

MANAGING UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOMS: USING MIXED METHOD FOR THE EFFECTIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Abstract

The practice of teaching has been evolving from time to time with the advent of changing trends in the society. Basically there are two approaches: one is Student-Centered and the other is Teacher-Centered approach. There is a shift from Teacher-Centered approach to Student-Centered approach based on the availability of sources in the field of teaching. But, Indians being non-native speakers of English require a mixed approach where two approaches are blended according to the needs of the students. Their psychological, social and economic factors play a major role in teaching learning mechanism. A Tai Chi model of education focuses on the dynamic blending of both approaches. In short, Tai Chi philosophy advocates for a perspicacious thought of teacher to explore a dynamic complementary approach rather than using a particular model constantly not realizing the type of students and their needs.

Keywords : Student-Centered approach, Teacher-Centered approach, Mixed Method, Tai Chi model

1. Introduction

In response to the present generation living conditions, the question of how teaching learning outcomes can be enhanced remains one of the challenges in undergraduate classrooms especially, in developing countries like India. Evaluation of teaching quality has become a complex and unresolved issue in education sector in our country since, multiple factors are involved in the way of teaching learning activity. India cannot be considered like any other country in the world since, it is demarcated with other countries in innumerable ways. The people of India have multidimensional interests, customs, conventions, habits, different economic status, multiple languages and being multicultural holds different outlooks. So, restricted to these multiple factors, it is difficult for an English teacher to ensure a particular approach in the undergraduate classroom. In the era of globalization and internationalization of education, the influence of student-centered learning theory is very deep and far-reaching. However, teacher-centered approach has been practiced with a long history, hence debate also arises and this makes some educators perplexed or frustrated especially, the teachers of Indian

classrooms. Henceforth, realizing the existing conditions in our classrooms, it is important for an English teacher to balance student-centered and teacher-centered models for the development of modern education.

2.0 Student-Centered Approach

Theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky collectively worked on students dominating on how, what and when to learn. John Dewey advocated progressive education believing that learning is a social and experiential process. He believed in preparing students to think critically applying to real life experiences which can prepare learners for future. [1] Carl Rogers ideas about the building of an individual is also contributed to student-centered learning. Rogers wrote that "the only learning which significantly influences behavior [and education] is self discovered". [2] This approach is based on Self-determination theory which focuses on the degree to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and 'self-determined'. When students are given the opportunity to gauge their learning, learning becomes an incentive.

3.0 Teacher Centered Approach

In the West it may have its origin from Socrates a great Greek philosopher who used to ask crafty questions to the students that would lead to understanding of his own and society. Even this type of education is also found in ancient Indian Gurukul education system. The chief motive of traditional education is to transmit to a next generation those skills, facts, and standards of moral and social conduct that adults consider to be necessary for the next generation's material and social success.[3] Essentialism and perennialism, are claimed as teacher-centered philosophies (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012). The key function of these philosophies are to direct young people in the essential knowledge for good citizenship, the learning of the basics. Perennialism focuses on the values associated with reason, and it is also the basic content of education. The teacher is the one to direct the class, promote high academic standards and discipline, and lead student practice and rehearsal of the basics. The content is not selected because of student interest but because it represents the essentials and perennials (Bull, 2014). Here the syllabus is framed taking some suitable topics as content to teach them to students orally.

4.0 Reassessment of Definition

In practice it is difficult to find an agreed-upon definition of an absolute "student-centered" or "teacher-centered" learning approach. While these two approaches can be integrated in some cases, things may get confusing for those who are used to put ideas into crisp and non-overlapping categories. In fact, in most of the effective classrooms these two approaches are blended and used alternately. For instance, Socratic inquiry is termed to be a student-centered approach, because it involves question-based engagement of students. "The Socratic method of teaching is a student-centered approach that challenges learners to develop their critical thinking skills and engage in analytic discussion" (Coffey, n.d., para.1). While others insist that Socratic inquiry is teacher-centered in that the teacher selects and delivers the questions (Halstead, 2011).

In the context of education, pedagogy, being at the "center" is generally defined in terms of the source

of authority and controlling in the process of teaching learning activity. Teacher centered does not mean teacher hegemony or holding more power to control the classroom. In reverse, student centered does not mean that student takes over the total control of learning process. This paper is not intended to draw an exact dividing line between student-centered and teacher-centered model, neither to follow a particular approach. The meaning of student centered and teacher centered approaches are overlapping and therefore it is difficult to make a choice between two. Education is and should be an endeavor embracing the oneness of teaching and learning. It is better to describe education as an integrated whole which transcends the polarization of student-centered or teacher-centered teaching and learning.

5.0 Discussions on Teacher Centered versus Student Centered approach

Teaching strategy is a complicated issue. There are plethora of discussions about the distinction between teacher-centered and student-centered pedagogy. They have their own unique qualities and shortcomings, strengths and challenges. As a result, the debate on student-centered versus teacher-centered education has prevailed for many decades. In recent decades, a great deal has been written on the shortages of teacher-centered education. But, in India after Independence there were drastic changes in the Indian society where people ignoring their hereditary professions believed in the only longstanding trustworthy investment in education. At this juncture, we find students prevailing from different social-economic backgrounds which definitely have an impact on teaching-learning process. As English is not our native language the exposure to it varies from student to student based on their socioeconomic conditions. There are other factors also which play a significant role in learning. Students coming from vernacular medium upto 12th standard are mostly from low socioeconomic status. One interesting fact is students coming from English medium background also are found weak in using English language adequately to their expected level. In such cases student centered approach does not fit into scenario. Moreover, they have to study in teacher centered model upto their 12th standard.

Sudden shift from teacher centered to student centered approach with the above said shortcomings will become confused for students. As the students are found inadequate in using the English language to their expected level, it is necessary to have a teacher to gain self study-ability.

Technology also plays a major role in their learning activity. Generally there is a belief that technology pruned education will enhance the learning skills of the students. It is true to some extent. But, in reverse the students are using cut and paste method for their assignments and even in the examinations also. This will not help them in acquiring appropriate and adequate knowledge in the subject. It should be used as supplementary aid to enhance their knowledge. Students are neglecting the printed books and forgetting their study skills. Writing skills are getting worse due to negligence of using note making skills.

Chall in his research analysis concluded that the traditional teacher centered approach generally produced higher academic achievement than the progressive student centered approach. In developing reading skills among student student centered approach failed due to lack of teacher supervision as said by Cunningham. He stated ...Unfortunately, the progressive/constructivist approach is markedly inferior to traditional, 'teacher-centered' pedagogy.

Teaching efficiency has been submerged by an overemphasis on student-centered pedagogy. Too much emphasis on student-centered pedagogy may induce problems with technology distraction, leading to purposelessness and lacking of self-control. The "attractive and colorful" student-centered classrooms did not live up to expectations. "...the result too often is a rising tide of noise and disorder. The upshot is the most fearful waste of precious time in the classroom. (Spencer, 2001, para. 13-14).

It is an undeniable fact that students are different in characteristics, and there are always some introverted students who are smart but quiet, withdrawn or timid. Some do not have adequate competency in language due to their low social background. They prefer to be passive instead of

participating in group work or presentations used in pedagogy. This leads to confusion, plainly student rejects the participation and sometimes leads to unattending of classes due to phobia.

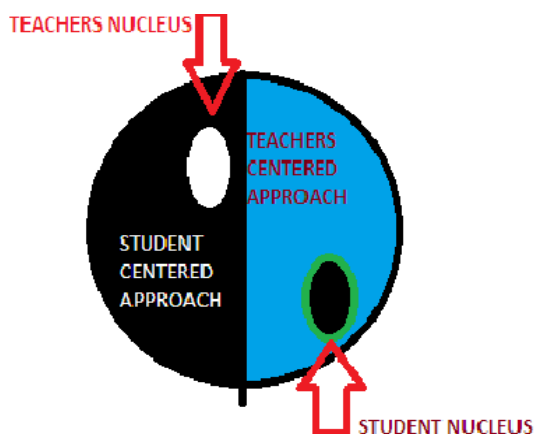
6.0 Relationship between Teaching and Learning through Mixed Method

Generally there is an assumption that Teacher Centered Learning and Student Centered Learning are completely two different models and each have their own modalities. But, in reality both teaching and learning aspects are equally important in bringing the effective learning outcomes. Both the teachers and students should share their responsibilities in teaching learning activities. In concern to different factors effecting the teaching in classroom it is not possible to completely stick on to a particular model in classroom instruction. There should be balanced maintained between the Teacher Centered Learning and Student Centered Learning based on the type of classroom environment and resources available for teaching. Teachers should be perspicacious enough to sense the type of students and blend the techniques according to the demand in the classroom. Therefore dynamic blending of both the above discussed approaches is the need of the hour in the present higher education system. This can be better explained through through ancient Tai Chi model which suggest an integrative approach.

Tai Chi was represented by the circle divided into black half and Yang blue half as shown in the figure below, which describes how two apparently opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary, interconnected and interdependent in the word and how they give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. In nature yin and Yang are male and female. If they do not maintain unity nature will not exist. (Tai Te Ching, Chapter 39) They can be thought of as complementary rather than opposing forces that interact to form a dynamic system of balance in which the whole is greater than assembled.

In the below figure, one white nucleus appear in black half (student centered) which is called teacher nucleus and the student nucleus is present in blue half (teacher centered). This indicates the transforming of one with another and both the

models are in interactive mode. With this it can be assumed that there is a collaborative harmony in teacher student relationship saying that “you are in my mind and I am in your mind” Inferring to a shared process growing out of interaction among students and teacher.



According to Tai Chi philosophy student may be considered as “Yin” while teacher as “Yang”. A this philosophy focuses on the dynamic interaction of the teacher and the student. This philosophy engages in variation as well as adaption of the things. The subjective position between the student and teacher is not immutable. They may shift reciprocally in accordance with different individuals. The dynamic and mutual transformation of teacher-centered and student-centered teaching characterizes a Tai Chi inspired educational philosophy.

7.0 Conclusion

Providing education to the students in a classroom involves an interaction between teachers and students. The attention should be paid to imbuing of knowledge and skills to students. According to Tai Chi philosophy, teaching and learning may look like, two contrary forces but, in actuality they are overlapping and interdependent in education. Teaching and learning give rise to each other as they are interrelated to one another. This type of exchange phenomena existing in the classroom emphasizes the holistic education rather than the assembled parts.

Respecting the difference of individual students in concern to their psychological, social and

economical traits, the teaching should be transformed or adapted in accordance with the individual aptitude of the students. In other words, education is a highly individualized process. Even in the same class with the same teachers, the pedagogies should dynamically vary according to the individual differences of the students. The strategies used in the classroom should be not be same with all the students. They should change to fit the needs of the students. Teachers with a broad vision should avoid sticking on to a particular approach and should come out with multiple strategies, exercises and activities to serve the objective of imbuing knowledge and skills among the students. Gardiner proposed to choose the different ways to enrich the knowledge of students in the classroom. Tai Chi model also advocated the teachers to deal with education challenges with highly personalized approaches.

To the concrete, Tai Chi philosophy advocates the theory of adaption and coordination which helps in matching the teaching strategies and student individual needs and levels. This philosophy is best suitable to Indian classrooms since exist with different psycho, socio, economic backgrounds. All the students cannot receive the subject knowledge in the same pace. Henceforth, teacher should take independent decisions to the dynamic blending of approaches, methods and techniques and engage in using mixed techniques.

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