

Micro-teaching and the Teacher of English

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We hear so much about educational technology these days. Micro-teaching is one aspect of educational technology that is being utilized to a greater extent in teacher-training. At the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya micro-teaching is an essential part of the methodology of all classroom subjects. All students enrolled for the diploma in education course are afforded the opportunity of trying out micro-teaching, and all are unanimously of the opinion that they have gained much confidence through this process.

What does micro-teaching really involve, it may be asked. Basically, one student prepares a lesson in, let us say, English grammar or poetry or some other aspect of language or literature. He then teaches a small 'class' consisting of about ten other diploma students. The whole exercise is carried out in a specially designed micro-teaching classroom or laboratory. While the lesson is in progress, the television camera records everything. When the lesson is over, a discussion takes place in which everybody is expected to participate freely – the lecturer, the student-teacher and the students who acted as pupils. The lesson recorded on video tape is screened so that everybody is able to see for himself exactly what was said and how it was said. The TV camera picks up every nuance of speech and every mannerism. It is easy for students to see for themselves how others see them – and hear them as well! Slovenly postures, faint writing on the blackboard, inaudible speech, will be shown up. Students, it is hoped, will strive to improve on realising the weak points in their teaching methods. Very often it has been found that graduates tend to lecture rather than teach. In a fifteen minute micro-teaching session, the whole class may be playing too passive a role. The supervisor or lecturer would then find it necessary to devote some time to guiding his students on the techniques of questioning in classrooms. When a student has sat through half a dozen micro-teaching lessons he is aware of a variety of lesson situations, ranging from the lively and sprightly ones to the dull, tense-ridden types. The classroom personality of the teacher is also shown up in an unmistakable manner.

When students are asked to relate frankly what they

have gained most from micro-teaching they cite the realization that a thoroughly prepared lesson ensures better presentation and a greater degree of interest on the part of the pupils. When the time comes for teaching practice in schools, students will have mastered the art of preparation of lesson notes. Some students say that micro-teaching helps them to get over the initial shyness and self-consciousness that is encountered when facing class for the first time. For the prospective teacher of English, micro-teaching provides an opportunity to check on one's speaking style and general tone. Many a student has been shocked by his own manner of teaching poetry or drama, for example. It is far more effective to see for oneself the dull nature of a literature lesson taught without feeling than to merely hear it said in the English method class that we are concerned with the communication of emotion in the teaching of poetry and drama.

What are the criticisms, if any, of the micro-teaching method? Sometimes we hear the murmur that the lessons are carried out in a highly artificial situation, with students forced to act a role as it were. Another complaint relates to the time factor. As there are over 600 students in the diploma of education course, every micro-teaching lesson has to conform to a very rigid time slot. Lecturers often find that they have to cut short the discussion or post-mortem session after a micro-teaching lesson because another group of students is stamping its feet impatiently outside the classroom studio. A lesson is successful if co-operation is forthcoming from one's fellow students and not otherwise.

However in spite of these criticisms and complaints both students and lecturers do look forward to micro-teaching. The faculty is gradually building up a bank of micro-teaching lessons in various subjects, including English language. In time this collection, hopefully, will include a wide range of classroom situations illustrating inspiring teaching as well as the very opposite and the 'grey sector'. Micro-teaching can never replace the teacher but it is an aid to the achievement of the goal of good teaching.