

# Lecture No. 13

## Effective Interpersonal Skills in Teaching

Effective personal and interpersonal skills underpin professional practice. They have a number of dimensions including empathy, team working, creative thinking, the skill of reflection and a sense of humour. All are underpinned by effective communication skills in their widest sense. These include:

1. effective questioning
2. reflective listening
3. non-verbal communication.

These skills should never be used in isolation. They form an essential part of the dialogue that effective teachers develop with their learners to bring about positive changes in behaviour and to deepen understanding.

### 1. Effective Questioning

Questioning has many dimensions. For example, teachers use it to:

1. check what learners know
2. assess their learning
3. draw on personal experience
4. promote development of practical skills
5. encourage reflection on progress and the learning process.

### 2. Using Discussion

Active learning approaches stimulate discussion and deepen learning; this is particularly effective when learners work in small groups. These subject-focused resources give an overview of classroom practice but draw out some common principles.

To stimulate ideas, view the video clips and consider:

1. What strategies for introducing discussion are evident?
2. What benefits do you think the teacher was looking for?
3. How did the learners respond?
4. What role did the teacher play?
5. What would you describe as good practice?
6. What, if anything, do you think could have been done differently to support learning?

### 3. Managing Groups

Group work is particularly valuable when the aim of learning is to develop conceptual understanding or strategies for solving more challenging problems. In these areas, learners need to share alternative views, interpretations or approaches. In small groups learners are able to check their understanding by explaining, or rehearsing, it in their own words to at least one other person, who could give them instant feedback. It also provides a 'safe' arena in which to ask questions.

You might use the resources as part of a teacher education or professional development programme to address some of the challenges of group management:

1. What can a teacher do to facilitate learning in groups?
2. What can be gained from observing and listening to learners at work?
3. What do you notice about planning and group management strategies?
4. How did the learners benefit from working in groups?
5. What, if anything, do you think could have been done differently, to support learning?
6. What can go wrong with group work? How could you prevent these problems happening?

7. If you are feeling unsure about managing groups, what skills do you most need to develop?

#### **4. Effective Teacher -Personal Skills**

Together with professional skills, effective teachers use their personal skills with the students as these skills play an important role in students learning process, achievement, and behaviour. Some of these skills are as under.

##### **(a) Caring**

Effective teachers care about their students in order to bring the best of each one to encourage learning. Eisner (2002) suggests that “teaching is a caring exercise” which takes an important role in effective learning process. Showing care includes listening to the students, not only when they are in the classroom, but also about their particular lives and/or personal problems. The role of the effective teachers, in this situation, is to be good listeners, paying attention to, and showing understanding through tenderness and patience. Therefore, there is a more effective achievement when the teacher demonstrates that cares about the students and knows them individually.

##### **(b) Knowing the Students Individually**

Caring teachers also know the students individually and give them individual attention and develop productive relationships with their students. They treat their student with respect and expect the same in return, enhancing the students learning progress. It is not enough to know the students in their formal setting (in the classroom: their learning strategies or learning style), but also, to know them in their informal setting (outside the classroom: likes and dislikes, background, their motivation, aptitude and attitude to learn).

##### **(c) Teacher-Students Relationship**

Effective teachers do not only have a teacher-student relationship in the classroom, but also demonstrate interest in students’ lives beyond the classroom, using a wide variety of strategies to interact with them outside the class, and the educational institution. This also encourages students to perform their best in the classroom (Kohn, 1996). The election on the type of social event can be easier if the teacher knows the student’s preferences. Students really appreciate the teacher who attends social event with them, such as the graduation, the end course dinner, a visit to a museum, a local event, a concert, etc. According to Stronge et al. (2004) the social interactions between the teacher and students encourage students leaning and achievement. Besides, this helps introvert or low self-esteem learners to be better integrated in the group. Wolk, (2002) stated that a strong relationship with the students helps to decrease discipline problems.

##### **(d) Classroom Environment**

Wang et al. (1997) found classroom climate to be one of the most important factors to affect students’ achievement, although, on the contrary, it has been a strong predictor of students’ aggression. However, having an optimal relationship with the students helps to create a warm and safe classroom environment so that students can achieve their potential, as they feel safe and confident to attempt new tasks and participate