

LEARNER – CENTERED TEACHING

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In a traditional classroom, the teacher speaks, the students listen. In a student-centered classroom, the students speak and the teacher listens and the teacher acts not only as teacher, but as both facilitator and activator. One major change in educational system is the shift in paradigm from a teacher-centered classroom to a learner-centered classroom. This shift makes the students more responsible for their education. Teachers now need to take an active role in developing the learning process as well as teaching students how to learn.

One of the important points to developing a student-centered classroom and learning environment is to create ongoing projects for students. Ongoing projects promote mastery of subject matter being taught and learned. Learning objectives and standards, for just about any subject matter, can be met through well-designed projects and activities. And providing students with various project choices allows them to demonstrate what they're learning.

Providing students the opportunity to lead in the classroom is a great way to develop a student-centered learning environment that fosters engagement, growth and empowers students to take ownership of the learning experience. Each day consider allowing a few students to each take charge of an individual activity, even if the activity requires content skills beyond the level of the students. Then rotate students between leadership roles so each student gets the opportunity to lead an activity.

Dorothy Strickland and Shannon Riley-Ayers point out that 'Early literacy plays a key role in enabling the kind of early learning experiences that research shows are linked with academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates and enhanced productivity in adult life.' In the higher classes in schools and colleges these skills are further strengthened based on the foundation laid in the

primary stage and also depending on the participative nature of the teacher and the taught. The regularity in attending this training and the whole hearted nature of teaching learning produces the average performance of an educational system or a society. With this as background we need to look at the factors related to the critical comments on the language skills of our students.

There is a saying that teaching is the noblest profession and that as the teachers we have to help learners, whether they are willing or unwilling, to develop good communication. There is no doubt that a motivated teacher can work wonders in the students in favorable or unfavorable situations, but how many of such teachers are available in our system. There may be several factors that hinder a slow learner, but without going deep into all those socio, economic, physical or psychological reasons, the teacher has to find out if such students are performing well outside the classroom. If they are doing well outside, then we have to surmise that they have a problem with the process of education, and it is here that the role of the teacher assumes paramount importance.

In order to increase the average performance of a class we have to strengthen the process of education. A slow learner initially desires to learn but he may have a problem with the process. Here teacher motivation, peer assistance will be of greater help. The teacher and in turn the system must provide for special remedial classes for such students. In such classes, in addition to imparting language, attention must be bestowed on how the student's self image may be improved. Further the teacher has to try to increase the attention span of the students to what is being taught and why it is relevant or useful to him. It should be the endeavor of the teacher to develop the self-expression of such students and to raise their self-esteem. They may be

encouraged in such special classes to try to compete with one another and gradually with others in general classes or with even gifted students. While identifying slow learners is the first step, handle them is really a challenging task for the teacher. It demands great patience, minute observation and equipped with good method of teaching technique, moreover a compassionate human heart.

Another way is to bring the learners to write something on the black board making them feel that they too can contribute in a class. It develops their self-esteem and makes him feel good. This may involve the student's real life situation which bring out his emotions and there may be instances where a particular student may be overwhelmed by the flow of ideas and struggling for words, and in such situation the teacher has to first ask his classmates to come to his rescue and provide the words and sentences for his feelings and if the student is not satisfied with their suggestions then the teacher may supply some alternatives and allow the student to pick his own answer. In such activities the teacher may move around the class and speak to the students for a while, involving them in the activity, and make them learners with an enthusiasm.

In all these methods the students take the teachers in to confidence and getting needed emotional and moral support. The teacher, particularly a language teacher, has to bring humor in the class to create interest. He should make learning fun and comfortable. The positive attitude of a teacher is very important and in the general classes he should allot extra time for asking questions and in helping weaker students answering them.

For all this to become a reality the teacher has to be patient and consistent in his efforts as a teacher. Some graded challenges may be thrown to the students and make them believe that the objectives in such classes are achievable. In such smaller classes individual attention can be shown which boosts their confidence and the friendly environment is conducive for learning. But, the teacher has to take special care to reduce or totally remove any distractions in learning. In some of the colleges teachers change the seating positions of the student to promote their attentiveness.

In such classes students may also be encouraged to act as a teacher and this promotes a love for being a peer teacher. Care should be taken to clarify what is required of a student when is acting as a peer teacher. They should be given clear directions which may be written on the board. This not only helps the volunteer to aim for accuracy but also enables others to check, guide or correct him. All this would become an involved activity and it makes the students partners in the learning process and drives away their apathy.

After such special classes the teacher may encourage the slow learners to mingle with others in the general classes and conduct common tests along with others. The tests should be graded from simple to complex from oral to multiple choice questions, true or false, fill in the blanks to develop their self confidence. And after that they may be encouraged to go for writing longer answers. But the after each test the teacher should provide short feedback to the learners but without embarrassing them or creating threatening environment. The teacher should never scold a learner for committing error thus giving scope for extra psychological burden. Even while using a standardized test the teacher can't ignore the problem of the child.

Some teachers making students exchange the answer papers of the student and asking them to evaluate those papers under the guidance of the teachers. This has a positive effect and provides ample opportunities to learners from their peers. They can develop their own vocabulary, sentence structure and even the calligraphy from their classmates. From among the students, by consensus, a teacher can select and place a student as in charge of the class and give some time for the class to interact under the tutelage of a peer-teacher. This will prove to be an activity of rewarding nature and it boosts the motivation of the students and makes them complete their tasks in the given time frame.

To improve the lot of the students the teacher has to be conscious of his own capabilities. Some common excuses given by teachers are lack of training, lack of time, lack of support from students' family but these can be overcome if a coordinated

attempt is made by all teachers to help the lot of the students, and in turn help the lot of the society. We may follow such methods to help them create a civic infrastructure that unites stakeholders around shared goals, measures and results in education, supporting the success of every child, cradle to career.

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