

## Pedagogy and Teaching

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### Abstract

This paper tries to emphasise the importance of pedagogy in higher education. The impact of teachers and facilitators being trained and aware of the pedagogical methodologies to effectively facilitate the teaching and learning outcomes in students.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, higher education, teachers, facilitators, learning outcomes.

### Introduction

Pedagogy can be defined as the study of the most effective frameworks for teaching and learning with innovative methodologies and successful execution of these frameworks. It can be defined as an environment wherein teaching and learning are happening in real time. Learning is innate and we as a species are constantly learning from our environment and by observing others. Csibra and Gergely (2006) remark that "Humans are adapted to spontaneously transfer relevant cultural knowledge to conspecifics and to fast-learn the contents of such teaching through a human-specific social learning system called 'pedagogy.'"

Teaching in classroom is highly systemised with set protocols that are followed. In today's settings, it has become the norm that everyone is undergoing some sort of structural learning from one source or the other.

### What is Teaching Pedagogy?

Reference to pedagogy often is misconstrued as teaching method. However, this does not only encompass techniques and tools but also concepts being used to frame goals, applications, and even the total education picture. "In contemporary pedagogy practice, there are two general considerations: **the focus and the approach**" – Research .com

However, the view that we need to focus on is the optimal and tandem use of methods and frameworks that facilitate both **instructivist** and **constructivist** methodologies. Instructivist methodology is the teacher-centred method, and the best example is our day-to-day routine wherein students are expected to learn through the instructions given by the teacher in the form of lectures and demonstrations. "Teachers become facilitators of information that

students should recognize, comprehend and retain. consequently, students must give their exclusive focus to their teachers” (Scholarify, 2021). As such, assessments are also centred on whether a student has done well by the teacher.

Though this looks like an ideal framework where the expert is passing on his accumulated knowledge and wisdom to the seekers. However, it is not without shortcomings- traditional education at some point suppresses students’ creativity, expression, and self-directedness. It eventually results in the truncation of students' thinking and communication skills, it limits the knowledge that the student acquires during the process of learning. Eg. Despite having studied English for 15 years, the students are not able to express themselves clearly.

Constructivist framework or the student-centred framework encourages the students and teachers to interact equally and create such an environment that the student questions as well as has the freedom to explore alternatives.

Husbands and Pearce (2012) point out that there "is robust evidence that giving serious consideration to pupil's voice can generate highly effective pedagogy." Niemi (2012) elucidates that expert’s call attention to the importance of involving students in the process of learning – “this process involves the active participation of the students about the methods used in facilitating the learning outcomes of the student and is a more preferred stand as this encourages a syncretic premise that at its core fosters a deep motivation to learn more about the subject.” (Research.com) However, this idealistic scenario is far from reality that exists in the student-centred classrooms.

The day-to-day working of the student-centred classroom comes through the restrained management of teaching-learning outcomes in the classroom achieved through a manoeuvring of class discussions to move into pre-conceived directions thus creating a confidence in the students that they arrived at a particular conclusion themselves. Here, the teacher’s role is more of that of a moderator. An example is the successful amalgamation of both high-tech tools like computers and traditional methods to teach the subject.

On the ground, classroom pedagogy denotes that the teacher is in the process of real-time implementation of methods and techniques like: discussions about teaching and learning; soliciting advice from students about new initiatives; inviting comments on ways to solve problems suitable in the classroom that facilitates learning by the students. Husbands and Pearce (2012) put it, “it is about talking with students about things that matter in school.”

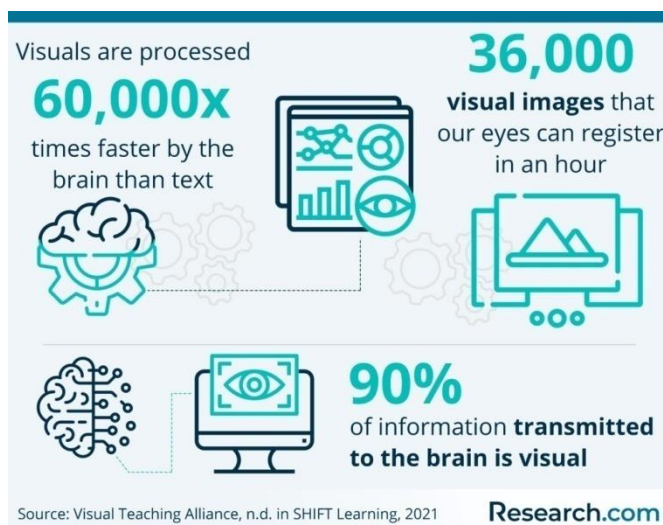
### **Framework for Learners**

The pedagogical methods for learners refer to the use and implementation of tools that leads to effective learning of concepts by the learners. The ubiquitous frameworks for this are Fleming and Mills - VARK and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. VARK (Visual,

Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetics) by Neil Fleming and Colleen Mills - the VARK technique was developed by Fleming and Mills (1992) to help students focus their attention on ways they address information. VARK elucidates the four perceptual modes of learning modes preferred by students, viz - Visual (V) – preference for graphical and symbolic ways of representing information. Read/Write (R) – Preferences for information printed as words. Aural (A) – Preference for "heard" information. Kinesthetic (K) – Preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real).

“Fleming and Mills (1992) divided visual preference into two perceptual modes, which are (V) Visual and (R) Read/Write, which is often interpreted as overlapping modes as both involve the visual mode of acquisition of knowledge. The (K) Kinesthetic perceptual mode is a multi-modal learning model as it uses a blend of senses from visual to aural in acquiring knowledge that requires a coordination of fine motor skills (e.g., learning to play the piano).”  
(*Research.com*)

Students inherently and instinctively use the VRAK in gaining expertise in a particular domain in the classroom. Teachers too exploit a blend of VARK techniques: (V) Use graphs, (R) Grade papers/notes, (A) Do group discussions, and (K) Make students perform real/simulated physical tasks (e.g., first aid on a dummy, using a microscope, creating a program, etc.).



### **Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)**

Gardner (2013) does not promote the theory of multiple intelligences as learning styles and that when Gardner refers to MI simply in the context of "modalities of intelligence", the glaring emphasis on the plasticity of the brain or lack of it as observed in the existence of a distinct developmental progression as well as the observation of existence of idiot-savants, prodigies, and other extraordinary people.

The study threw light on Gardner's argument that "the narrow definition of intelligence as equal to scholastic performance is simply too constrictive" as it simply ignores the fantastic intellectual and cognitive capabilities exhibited by the learner.

Gardner categorizes intelligence into modalities as listed by Reserach.com, namely - Verbal-linguistic intelligence (well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings, and rhythms of words), Logical-mathematical intelligence (ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns), Spatial-visual intelligence (capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly), Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skilfully), Musical intelligence (ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timber), Interpersonal intelligence (capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations, and desires of others), Intrapersonal (capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking processes), Naturalist intelligence (ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals, and other objects in nature), Existential intelligence (sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as, "What is the meaning of life? Why do we die? How did we get here?") ( Research.com)

Gardner (2013) argues that irrespective of the subject that is being explored, an effective teaching-learning setup would consider the myriad modalities of MI.

A criticism of MI and VRAK, throws light on the fact that these modes/ methods lack empirical data about the effective learning outcomes (Peariso 2008). However, studies in classroom pedagogy have enabled teachers pick and choose the optimal method for a successful classroom outcome.

### **Pedagogy in the Classrooms**

Classroom pedagogy holds under it multiple approaches:

**Constructivism** wherein students take an active part in their education and teachers are assigned the role of a guide. E.g. Montessori Method of education.

**Social Constructivism:** Students have a decisive role in their educational endeavour and teachers are seen as facilitators who provide direction. Learning becomes a tandem and tacit effort.

**Behaviourism:** Envisions the teachers as the sole expert authority and subjects are taught directly as lectures or demonstrations

**Liberationism:** Paulo Freire, the father of liberationism, makes the student the centre of the learning outcome and proposes a collaborative approach to learning.

## The Nine Teaching Methods

Based on the above, classroom context may be assigned into nine teaching methods and learning styles as exemplified by Doherty and Singh, 2005 (taken from Research.com).

Style A (Command) – The teacher makes all decisions.

Style B (Practice) – Students carry out teacher-prescribed tasks.

Style C (Reciprocal) – Students work in pairs: one performs, and the other provides feedback.

Style D (Self-check) – Students assess their performance against criteria.

Style E (Inclusion) – Teacher planned. Students monitor their work.

Style G (Divergent) – Students solve problems without assistance from the teacher

Style H (Individual) – Teacher determines content. Student plans the program.

Style I (Learner Initiated) – Student plans own program. A teacher is an advisor.

Style J (Self-Teaching) – The student takes full responsibility for the learning process.

*(Reference: Pedagogy in Education: Guide To Frameworks & Teaching Methods Research.com)*

Consequently, assessment of the classroom outcomes as elucidated by Allen 2003 in *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education*

| Concept                        | Teacher-Centred      | Learner Centred  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Teaching goals                 | Cover the discipline | Students learn:<br>How to use the discipline<br>How to integrate disciplines to solve complex problems.<br>An array of core learning objectives such as communication and information literacy skills. |
| Organisation of the curriculum | Course in catalogue  | Cohesive program with systematically created opportunities to synthesise, practice , and develop   |

|                    |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|
|                    |   | increasingly complex ideas, skills and values.  |
| Course Structure   | Faculty cover topics  | Students master learning objectives   |
| How students learn | Listening<br>Reading<br>Independent learning, often in competition for grades | Students construct knowledge by integrating new learning into what they already know.<br>Learning is viewed as a cognitive and social act   |
| Pedagogy           | Based on delivery of information  | Based on engagement of students.  |
| Course delivery    | Lecture<br>Assignments and exams for summative purposes                       | Active learning<br>Assignments for informative purposes<br>Collaborative learning<br>Community service learning<br>Cooperative learning<br>Online asynchronous, self-directed learning<br>Problem -based learning |
| Course grading     | Faculty ass gatekeepers<br>Normal distribution expected                       | Grades indicate mastery of learning objectives .<br>In higher technical education, it indicates the successful placement of the student in coveted companies during placement drives                              |
| Faculty role       | Sage on the stage   | Designer of learning environments   |

|                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Effective teaching | Teach (present information) well and those who can and will learn | Engage students in their learning<br>Help all students master learning objectives<br>Use classroom assessment to improve courses<br>Use program assessment to improve programs |
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*(Allen 2003 in Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education)*

### Conclusion

Some approaches seek to eliminate barriers and focus on creating a utopian model wherein each and everyone benefits from an equal opportunity for learning. Certain methods are best suited for a particular phase of learning like behaviourism is best suited for early learners who need guidance and instructions to start making sense of the world around them. However, it is an undeniable fact that each classroom is unique, and each learner comes with a unique set of talents. The educator is more often than not compelled to pick and choose the best method keeping in mind the outcomes and learning styles of the course that the student has enrolled into. Every which way one sees it the truth is that college students are the essential stakeholders of their education. Educators pick and choose the best practice for teaching based on the needs of the students. The outcome lays in the symbiotic and respectful collaborative atmosphere wherein the outcomes clearly lie in the direction of the students becoming independent and gainfully employed.

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