INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING: A PRIOR SUPPORT UPON BRIDGING LEARNING GAPS

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Not all the students in every class can easily cope with the lessons provided by the teacher. There are fast learners but also often times, there are students who do not learn at the same pace as other students. This is one of the reasons why teachers must think of creative ways in providing sufficient support for the students for them to be guided in their performances in the class. The teacher needs to bridge the learning gaps of the students to help them accomplish the tasks that they find difficult to achieve and must have continuous support until the students can perform well independently, and one strategy that can be applied is the instructional scaffolding.

Edudemic Staff (2014) gives an easy to understand structure to define what scaffolding is -- “teacher does it, the class does it, the group does it, and then the student does it.” It means that the teachers must facilitate learning in which they model or demonstrate how to perform a particular task and offer the needed support by the students. The students will follow what the teacher is doing, and this practice will continue until the students can master the skill or task and can learn independently. The repetitive nature of scaffolding helps students develop stronger skills for handling new material.

According to Mary Firestone (2013), there is a general process in using scaffolding as strategy in teaching. She said that "a teacher begins teaching at the level the students can understand, and then she builds on that understanding." The teacher will first begin with the simplest instruction to more complicated ones and as the process goes by, the students will be able to adapt what the teacher is doing until it becomes a more individual approach until they can handle learning on their own.

To effectively apply scaffolding, the teacher must tap into students' prior knowledge wherein the students will be asked about their perspectives, ideas and opinions about the content or context of the topic being discussed by the teacher and relate those to their lives and own experiences. If there are some chances in which the students seem not to have an idea about the topic, the teacher may drop some clues, hints or suggestions that will lead them into understanding the concept and once they get there, they will grasp the content as their own.

Another is using visual aids such as graphic organizers, pictures and charts which serve as scaffolding tools. The students will be able to visually represent their ideas, organize information, and grasp concepts through these tools. The more
concrete the examples and tools are, the more the students learn better and effectively. These tools can also serve as their support in leading them to the better understanding of the lessons because these make the students think, and be guided to come up with the right concept of the lesson.

Thinking about scaffolds, others might think those structures used in the construction of buildings for instance in which these serve as support for the workers. This is a good metaphor of what scaffolding in education means wherein the teacher is the scaffold and the workers are the students. As long as the students need the support, scaffolding will remain present but once the students can already perform in their own, it will be removed just like when the workers no longer need a scaffold when the building can stand on its own.

References:
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