



## WALK IN OUR SHOES: AMELIORATIVE TEACHING APPROACH USING FACILITATION

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### ABSTRACT

*What teachers regard as a boon for students, some learners take the same thing the other way around. They wear a smile, a strong and effective façade, yet if only they could talk, and burst it all out, there is a malcontent story behind. This action research entitled WALK IN OUR SHOES: AMELIORATIVE TEACHING APPROACH USING FACILITATION aims to investigate the root cause of the sentiments of the students on their intense displeased notion on reporting as a teaching strategy. It examined the effectiveness of facilitation as an improved teaching approach to be used by teacher education students of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology. Data were collected through modelling of the teacher, observation and demonstration by the students, wherein student demonstrators were interviewed. Thematic analysis was employed based in the interview conducted with the research participants. The study revealed that facilitation is preferred by the participants in presenting their lessons. It was brought out in this research how excited the students were in starting their facilitation activities. Divergent questions were unveiled from their exploring minds. The student demonstrators have shown their potentials of emulating the practices of an effective facilitator, who they dreamed to become one someday.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Every time I give instructions to my students about the reporting task - how they should do it and how they would be rated, all of them would wear the poker face - a blank expression. Silence. No sound you could hear that implies complaint, murmurs, and other negative sentiments. One time, while passing the corridor, I overheard a student who candidly expressed her displeased feeling about the reporting task assigned to her. This caught my attention as this was my first time to hear somebody who is strongly against the reporting strategy which is a very common task way back my own college years. I asked more of my students to confirm the issue and most of them agreed that reporting gives them an intense feeling of queasiness, which they could not just burst out to teachers.

This issue has affected me because of the burden I caused to my students that I never intended to give. One of the reasons why they hate reporting concerns the financial matters because of the need to spend money in producing the instructional materials. Other than that, they are also not confident in

delivering the report due to lack of knowledge, the time is limited for the preparations and the resources are limited also. Most of them were coated with fears of committing mistakes – afraid of bullying from classmates and criticisms from intimidating instructors. According to them, class reporting consumes so much time that teacher intervention could no longer be accommodated.

The issue was heightened when the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCUCOA) representatives advised the school administrator to eliminate reporting “during the accreditation day”. This has caused confusions and many speculations from different points of views. There were instructors who asserted that class reporting should still be imposed, while there are those some who totally discouraged it.

With the notion to eliminate the class reporting strategy, my worries were directed to the possible challenges that my students would encounter once they graduate and pursue their careers – both in



the academe and in the business field where public speaking skills are highly required.

Should class reporting be eliminated or are there any other ways to mend such classroom dilemma? With the rising and an unsettled issue, this calls to conduct an action research.

It is painful to realize that I unknowingly put my students in great pressure every time I give them a reporting task. This concern made me reflect deeper on the thought that when we were getting used to do something, sometimes we can no longer recognize the flaws of it. As much as I want to dig into the roots of this problem, I want to find also the best remedy available from books and suggestions. I have compiled a collection of thoughts, random statements, and different words of mouth from more of the students I encountered and from my colleagues. I came to a realization that reporting may already be tested by time, as one of the best teaching strategies, but the possibility of having some loopholes is still inevitable.

Instead of having the reporting as a strategy, I intend to alter the approach. According to Sunnarborg (2008), facilitation is far different from the lecture type of handling a class as this strategy makes the learners responsible for their learning. This notion affirms that using the facilitating strategy teaches the students how to learn.

Training the students in becoming facilitators would not lessen their potential to become productive educators and business executives someday. It even erases the traditional way, the old image of a typical classroom set-up of having the lecture and reporting tasks, bombarded with pressures and all. This facilitation strategy agreed on the contention of Clapper (2009) that "if you want them to develop an active and engaging classroom, let them experience it for themselves."

In order to take this plan into action, I asked my students to play the most important role as being the participants of my research. I intend to get my student's own reflections on the differences between the reporting and facilitating approach as a teaching strategy.

To assess and evaluate the new strategy used, I prepared a set of FGD guide questions in an open-ended form (Cresswell, 1998).

1. What are your experiences as a facilitator in the class (preparations, resources, feelings)?
2. What is your assessment of the strategy being used?
3. What are the differences you could give in reporting and facilitating strategies (Likes and Dislikes)?
4. How can this strategy be improved?

## METHODOLOGY

To bring about an authentic research, I had a group of mixed members of students. I prepared materials to where they could write their remarks. I utilized purposive sampling, particularly convenient sampling (Marshall, 1996).

Unexpectedly, I felt nervous as the days rolled before the start of the conduct of my study. My preparations were more serious as I wanted my students to observe intricately the details on how I would demonstrate facilitating as a teaching strategy. I invested efforts to show them how to facilitate the class in the most effective way. I believe that it would be easier for them to follow what I do if I make all the procedures clear and smooth. To avoid any duplicate presentation, I assigned them other topics, so they could emulate the steps, but not really the ways on how I demonstrated it. With varied topics I assigned, it can trigger also their minds to think deeper and formulate more learning activities they can use during their facilitation sessions.

We set different schedules on when to conduct the facilitation class. This would give enough time for students to focus more on their observations. I also kept a journal to record all my observations. Before the presentation of the assigned facilitators, I evaluated their plans first on how they are going to employ procedures of facilitation strategy.

I did not miss to take note all of the happenings from those unavoidable and unwanted circumstances during the demonstration in order to make my observations reliable and valid. Right after every presentation, I always seek time to talk with the reporters and facilitators that even if sweat is still all over their faces, I requested them to share their feelings.

With my serious dedication to resolve the issue about reporting and to find the best alternative approach, I admit that that the activities I had with my students made me realize that changes and new things can bring better improvements.

I did not let any single observation pass my records as I need every detail of it, in order for me to come up with a good conclusion. During their presentations, I jot down all the information I could get, from their awkward gestures and overwhelming confidence. I was driven by my purpose to make things clear to myself and my co-teachers that there could be another way not to eliminate reporting, but just to modify the approach and use facilitation instead.

As the moment came when they are to use facilitation as a teaching strategy, undeniably, excitement was printed on their faces and even in mine. I noticed that all of them have their index cards with



enumerated steps of the activity they planned to facilitate. This time, they asked their learners to bring all the materials needed for the activity. As I sat at the back of the class to observe everything, I noticed that most of the facilitators have given a lot of divergent questions in starting their class, which served as motivators in engaging their learners. With the inquiry based approach they used, they were able to play the part of being an effective stimulator as they learned the crucial art of questioning.

All the learners were very busy of the activities given by the facilitators, that I can no longer feel I was needed in the classroom. Instead of feeling rejected, I even felt proud of the performance of my students. Because of the changes of their behavior, I am certain that they learned something from the activity we had.

To summarize all the observations of my students, I let them compile all their opinions regarding the strategy being employed by the leaders of the groups. I made them enumerate all the advantages and disadvantages of facilitation. Lastly, I made them decide, if they would prefer the facilitation teaching strategy in handling their own classes someday. I ended the activity by thanking each participating class and assuring my students that their participation in the success of the study is highly appreciated.

Trustworthiness is an important aspect to produce an authentic research. With this, the value of trust is reciprocated with my participant. Rossman & Rallis (2011) considered trustworthiness an important criterion of how good a qualitative research is. They also enumerated the criteria that made up trustworthiness namely: *credibility, conformability, dependability and transferability*. To help me gain the participants' willingness to participate, I applied the points mentioned above.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This action research was grounded according to four major questions. The interview endeavored to know the experiences of research participants as facilitators in the class, their assessment of the facilitation strategy, advantages and disadvantages of facilitating, and how facilitation can be improved.

In this section, I categorized the factors and issues to be analyzed in relation to the research questions of this study. In this way, we could see clearly how to the research questions have been addressed.

Based from the experiences of the research participants as a facilitator, the following are the gathered information presented in different themes:

**Perception of Students on Facilitation** – Letting my students perform their own facilitation strategy after I have employed mine supports the statement of Welty (2010) that experience is the most salient feature for learners as the gathered meaningful experience can poke up their interests and they will also be motivated to engage themselves in learning.

Printed on the bright faces of my students are the collective realizations on how effective facilitation is in delivering instruction. Because of the activities they have introduced to their own learners during their facilitation demonstration, they witnessed how engaged their learners were. The activity that the facilitators used have awakened the minds of the learners and encouraged the latter to use their creative problem-solving skills (Samson, 2011).

**Ways of Effective Facilitation** – Based on their list of observations on how effective facilitation works, my research participants have come to realize that pre-planning is essential when using the facilitation strategy. This is supported by Diamond (2009) as she elaborated that effective facilitation can happen when there is a good amount of juggling, judgement, and leadership. Diamond emphasized that during juggling and judgment steps, the facilitator should create a detailed process on how the activities should be performed by the participants, and scrutinized his own procedures to come up with a final output, that is already organized and beneficial for all.

**Characteristics of a Good Facilitator** – My research participants were able to come up with a list of characteristics they have observed on their classmates demonstrating as facilitators.

They have highlighted that a good facilitator is a good stimulator. The facilitator should be a good motivator, a clear, and a reliable source of information and can trigger active interaction. This is supported by Beckett (2011) when he shared his tips on being a good facilitator as a stimulator of discussion. According to him, one should be able to ask questions that prompt discussion.

Another characteristic on the list is accommodating. The research participants emphasized the necessity for the facilitator to promote friendly and safe classroom environment. He should be a good listener and accepts all ideas from the learners and twist them all to align with the topic. McClellan (2011) on his book, *The Functional Facilitator: Because Attitude Is Everything*, he accented the importance of accommodation of facilitators to listeners. He elaborated that no matter how knowledgeable the facilitators are in the content, it is his accommodating attitude matters most, which could label him as an effective facilitator.



**Pros and Cons of Facilitation** – To stress out more about the facilitation as a teaching strategy, the research participants also gave some good points on the advantages and disadvantages of employing such strategy in the classroom.

One advantage which is common in their list is that the strategy could enhance the leadership skills of the facilitator. According to them, it takes a good leadership skill before you can employ facilitation as you will be the one to organize everything and the whole procedures, facilitating learning all throughout the session. One of the research participants confessed that in his experience of using facilitation as a teaching strategy, for him it was both challenging and motivating.

On the other hand, facilitators were also asked on the downside of the strategy, wherein they highlighted that enough preparation is a must. According to them, they do not need just to familiarize the content, but above all the materials they would use in the activities.

**Ways to Improve Facilitation** – In order to address the dilemma stated on the disadvantages of facilitation, my research participants also proposed their solution, which is Pre-Planning Sessions. For them, it is essential that teachers employing facilitation should be able to prepare and plan well the activities to be done by their learners, so that the learning objectives set can be achieved. Diamond (2011) indicated the importance of planning ahead so that the facilitator could draft the activities well, to help the learners attain what is needed to be accomplished.

As I sway my way out of the classroom, bringing the manila papers with me with handwritten outputs of my students, I felt so light and contented. With the very short span of time I dedicated to conduct my study, with the outputs on hand, it gave me an assured feeling that I have resolved an issue, I was able to mend the student's trauma, and initiated the necessary changes for the improvement of a teaching strategy.

Changes can be very crucial, especially when not bended towards positive outcome. It has been a great challenge on my part to propose changes in altering the reporting strategy, when I myself did not recognize any problem about it before. However, as a teacher, I opened my ears to accommodate my student's yearnings, for they should be the center of all the alterations I would impose in my classroom.

As I welcomed the ideas of my students in highlighting facilitation over reporting, I was impressed on how well they have presented their conclusions. Based on the activity we had, they were able to specify individually the characteristics of a good facilitator.

They have drawn their inspiration from their own classmates' performance, those leaders who employed the steps on how facilitation should be done. This thought brought me to a delightful conclusion that they could do it themselves, and with that I am more than proud.

Not all the things we want to change, implies that something is mistakable about it. There could be just an angle that we did not notice, some inner thoughts we left discarded. Welcoming change may not always guarantee satisfying results, yet making a step towards it, is for me means submitting myself for improvement.

I was thankful for my students for being the catalysts of this change. They have triggered me to do something new, something different, and along the journey, they were there to prove themselves that the changes they want are the changes I need.

With so much contentment inside of me, I am now excited to try more new things, as long as it could lead me to become the best version of myself as a teacher.