

# **LANGUAGE IN INDIA**

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## **Attitudinal Incompatibility between Teachers and Students in a Classroom**

**V. Kalpana, M.A., M.Phil.**

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### **No More Deification**

The age of deifying teachers has passed by. No learning can be achieved unless strategic changes are adopted by the teachers. In this age, Information and knowledge is available at the click of a button. So where is the need for a teacher and his/her knowledge? The teachers are not the only torch bearers of knowledge. It is easy to imagine a class without a teacher but not without students. Every student enters a classroom with at least a basic knowledge in the subject. It is therefore imperative for a teacher to come down from his pedagogic throne and reach out to the students more empathetically. This is where the attitudinal compatibility, that is more often a chimera, comes into picture. Attitudinal compatibility, a major determinant factor in the teaching-learning process, helps both the teacher and the taught to work in sync. It also projects a

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realistic belief in one's own ability to adopt the most appropriate approach to deal with people in the real world.

### **Attitudes**

“Attitudes are seen as cognitive and effective orientations or dispositions towards an object, idea, person or situation” (Fiske & Taylor, 2008). Self-concept which includes attitudes, behaviours and beliefs about one's ability to learn and perform tasks and Anxiety which includes feelings of tension that hinder learning processes and performance are an integral part of acquisition of knowledge. An individual's attitude affects their experience in learning situations. This in turn influences the perception of competence in both teachers and students.

The teacher might assess a situation based on her attitude toward the student and a student can open up or close himself to a teacher based on his perception or attitude. These attitudes thus impede learning. According to Lewin (1936) the characteristics of the individual and his reaction to his environment determine the human behavior. Stern (1970) and Walberg (1981) have proposed that educational environment is one of the nine determinants of student outcomes. There is a close relationship between attitude and the teaching learning process. Until and unless a right attitude is maintained by both the teacher and the taught, the ultimate goal of a classroom cannot be attained. There are various factors that develop the right or the wrong attitude in the classroom.

### **Classroom Atmosphere**

A class room atmosphere is not a giving away of knowledge by the teacher but a sharing of information between the teacher and the taught. Most teachers believe that once they begin their first teaching assignment, they have reached their pinnacle of self development. The teacher can longer be complacent about his acquisition of knowledge. Unless he upgrades his information and knowledge, he will find himself lacking in a class comprising highly competent students. A negative attitude is created in a student when he loses faith in his master. Hence to keep himself abreast of the most modern ideas and theories in his relevant field, a teacher should update his knowledge base.

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## **Family Background**

The family background of both the teacher and the students contributes to the attitude. Any deficiencies or deprivations in the family can lead to a lack of self confidence. A lacuna in the right upbringing can lead to a lack of self esteem. The social status of a family is directly proportional to the attitude of the student. The nature of the family, whether joint or nuclear, also affects the attitude of the student.

## **The School**

It matters most where one has completed one's schooling from. The medium of education, the social status of the school, the competency of the teachers and the geographical location is commensurate with the attitude displayed in the class. The proper attitude should be inculcated right from the moment the student enters the learning process. Learning is not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the acquisition of right moralistic and ethical values.

## **Age**

Teenage is a period of confusions. A teacher should bear in his mind the age of the students entrusted in his care. Students are usually restless, inquisitive, adventurous and independent. They are perplexed about the physical changes that take place in them. The student often seeks answers from his mentors. If a teacher is able to come down from his high horse and take the position of a mentor, he will win over the confidence of his students. It is important for a teacher to view things from a student's perspective. This will help him in striking an instant chord with the class. A holistic mind full of wisdom and knowledge will possess the maturity to understand that his priority is not intimidating the student but sharing his knowledge and wisdom with the student community.

## **Physical Appearance**

Physical appearance also plays an important role in the attitude of the teacher and the student. Appearances can make or break the impressions created by the teachers or students. If the teacher possesses a superiority complex, then he or she will look down on the students who

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are economically backward or academically not up to the mark. On the other hand, if the teacher is suffering from an inferiority complex, then he or she might misuse his/her power to put down the affluent or smart students. This is true with the student too. It sparks negative learning experience.

The classroom atmosphere, the mode of instruction the relationship between students in the class and between the students and the teacher all impact learning. Thus the process of creating an open classroom environment where students feel comfortable discussing often volatile issues begins with an examination of our own attitudes, feelings and behavior.

### **Negative Attitudes**

The other areas which ignites negative attitude in a classroom are colour, creed, religious orientation, gender, physical ability and disability. Skin complexion seems to be one of the major factors in forming the attitude in both the teacher and the students all over the world. Popular beliefs and generational preconceptions in connection with the complexion have done enough in effecting attitudinal changes in the academic environment. Then comes the religious orientation of the teacher and the taught. In the battle for the supremacy of one religion over the other, the worst affected victim is the learning process. The affinity for one's own community renders a teacher opinionated and a student biased. The academic atmosphere has always been shadowed by gender issues from the time immemorial. The general notion is that the comfort zone lies between a male teacher and a male students and female teacher and female student.

Letting go of one's pre-conceived notions is hard and fighting egos even harder. As these preconceptions are deeply embedded in the minds of the individuals, they pose subtler and serious problems in the learning process.

Attitudes influence the extent to which intended learning outcomes are realized. Students with more positive attitude will report higher levels of goal oriented learning outcomes and students with less positive attitude will report lower levels of goal oriented learning outcomes. When the relationship between attitude, behavior and learning outcomes are considered, positive attitudes will augment levels of exhibited learning behaviours.

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## Conclusion

The teacher's relationship with his or her students is a pivotal aspect of any learning environment, which can lead the student to love or hate a subject, and to be inspired or turned away from learning. On the other hand, a student's level of cooperation in a class can determine the amount of interest with which a teacher might dispense with his knowledge. Teachers should deliberately and consciously reflect on their own teaching practices. They should bear in mind that students differ in their abilities, rates of learning and interests. The teacher's relationship with his students, in many ways, is integral to a student's success and in creating a cooperative learning environment (Hijzen, Boekaerts & Vedder, 2007).

There are three factors that every teacher should adopt to determine effective learning. One, teachers should generally be interested in learning and improving their practice; second, they should be conscious about their teaching practices as this can provide a catalyst for their change in attitudes and guide improvements on the way they teach; finally, they should not forget that students are the major stakeholders in the education process and therefore they should be conscious of their needs.

Examining one's own personal behavior provides another way to determine our underlying attitudes. Self-development is coupled with teachers' performance in the classroom, especially with respect to how they handle different perspectives and attitudes and how they relate to the heterogeneous class. The right student-teacher relationships help a teacher realize that students are also teachers and that their interactions with the students offer a wealth of opportunities to learn about themselves and the different perceptions of the world that people have constructed.

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