

Effective Teachers- Need of the Hour

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a noble profession that demands the heart and soul of a teacher. However, over a period of time teaching is moving towards mere delivery of the content by the teacher in the classroom without considering its effectiveness. Nonetheless, the aim of teaching remains the same i.e., effective learning. The probability of effective learning increases with the help of teachers who consider various needs of students and involve pedagogical analysis, interactive student-teacher relationships, create healthy classroom environment, provide specific assessment, fair evaluation, motivate and encourage independent thinking. An effective teacher along with having good subject knowledge also should possess organizational, managerial, professional, and personal skills to create a better learning environment. The teaching-learning process becomes effective when the teacher-student relationship is developed during the course of training. This paper endeavors to present the attributes of an effective teacher who would contribute optimally to the learning community.

Key Words: Effective teaching, Effective learning, Pedagogy, Teaching-learning process

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching learning process becomes effective when teacher-student relationship is developed during the course of training. Now - a - days teaching has turned out to be mere delivering the content in the classroom without taking in to account its' effectiveness. However the aim of teaching never gets changed. It shall be to produce effective learning. This objective can only be achieved through effective teachers. Soul of effective teaching resides with various parameters like:

1. Teaching pedagogy
2. Student-teacher relationship,
3. Class room environment,
4. Providing specific assignment,
5. Fair evaluation,
6. Motivating and encouraging independent thinking.

All these require certain qualities i.e. along with possessing good subject knowledge an effective teacher should also possess organizational professional and personal skills for effective teaching process. An effective teacher should always keep in mind that teaching is a dynamic process. Therefore, challenge is to keep pace with the evolving era of new pedagogical tools and technology. Goal of teaching is also to prepare learner for self- learning as a continuous process. Pedagogy i.e. art

and science of teaching plays an important role in effective teaching. Pedagogical analysis and approaches should be flexible and should address to differences existing in the class room. No single approach fits all just like chemistry. Different chemicals are mixed to give rise to a specific compound, similarly different combinations and permutations of instructional objectives and equipment are required to satisfy needs of each and every learner in the class room. Each topic required different approach even in the same lesson. According to Gurney (2007) it is advised to reflect on the doings in the classroom rather than theory and practice. Pedagogy is based on perception and attitude. Primary goal of teaching is to impart learning to the students keeping in mind overall development of the child. The latter can be achieved effectively through an effective teacher. Teaching often referred as occupation or profession is actually a complex process where any individual or group of individuals are being imparted learning in terms of knowledge, skill and attitude. Teachers must be prepared with master plan for each lesson just like architecture so as to give a right direction to channelize the energy, enthusiasm and learning capabilities of students. Effective teaching learning methodologies ensure that classroom becomes favourite place to learn.

2. HOW TO MAKE TEACHING EFFECTIVE?

Teaching is an interactive process which primarily focuses on interaction occurring between teacher and learner while doing specific tasks and activities to achieve certain learning objectives. According to Holt (1964) “Learning is enhanced and students want to take up the challenge of thinking and questioning on a specific topic given if a teacher is knowledgeable, passionate, enthusiastic, creates warm class room climate.” Ultimate goal of teaching is to produce learning and this can be done effectively if certain points are considered and followed by an effective teacher.

- Catering to specific needs of learner
- Designing specific pedagogy
- Clarity of objectives before delivery of content
- Knowing necessary professional and personal skills

It is the need of the hour to understand that learning is a process and not product. It involves all those experiences a learner is exposed to during teaching. It intends to influence behavioural potential of learner and prepare him to adapt better to every situation making necessary decisions thereof. Effective teaching is an art of affecting overall personality of the learner while respecting his individuality. Effective teaching occurs when

- Teacher has clarity about the needs of the learner
- Instructional design takes into account holistic development
- Three domains viz. cognitive, affective and psychomotor to be addressed equally
- Positive learning environment is created Learner is positively engaged
- Acknowledging and valuing previous experiences and knowledge of learner
- Pedagogy based on strengths and interests of learner
- Usage of array of pedagogical tools and strategies by exposing learners to various sources and opportunities
- Encouraging students to challenge their limits
- Providing safe and cordial learning environment both physically and emotionally
- Focusing on building positive and strong relationship with learners
- Building self confidence in learners
- Regular feedback by the learners

2.1 Teaching Approach in Context to Learning Theories

Learner centric approach is the best to be followed as it focuses on learners as active individuals and not treating them as 'empty vessels'. Effective teacher acts as mentor and guide and aims at developing autonomous and independent thinkers ready to accept challenges. Students are equally involved in decision making and respect is given to their experiences, ideas and views. Constructivist approach to learning must be followed as proposed by Swiss clinical psychologist Piaget in 1978. According to him, "Children cognitively construct knowledge and meaning through new experiences and interactions based on in relation to existing schemes as opposed to memorization." Infact, "Any new information that fits into an existing concept or fact is easily understood than information that does not fit in to existing scheme (Slavin 1988)." As Gardner who takes care of each and every seed properly and tries to create an ecosystem so that each and every plant flourishes at optimal level, a teacher shall also take care of individual students by creating warm classroom climate so that needs of every learner is addressed. Many learning theories have been proposed signifying the fact that children and adults use mental patterns i.e., schemes to guide behaviour or cognition and interpret new experiences based on previous ones. (Vygotsky 1978) mentions about zone of proximal development for each learner which is bounded on one side by developmental threshold necessary for learning and on the other side by the upper limit of the learners' current ability to learn the specific material.

2.2 Characteristics of Effective Teacher

An effective teacher do not teach merely with the intention of delivery of the content but focuses on effective learning to motivate students as independent thinkers and task masters. In 2000 Borich elaborated that "five factors viz., teacher task orientation, content clarity, engagement in learning process, success rate of students and instructional variety frame the responsibilities of an effective teacher." Killen (2006) explained "an effective teacher with clear purpose and specific teaching goals." Therefore, an effective teacher should have certain attributes which makes him stand out in teaching community.

- Responsible
- Positive attitude
- Flexible
- Fair
- Practical
- Social
- Goal oriented
- Keeping high expectations
- Passionate
- Committed to students and learning
- Master of subject
- Personal, Professional and organizational skills
- Consider contextual realities
- Member of learning community
- Organised and systematic
- Constant self-evaluation
- Sense of humour
- Welcomes criticism
- Evolves professionally and explore new teaching methods.

- Believes in establishing collaborative and positive learning environment.
- Professional growth through training programs and courses.

2.3 Professional and Personal Skills

It does not merely involve having a deep content knowledge to be an effective teacher but also communication of professional, personal, organisational skills, organising instructions, providing relevant assessments and fair evaluation, creating effective classroom environment, promoting enthusiasm, motivation and building an interactive teacher student relationship. According to Gibbs (2002), “An effective teacher shall be able to meet and adapt the demands, threats and challenges prevailing in the varied environment of teaching. He further elaborated that an effective teacher should have open approach to changing advanced approaches of teaching and be prepared in case of failure.” Stronge and his team in 2004 stated that, “the nature of teaching is vocational and effective teachers are fervent about their chosen profession. Passion is contagious so that it affects the learners to achieve their learning objectives with proper clarity.” Effective teacher should always be a good learner too as day by day new advances are coming in technology, skills and curriculum design. Teacher should be able to keep pace with the changes. Teacher also serves as an effective link between school and society besides being master of his subject he shall also be knowing how to manage classroom and students in terms of discipline, work, interaction among teachers and students, students and students. Effective teachers can be distinguished by their passion, dedication and taking responsibility for the achievement and failures of their students. They believe that each and every student can be motivated to challenge his limits and nobody in class is so poor to learn nothing. In latter case (if any) the only need is to motivate and encourage them to discover their own potential.

2.3.1 Knowledge of the subject

It is generally considered to be the first and foremost requirement to be an effective teacher. According to Reynolds and Muijs in 1999. “A good content knowledge helps a teacher to respond to spontaneous question of students.” “Symbol of a great teacher is effective delivery of content (Ferguson and Womackl 1993).” This quality helps to enhance learning environment of the classroom.

2.3.2 Pedagogical analysis

Outcome of effective teaching should be effective learning and it's a continuous process. As the learning environment is dynamic and constantly changes therefore, it comprises of all activities which help to cater to the needs of both learner and trainer to adapt in the heterogeneous environment around. To achieve this better learning pedagogy plays an important role. Teacher shall always analyse the given content material of any subject, any topic with the aim of producing best learning. He should be ready with the master plan of the lesson to be taught i.e. pedagogy. The latter gives the framework of activities to be taken by the teacher. Most importantly decision of cardinal objectives of instructional pedagogy should be based on expectation sets for learners of particular stage of development in relation to their culture, social and familial contexts. Systematic execution of content analysis, instructional objectives, techniques, instructional aid and equipment and last but not the least suggesting appropriate evaluation strategies viz. oral, written activities etc. is required to make a pedagogy learner friendly (Figure 1). Complexity of pedagogy can be simplified by pedagogical analysis i.e. by breaking the content material into simpler units and subtopics and so on as per requirement. For example if the concept of photosynthesis has to be taught in class then it shall be fragmented into simpler subtopics like modes of nutrition viz. autotrophic heterotrophic, examples of each category, sites of chemical reaction, processes and cycles involved etc.

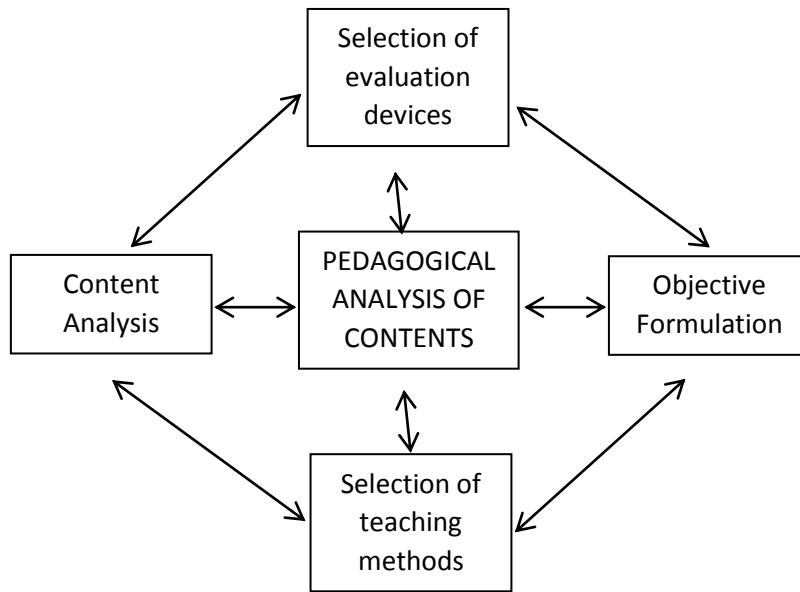


Figure 1. Various components of pedagogical analysis (Bhowmik et al., 2013)

2.3.3 Development of healthy classroom environment

It includes managing and organising the classroom right in the beginning of the session based on students' needs and preferences so as to enhance learning environment. Classroom management like managing the notice boards, seating arrangement is usually at high priority for an effective teacher. Management does not mean formulation of strict rules. In fact it takes into account students' needs and preparing suitable plan, procedures, task and assessment, instruction so as to promote and encourage effective learning. An optimal learning environment must be provided to every student where they feel comfortable in terms of decoration accessibility and mobility. Even furniture arrangement of a classroom matters as demonstrated by Kohn (1996). Good instructional design minimises the likelihood of misbehaviour in class and discipline is promoted. According to Kyriacou (1998) misbehaviour can be minimised by skilful teaching.

2.3.4 Respecting individual differences

Effective teacher always give personal touch to learning of every student. He understands that students develop up at different rates and they have range of abilities and attitudes. No matter what the subject is teacher must feel the pulse of a classroom. Instead of following a similar pattern, teaching methods must be modified to maintain a high level of interest and passion among the students. Not every student learn in the same manner as many of them learn through various learning opportunities available and rest need training through direct teaching and subsequently put under learning requirements. An effective teacher always helps students to learn on their own from their environment, peer group and various sources available.

2.3.5 Communication skills

An effective teacher should communicate clearly about course objectives, content, assessment and evaluation criteria. "Lack of communication skills and confidence in teacher will hamper the students learning (Bandura 1997)." With good communication skills a teacher can act as a motivating leader to encourage students to take challenges in life. Moreover humour adds flavour to teaching making it more interesting. Effective teachers need not to be clowns but sometimes cracking jokes and speaking things on a lighter note breaks the monotony of the classroom and negative cold barriers.

2.3.6 Fairness

Fairness, equity and respect are other vital characteristics of an effective teacher highly appreciated by the students. A democratic environment must be maintained in class room so that every student has a fair chance to speak. All students must be treated equally ignoring their culture, social and familial background. This trait of a teacher fetches him a great respect in the eyes of students.

2.3.7 Assessment and evaluation

A good way to communicate high expectations and achieve better understanding of assimilated and accommodated concepts by the student is through giving him challenging tasks involving real world problems for the specific topic. This type of assessment not only enhances the learning but also gives learner an opportunity to identify the gap areas. Effective teachers have skills to put in alternative assessment techniques in practice leading to rational evaluation system. They make sure that students know their learning objectives clearly. Throwing light upon assessment criteria in advance encourages students to take greater responsibility. Effective teachers not only take into account formal procedures and grades during assessment but also rely on informal responses gathered during the session, classroom activity etc. This information is used by an effective teacher to improve their instructional strategies to improve learning. According to Cameron (2002), “Students should develop an understanding to consider evaluation as part of the learning process and not merely a formality to pass the subject.” Assessment strategies can benefit students in enhancing their learning environments by peer tutoring, cooperative learning and questioning, summarising and collaborative reasoning.

2.3.8 Empathetic Attitude

A teacher should always remember his period as a student to understand the psychological, emotional and behavioural differences of students in a better way. Sometimes a personal touch to students can do miracles by motivating them to be a good learner. Eisner in 2002 suggested that, “teaching is a caring and an emotional exercise which aims for effective learning process.” Knowing students personally and caring about their problems needs a teacher to be a patient listener too. At the same time it is required to respect the confidentiality issues also. An environment must be created so that students’ do not hesitate and discuss their personal issues easily and comfortably. An effective teacher tries his best to resolve the pertinent issues also. An effective teacher is sensitive, understanding, trustworthy, honest and full of love and emotion towards his students. He always respects students and knows their hobbies, likes and dislikes, background, aptitude, attitude and their motivation level to develop best relationship with them.

2.3.9 Teacher Student Relationship

Teacher student relationship is not only limited to the classroom boundaries but for an effective teacher it goes much beyond it. Effective teacher uses a varied range of approaches to interact with students outside the class to foster this relationship. Activities like excursions, trips and visits to local places etc. can be organised to nurture it further. Stronge et al(2004) recommends, “that social interactions beyond class room learning between the teacher and students, motivates them to learn and achieve better. This further helps introvert and learners with low esteem to get engaged with within the group by increasing their participation and encouraging them to better adjust to the learning community.”

3. CONCLUSION

To conclude it takes heart and soul to be an effective teacher. Passion for the profession, content knowledge, pedagogy, dedication to students, openness for evolving technologies, readiness for taking up challenges, professional and personal skills are the attributes of an effective teacher.

Creation of an ecosystem in classroom where every student feels comfortable involves a great teacher-student relationship. Effective teachers should understand that teaching is a dynamic process. Learner centric approach with constructivism is another vital characteristic of effective teaching. Therefore the need of the hour is that teachers should inspire students to reach their optimal potential of learning through their personal and professional qualities. To sum up “*Teachers like leaves everywhere abound, effective teachers like fruits are rarely found.*”

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