oriented thinkers who know when and how to use their skills to best effects (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989).

Threat(s)

To fast-track the policy change from teacher-as-a-ruler to teacher-as-a-group-coordinator can cause some degree of inconvenience and malcontent, if not confrontation, for those teachers who relish authority in anyway or are adamant to changes . We are ,indeed, transactioning with a group of human beings instead of machines ; therefore, educational theories, guidelines or models ,even if practical, are of mixed-blessing nature. In this particular case, the protocol may as well complicate and, at times, demotivate a portion of interactants involved in the process . Moreover, effectuating a policy without first devising some valid evaluative principles does not make it any better than paying a lip service to the whole issue.

4. Conclusion

"EEDA" as a manegerial protocol emphasizes the dynamicity and developmental nature of EFL learning. It can be easily applied as a normative by teachers and learners in all levels of language learning to assess the functionality of their efforts. The key terms of "EEDA" must be bilaterally interpreted in a teacher-learner dynamic web. There has also been a concerted try on the part of the present researchers to include ,in the SWOT analysis section, some potential concerns about the guideline that can maximize and optimize learning and teaching unitedly .

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