

Role Of Teachers In Creating Participative Learning Environment

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Abstract

Teachers are leaders in the classroom. They are instructors, managers, role models inside the classroom. The onus of achieving learning outcomes lies with the teachers. It is acclaimed that teachers are responsible for results achieved by students. In the current times, when classroom climate has changed inadvertently due to the entry of technology in teaching learning, the task of teachers has also undergone a paradigm shift, where now teachers are to act as facilitators of learning not as a medium of transmitting knowledge. Accessibility to learning resources have increased. In the changing times when it is being asserted that teaching should be learner centric, teacher has a major role to play in the modern context. Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and student support are focal points of quality education and in all these aspects teacher can play an important and central role. When planning curriculum teachers can work according to the needs at grassroot level. Pedagogical interventions can be made learner centric by utilizing specific local anecdotes in teaching learning. ICT interventions in classroom can help improve teaching learning outcome. Subject specific pedagogical techniques should be employed. Teachers should use technology to share resources and use classroom time for more meaningful discussion. Use technology to enhance communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking in classroom. This becomes more important in which we have to train the learners to become life-long learners as envisaged in NEP 2020. Similarly adopting innovative practices to assess learning is the call of the day. In the same context, when we say that formative assessment should be employed so the teachers' role becomes all together more important. In nut shell teachers' role is holistic in nature, playing important role in the classroom and beyond.

Key Words: Teachers, Inclusive classroom, Pedagogical practices, Curriculum Transaction, NEP 2020.

Introduction

From early days, teachers have been worshipped and adorned for their contribution in developing learned society. Teachers are the torch bearers and have a great role in bringing about positive changes in the society. Recently National Education Policy has been adopted which also places teachers in a fundamental role in effectively implementing the cardinal principles of NEP 2020. This policy is built on five pillars of Accessibility, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. This also puts forward a vision of Education focusing on recognizing, identifying and fostering the unique capabilities of each student. This requires sensitization of teachers, parents and other stakeholders in order to pursue holistic development of children. In the context of Higher Education also the new policy acclaims that 21st century learners must be thoughtful, creative individuals who have a blend of character, ethical and constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service. As per NEP Section 9.1.3, Higher education must enable the development of an enlightened, socially conscious, knowledgeable and skilled nation that can find and implement robust solutions to its own problems. Higher Education must form the basis for knowledge creation and innovation thereby contributing to a growing national economy. It represents the key to foster more vibrant, socially engaged, cooperative communities and a happier, cohesive, productive, innovative, progressive and prosperous nation deeply rooted in its values and culture.

The policy also highlights several shortcomings of the existing higher education system. The most important of these is there is a less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes. This observation is also supported by the fact that at present India has a huge population of unemployed educated youth as well as underemployed graduates. This points out the fact that at present the education system is lacking behind in meeting the requirements of job market as it has failed to produce market friendly individuals with the desired skill set.

In this backdrop it is imperative to introspect our existing curricula as well as its implementation. It is in this context that teachers' role becomes important because teachers work at grassroot level and has an opportunity to work at all levels, beginning from designing curriculum, transacting it in the classroom as well as assessment of individuals to ascertain the learning outcomes.

This paper focuses on interventions at all the three levels in context of Higher Education. As pointed out above that we need to focus on enhancing the employability of our learners. India has rich heritage of teaching learning institutions from primitive times and if we analyze our teaching learning methodologies right from the Vedic times, we shall conclude that all our traditional systems focused on developing the Pragya of learners i.e. developing the ability of critical thinking and problem solving. The same has to be emphasized now a days. We should focus on the principle of lifelong learning and should train the young minds to create knowledge, they should focus on developing idea and innovate. This would be possible only when these young minds are trained to think beyond classroom. Teachers should capitalize on curiosity of learners and help to build creativity of learners.

As stated earlier, teachers working at higher education level have an opportunity to work at ground level, right from designing curriculum, transacting it and assessing it.

Interventions in Planning Curriculum

Teachers while designing curriculum should focus on developing curriculum in the context of socio-economic and cultural needs. This shall have a positive impact on learners as they can better relate concepts in local context as they are familiar to the situations. This helps to create connect with learning. Secondly, such type of curricula will cater to the needs of the youth at local level, help to create employment opportunities as well in long run will result in lowering migration and development of local economy. Thirdly, curricula also should be designed in such a way that it caters to the demand of lifelong learning and curbing rote learning. While designing curriculum real world problems should be addressed along with focus on developing attitudes and values among learners. The main focus should be on engaging students in the learning process. They should be involved in teaching learning process in order to achieve learning outcomes.

At the outset, we shall focus on designing aspect of the curricula. Need analysis should be done as per the national and regional needs, human resource requirement as well as requirements at the global front need to be addressed through the curriculum. Due focus is to be given to development of requisite skill set.

Interventions at level of Curriculum Transaction

The second stage where teachers can play an effective role is the stage of curriculum transaction inside the classroom. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment and creating a welcoming and supporting atmosphere in the classroom. Class is a diversified group in terms of achievement, interests, capacities and cultural settings. It is imperative for a teacher to establish a positive and respectful classroom culture. Students are to be inculcated to indulge in open communication and dialogue that fosters a sense of belonging. Teachers should recognize and appreciate the diversity of students.

At higher education level where the students are more equipped to think and realize different aspects. They need to be creative, problem solvers and effective decision makers. With the growing use of information and communication technology, there is digital distraction among the learners so the conventional methods of teaching being practiced like chalk and talk needs to be changed. Moreover, diversity needs to be addressed by employing varied teaching strategies to accommodate different learning styles and abilities. Teachers need to provide multiple means of representation and engagement to address diverse student needs. The main onus lies with the teacher where he should focus on keeping the students maximally on task and minimally off task. This can take place when learners are engaged and they enjoy classroom activities. Learner centered pedagogical instructional strategies include project and assignment- based approach.

Engaging students requires implementation and deliverance of specifically designed lessons considering various learning preferences and abilities. Attitude of teachers greatly influences teaching learning. Teachers should be empathic towards students. They should develop positive interaction with students, which can be done by creating an informal environment where students are comfortable to ask questions and interact with teachers to resolve their queries and doubts inside the classroom and beyond. Teachers should look forward to help students to realize their full potential. They shall treat students with concern, respect and fairness in order to elicit the best in them.

Secondly, the teachers should take responsibility about their students' well-being and academic performance. In this context, teachers should act as facilitators of learning. Teachers should employ collaborative teaching strategies like projects, experiments, dialogues, games and exercises.

Teacher in the present times has more obligations to impart wisdom such as keeping up with new technology and transforming the learning experience to students. Today we are emphasizing on learner centric pedagogical techniques along with self - paced learning which opens an avenue for online teaching and learning. Teachers need to be well versed in these techniques as well as equipped to integrate technology in teaching. Teachers should identify and address the individual learning needs of students through personalized instruction and support.

Interventions for Learning Assessment

The third area of concern to teachers is the assessment of learning. Conventionally the education system is focusing on the reproduction of learnt knowledge in three hour examination and student being adjudged on the basis of the performance in these examinations. This system lacks flexibility, creativity and real test of knowledge of the students.

Experts are of the opinion that customized assessment techniques should be employed to ascertain learning of students. They are also of the view that formative assessment should be an integral component of the system along with summative assessment. This shall help the development of desired skill set among the learners. Practical examinations should be given more weightage.

Inclusive assessment strategies are crucial to ensuring that every student's progress is accurately measured. Teachers should employ varied assessment methods that accommodate different learning styles and abilities, such as project-based assessments, portfolios, and verbal presentations. The NEP's focus on a holistic and continuous evaluation system also aligns with this approach.

This discussion points out the fact that higher education system has to be transformed in terms of learning experiences being provided to students in the classroom. Whether it is offline or online teaching the student engagement is a critical issue. There is abundance of resources to students due to ICT invasion in our lives but to effectively use these resources the students have to be trained in the art of learning. Learning is an individual experience. Each individual is unique with a specific learning style as well as other psychological traits.

One technique for engaging students in learning is to employ collaborative learning strategies. Teachers should be given opportunities to work on small projects which can be small experiments in laboratory, library assignments or field experiences. This shall help the students to develop concrete learning of the concepts as well as shall make them confident, patient and critical thinkers. When the student tries to solve problems on their own, they tend to become self-reliant, innovative and effective decision makers. All programs of study should include some kind of field experience which shall help students to become skillful.

Strategies for Teaching Learning

In the light of above discussion, we can conclude that teacher today has more obligations to impart wisdom, such as keeping up with new technology and transforming the learning experience to students. Teachers have to deal with digital distraction, diverse student needs, online learning, overload of information and emotional well-being of learners. In conclusion, role of teachers is to adopt the following strategies inside the classroom and beyond:

- 1) **Understanding Diversity:** Teachers play a crucial role in understanding and appreciating the diversity present in their classrooms. This includes differences in learning styles, cultural backgrounds, abilities, and socioeconomic status. By recognizing and respecting these diversities, teachers can create an environment that values and celebrates differences.
- 2) **Differentiated Instruction:** Implementing differentiated instruction is essential to meet the unique learning needs of each student. This involves recognizing the various learning styles and abilities present in the classroom and adapting teaching methods and materials accordingly. The NEP encourages the adoption of flexible teaching methods that accommodate diverse learning needs.
- 3) **Inclusive Learning Materials:** Teachers should ensure that learning materials are inclusive and represent a variety of perspectives. This can help students from different backgrounds see themselves in the curriculum and feel a sense of belonging. The NEP's emphasis on local context and culture aligns with the need for inclusive learning materials that resonate with the diverse student population.

- 4) Promoting Collaborative Learning: Encouraging collaborative learning fosters an inclusive classroom environment. Group activities and projects provide opportunities for students to work together, learn from each other, and appreciate diverse viewpoints. Teachers can facilitate such collaborative experiences that promote inclusivity and teamwork.
- 5) Adapting Assessment Strategies: Inclusive assessment strategies are crucial to ensuring that every student's progress is accurately measured. Teachers should employ varied assessment methods that accommodate different learning styles and abilities, such as project-based assessments, portfolios, and verbal presentations. The NEP's focus on a holistic and continuous evaluation system aligns with this approach.
- 6) Professional Development: Continuous professional development is essential for teachers to stay updated on inclusive teaching practices. The NEP emphasizes the importance of ongoing teacher training and development, providing opportunities for educators to enhance their skills in creating inclusive classrooms.
- 7) Building a Positive and Supportive Environment: Teachers should strive to create a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere where all students feel valued and accepted. Teachers should accept the individual differences of learners and customize learning experiences to enrich learning environment. This includes addressing any instances of discrimination or bias promptly and promoting empathy and understanding among students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers play a vital role in bringing the principles of inclusivity outlined in the National Education Policy into practice. By understanding and embracing diversity, employing inclusive teaching methods, and creating a supportive learning environment, educators contribute significantly to the development of an inclusive and equitable education system. Teachers' new role required them to be more committed and responsible. As a result, he or she must possess complex management skills that enable them to handle information by scrutinizing the sources' credibility and validity. They must manage and compare the interests or expectations of students with the syllabus's purpose to achieve the expected instructional objectives. Instructional practices, in turn, depend on what teachers bring to the classroom. Professional competence is believed to be a crucial factor in classroom practice.

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