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Are We on the Right Track? A Review of Teaching Methodologies

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Abstract

Successful life in a scientific and technically developed world is not entirely based on mere technical expertise. This changed global world is in need of individuals who have understanding along with practical experience in people skills that is, soft skills. This paper deals with the cumulative training of the students to extract improvement in students as well as our teaching methods? This is the fundamental question every teacher tries to answer in his/her professional period. The main objective of this question is to come out with a class room teaching methodology in which students will be able to interact with the teachers and never feel frustrated on the lack of ability to interact with teachers. Many suggestions come from the minds of the experienced faculty as well as new members to this community. This paper aims to identify all the issues involved in the meager interaction between students and teachers and discuss the responsibilities of the profession.

Keywords: Role of Teacher, soft skills, education system.

Introduction

Today's world is globally connected, witnessed high growth and is ever changing complex system. One of the connected complexities is new challenges. We often encounter talented people who excel in technical competence but whose career is at a stake with the lack of social skills. These skills can be traced back to one's 'Sanskars'. At these cross roads the need for training and development systems and processes are expected to bring the desired result. Being a member of the teaching fraternity we have been a part of warm discussions on "how to bring improvement in students as well as our teaching methods?" Discussions on the teaching methodologies and getting different views from number of teachers are

not the new practices that belong to teaching profession. So many times students are also part of this discussion. So it can be notified what actually they feel about the ongoing teaching practices so that teaching can be made more effective for their benefit.

Teachers always say that students are not motivated and lack enthusiasm to adapt to analytical and logical methods and understanding the subject. All they need is subjective or theoretical knowledge which can be easily digestible. Quality job depends on knowledge of the relative subject and good communication skills. But as we all know that they can be sustained only for a very short span of time with only theoretical knowledge. This is just the fear of the students about practical knowledge or wrong phenomenon spread by someone else into their innocent minds. Whatever

is the reason for this, it's our responsibility to withdraw them from sailorship of the boat of knowledge with a big hole of this negative phenomenon and make them marshals of a ship which always leads to success. Many educationists suggested many theories in literature for improvement in the teaching learning process. All these theories are not other than the practices they used to mould them as successful teachers.

This paper is organized in VI sections. Section I describes the principle role which must be played by any teacher in the student's life. Section II will elaborate different phases of teaching. Section III discusses the evaluation of our track in the teaching profession while Section IV comprises of the suggestions made during discussions on improvement in teaching and students. Section V belongs to the teaching methodologies and the last Section will conclude the whole scenario of teaching practices.

The Role of Teacher

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan defined teacher as: "The teacher's place in society is of vital importance. He acts as the pivot for the transmission of intellectual traditions and technical skills from generation to generation and helps to keep the lamp of civilization burning." Henry Von Dyke has said about teachers and teaching "Ah! There you have the worst paid and the best rewarded of vocations. Do not enter it unless you love it. For the vast majority of men and women it has no promise of wealth and fame, but they to whom it is dear for its own sake are among the nobility of mankind". A teacher is "king of himself and leader of the mankind"¹. These words say everything about the teacher and the role which must be played by him in the student's life.

Teachers are the main guide for the students whose responsibility is to identify the strong areas as well as weak areas of the students. Teachers must guide them work around their strong points by overcoming the weak points. It is said that students always follow their role model. In this case a teacher works as a role model indirectly in their life. Teachers must create the characteristics of getting updated on the new concepts and how to apply or make them available to the running old concepts to enhance the outcome. If we as teachers are not taking the responsibility to make students aware of these new theories how will students come to know what is useful from a knowledge basket of an ocean size.

In one of the faculty development seminars delivered by Dr. Gaurav Bissa, I came through the four different terms used for a teacher, which are "ADHYAPAK", "UPADHYAY", "ACHARYA", and "GURU". I thank Dr. Bissa for explaining all these terms in meaningful manner in that seminar. They define "ADHYAPAK" as a person who used to teach without any practical approach. "UPADHYAY" is somehow ahead to "ADHYAPAK" by taking a challenge to teach with a set of examples taken from the past or current practical scenario and guide students with his wisdom. If a teacher teaches by setting an example of him and inspires students to follow the path of hard work associated with success then it will be "ACHARYA". "ACHARYA" word itself suggests that character (AACHARAN) of a teacher should be inspirational for the students to follow. The last word belongs to the teacher who dispels darkness from student's life and moves them towards success. As a student, I prefer to take guidance from a "GURU".

While lecturing something in front of any type of audience, the speaker must think of few things like content, its arrangement so that lecture will be interesting, delivery of content should be unambiguous and clearly understandable, and finally control over anxiety².

Lecturing is not an art of standing in front of a class and throwing the knowledge you know. It is a combination of vocal modulations, gestures, movements, facial expressions, and eye contact. The entire set of these factors will influence lectures quality.

It is always required for a teacher that he should never restrict himself to his own subject, or area of specialization. He should be well known with all aspects related to the theories he teaches. Planned lecture must possess real life examples, the details of the Technical Part, the Managerial Aspect, or the Artistic touch, which will give more finesse to the subject. His communication skills should be impeccable³.

If we simply put teaching as project then project management phases like planning, monitoring and controlling during execution and termination analysis can be used to classify the role of teacher in different phases of teaching like pre teaching, teaching and post teaching. Pre teaching phase is concerned with the planning of their teaching method. During teaching phases all the action planned by him must be actually realized and can be re-planned as per requirement according to the student's response. The post teaching phase is the phase of review and analysis of the methodologies taken into account during teaching

makes some difference from the last analysis or review result.

Insight into Phases of Teaching

As described in section one, pre teaching, teaching execution and post teaching are classified phases of teaching. During the pre teaching phase content specification will be decided which comprises the details of the topics and time required to complete those topics. Different educational councils as well as quality organizations have suggested many ways to prepare a teaching plan. The most important part with this specification is the set of examples according to current trends must be identified at the time of planning. A proper planning will help teacher to maintain the momentum of the lecture. They have also to define the strategy for conducting the test and its evaluation methods.

In the second phase i.e. actually a teaching phase, lecture content prepared and planned by him are delivered. While delivering the lecture they have to be very calculative about the body language of the students. Delivery should be in a manner through which a passive student can become active member of the student audience. Latest examples related to theories normally not covered in many of the books must be introduced to students in formal discussion.

The last phase of the teaching is evaluating the work done by the students through different evaluation methods. This analysis is basically an analysis of the methods you have used for content sharing through lectures is able to add an upper edge to your last analyzed method. Definitely result analysis of students has different meanings to students but for teachers its main goal is to analyze whether students grasped the concept as they thought during the planning phase of teaching.

Evaluation: Do we follow the same Practices?

All the phases of the teaching are defined in the manner by which a novice teacher starts his/her action of teaching in a disciplined manner and prove him/her in front of students that he will become a good teacher.

But major problem is that many of the teachers are not taking this as a serious profession. The first question that must come to a new appointed teacher is that "What is the best teaching practice to teach?" But instead of thinking about this question, they are getting a worst input

feedback from uncommitted teachers that "students don't know about the subject". A mind with this opinion is actually distracted from the genuine path of teaching and they even not try to deliver content in a planned manner. Unplanned lecture definitely bores the students and then what will happen we can understand that there will be a gap created between student and teacher. As a teacher we should try not to create these gaps or fill this type of gaps generated by someone else.

To make improvements in the teaching learning process evaluations must be done from time to time by the organization, based on the collected data which shows effectiveness of the teaching. It is also our responsibility to evaluate ourselves and our teaching practices and tries to identify black holes in that because no one can be defined perfect without evaluations.

Some of the evaluation methods that can be used are self monitoring or self evaluation, audio video recording, student's feedback on teaching, group interviews, feedback from observation by other colleagues and experts⁴.

Evaluation of us will take some time but at the end good evaluation with proper actions will lead to good teaching practices. A successful evaluation generates outcomes that are valid, reliable and indicate directions and action for improvement. Everyone may have some shapes of teaching where they need to do some improvements. Self evaluation of a lecture can be made by taking feedback from the audience based on different criteria at the end of the lecture itself. Some of the criteria are length of lecture, demonstration and audiovisual sessions, if taken, are truthful. The response collected through this technique will help to enhance the quality of future sessions.

Suggestions

Suggestions are an outcome of a discussion made on how to improve student's quality. Here are some of the suggestions normally suggested by any team involved during such sessions:

- 1) Motivate students through delivering motivational lecture sessions.
- 2) Improve their communication ability through seminars from time to time.
- 3) Define a Dress Code for students as well as teachers to maintain everything in a disciplined channel.
- 4) Define proper syllabus and then follow that only.
- 5) Appreciate students as well as teachers on their good work.

- 6) Introduce tutorial system in an effective manner.
- 7) Start Daily Progress Reports (DPR) for teachers.

By going through these suggestions one can identify that students are responsible for their current performance whether it is good or not up to the mark of expectations.

As a teacher I think we have to question ourselves, what have we done for them. First analyze whether we are up to the mark or not or may be responsible for their situation.

First thing to be noticed is student's motivation. People say that students normally do what they are getting from their seniors. We, the authors must say that same rule applies to us also. Experienced persons have to set their example for motivation to get success. But what normally happens is that things which are notorious or may be not good for our experience will be taken more attention than those good examples. Here we take the example of reference books for teaching. If we as teachers restrict ourselves to follow only one book over a period of time, we are actually moving to knowledge box which may be full of new theories and latest examples. Similarly, how can we restrict the students especially of higher professional courses to a specific book? Instead of diverting them to only one book we have to create a scene by which they can understand the usefulness of the study of very good books as well as reference books.

Always it said that group discussion is the best way to improve communication skills. Group discussion can be started at different locations with different perspectives. Present scenario of the world is the overall topic which can be used for group discussion. Presentation delivery is one more mode which can be used for improvement in communication skills. Both modes are used to remove the introvert and hesitation characteristics of the students who in turn trained to speak out in front of good audience. As an effect of this they will automatically try to improve communication skills by themselves.

Dress code in the institute definitely looks good and maintains decorum of institute but what happens if the person as a teacher or student does not understand the decorum of institute. In this situation how can we justify the use of dress in the institute?

Appreciation to the students as well as teachers will definitely add an upper edge to their work efficiency. They know they are noticed and now they have worked more and they will also be rewarded for that.

Is tutorial system beneficial to the students? Answer to this question varies from person to person based on their perspective regarding tutorial. Tutorial system is the way through which students can express their problem to teachers as well as be benefited from the questions raised by the teacher. Ultimate goal of this system is to move ahead by resolving the problems associated with the content.

Related to Daily Progress Report (DPR) system for teacher, we must think whether it is applicable to teachers or not and yes then what will be the performance for that? How teacher's progress report can be generated? How it can be analyzed? For teacher's progress we can use the feedback system where students give feedback to teachers for many criteria based questions.

So many other suggestions not listed above have a word phrase "PRESSURIZE" i.e. suggestions of improvement through pressure. We must say that we need to pressurize them for improvement rather we have to insist them for it. No definition of the teacher suggests that things can be done better by pressurizing others. First we have to insist ourselves for improvement and set an example then try to open student's mind to progress by insisting them.

Teaching Methodologies from Literature

Initially teaching is done by taking students into example and try to make them learn from moral of the example. Most of the students say that teachers are unable to express themselves properly during the whole session of a lecture. There are many different practices suggested by educationists for the same. Modern education methodologies are one of the ways to remove the phrase "It's just boring" from the lectures.

From initial teaching phase till now theories are increased which cannot be related to any formula. Teaching methodologies also change from time to time with increased number. So many innovations are done to enhance the effective delivery mode of teaching. These innovations come from black board teaching to white board with presentations, teaching with interactive video aids. But all these innovations require dedication of the teacher to make this effective. A simple black board teaching can be more effective and knowledge learning than a video presentation. All these methods will be effective if they are well planned and managed.

Classroom response systems, document problem solving, cooperative learning, quantitative writing, enhancing teaching and learning through media are few of examples of the methodologies which can be applied in to teaching environment. Classroom response system can be a hardware or software tool by which we can increase involvement of the students in to class and quick response to questions posted by the teacher. With this feedback can be immediately collected. Through document problem solving method students can be benefited by identifying the step needed to solve any problem. With this their problem solving competence will be increased and integrate them with pedagogical practices. Cooperative learning practices suggest making group of students who will work together to solve the problems. All these groups must be working in such a way that individual success is based on the group success. This method does not mean that few members of the group add their names to the work done by one or few enthusiastic students.

Quantitative analysis is to involve students into thinking scenario of scientific problems. Instead of only going through the formulas and applying them; they need to build skills of how these scientific theories, principles or formulas are implemented as different concepts. For this, problem should be generated in the manner of how answers must include claims with supportive reasons and proper justifications⁵.

All these interactive lecturing methods possess characteristics of active involvement of students as well teachers, increased attention and motivations, a new kind of learning, regular and fast feedback system, increase satisfaction of students and teachers⁶.

Training to be offered to the students and methods:

- Practice-oriented training methods and education on university level which includes the state-of-the-art presentation software to present technical aspects.
- Following a strictly organized schedule
- Optimal tutoring in reasonably sized-groups
- Adapting contents in line with international developments
- Maintain relations with trade and industry through lectures, joint projects and internships
- Undertaking doctoral degree programs to develop interdisciplinary technical, methodical and social competence

- Consolidating soft skills training measures to develop a high level training programme.
- Improving training material considering trends and the results of evaluation forms

Being a trainer the lecturer should develop the most essential technique in the students to be successful i.e. self-management. It is the blend of problems assessment, goals setting, time management and environmental influence. Integrating self-management training in the academic sessions and motivating students on learning these is complex as it is connected with the other skills. They are academic skills, assertion skills and so on.

Impact of personality development on improving presentation skills

In the recent past research has been intensified in communication apprehension to bring out the best training strategies to drive out the fear of speaking in front of groups. Making decisions about personality development is tough because it is difficult for an individual to accept that negative personality exists in him/her. Nothing comes without hard word in this world and trying to come out of barriers on one's own is normal in this world. In this global village every task is attained through team work. Theoretical perspective to learning suggests that it is the best way in which knowledge is constructed and developed and deep understanding and learning is developed.

All these practices will help to go ahead on the path of success but we cannot expect overnight results from it. It must be implemented as regular practice into teaching environment. Year by year these practices will automatically include qualities in teaching learning process.

Conclusion

This paper is intended to identify and discuss the gap between theory and practice of teaching profession and methods of teaching and the unclear picture of self-management skills development needs of students. It is written to discuss the ongoing practices in teaching profession without pointing to the individual's teaching methodologies. Being a part of this profession, ethics say that we are responsible to repay to our students, institution effectively to make brighter society. As a teacher one needs to focus on their

actual role towards the students and then analyze their running practices to check whether they satisfy their objectives of the role or not. By making a practice of continuous monitoring and evaluating teaching over a time, teaching can be improved by overcoming the negative issues or shortcomings identified in the evaluations.

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