

Learner-Centric Classroom in the Domain of ELT – An Observation

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Abstract

While concentrating on the above mentioned sub-theme of the Conference, my present paper attempts an understanding of the **role and relationship** that exists between the learner, the facilitator and the **reciprocal teaching-learning process** aiming to attain **educational objectives** en masse. It is pivotal in building mutual trust, respect between the learner and the facilitator as much as in establishing reliability and validity of the teaching and learning process. Through the mode of discussion and comparative approach, the paper takes into consideration the **traditional system** of educational process and the specific factor of learner centered classroom which is a **dominant signifier** in the paradigm of **ELT**. The comparative approach in my present paper attempts to find out the extent to which we **have stimulated** or **could stimulate** learner-centered classroom in the present scenario. The study foregrounds certain rural and semi-urban classrooms at UG and PG levels of Engineering and Management students in the context of West Bengal. This interpretation and understanding indicates the need for:

- ✚ Frequent faculty development programs to provide opportunities to explore the avenues made open through constant research on learning and teaching perspectives.
- ✚ Self-awareness on the part of the facilitators in terms of teaching methods being followed and the subsequent actions on self -development required.

Keywords: role and relationship, reciprocal teaching-learning process, educational objectives, traditional system, dominant signifier, ELT, stimulate.

What do we understand by the term “myth”?

According to Wikipedia the term ‘Myth’ has been derived from the Greek word ‘mythos’ which simply means ‘story’. The dictionary meaning of the term indicates false belief or idea. Going by these definitions, I would not like to consider learner-centered classroom is a myth or a false belief. We have to understand here that , belief and real existence stand poles apart. We will come to this point little later .

We talk about ICT (Information and Communications Technology) based learning in our contemporary society. We talk about Smart class, online-learning , distance learning and so on. The world has become a global village and everything can be accessed sitting at one corner via ICT. Now, ICT can be viewed as an umbrella concept for all its components, namely , television, cellular phones, computer , network systems-hardware and software, satellite connectivity and such others i.e. to say any application enabling any mode of communication . In such a state , the role of a Teacher is largely shared by ICT enabled tools.

Vedic System

Now, what was/is the role of Teacher in Vedic and ICT enabled educational society? Let us have a look at certain key considerations.

First, in reference to Vedic educational prevalence can we equate the weightage of the terms of modern day ‘Teacher’ to those of Vedic age ‘Guru’ ?

Second, the prevailing education system in our contemporary society and those of Vedic society.

Third, the need analysis of education in the challenging environment of Global village.
Fourth, the role of Government in the promotion and spread of education.

Finally, the education imparted in Institutions and the learning environments prevailing outside/apart from the Institutions.

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The scope and treatment of the above considerations requires detailed analysis and discussions. The limitation of words for the Conference paper and time constraints presently out me to take up the issue at length and would indulge upon these considerations for further detailed analysis and exploration in future research endeavors.

Role of the Teacher

Coming back to the question of role of Teacher in present scenario , it can be argued that one of the educational objectives demands the learners to ‘be prepared’ and ‘market ready’ to suit for any work environment standing on the doorstep of global village and extremely challenging multi-faceted work pressure.

Self-learning and the Teacher

Self-learning is the only option left to survive and harmonize with the need of the hour. It is to meet such a demand the role of a teacher becomes extremely crucial and facilitate learners by gearing them for the situation. Encouraging self-learning has many purposes. Critical thinking skills or higher order thinking skills are nurtured through self-learning. The learners with their existing knowledge (that they bring with them before the start of formal education) when explore their own potential they themselves create ways to meet their demands and find out newer techniques of learning to achieve and fulfill their aspirations. It is here, that the Teacher can function to understand them and their needs and guide them to the path of self-learning and self-awareness. But, the complexity lies in the word ‘guide’. To guide others one has to be competent and adept in one’s mission and vision. A Teacher needs to be visionary first, needs to be adaptable and flexible; needs to undergo self-analysis to compare their own state in the past, at present and how it can be improved for better future.

Difference between ‘Belief’ and ‘Reality’

Referring back to my first assumptions of the existing difference between ‘belief’ and ‘reality’ in terms of learner-centric classroom, it is undoubtedly true that in many remote areas / far from the city life many teachers with little or no facilities are toiling under the sun to guide the children learn on their own and combat their social barriers. Many NGOs have taken up this

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social cause to enable the children derive the blessings of educational technology to their fullest. In such a learning environment learners can question, can analyze, can solve, learn to accept responsibilities for their decisions in learning, encourages their control over learning. This stands in opposition to the teacher-centric classroom.

Learner-centric classroom doesn't allow one to accept the teachings as golden grains or as unquestionable. In fact, the scope to verify and argue is greater in such a system. It encourages the learners to reflect on what they are learning to be authentic and valid. It provides space for criticism and own points of view. It also gives them scope for self-recognition. Such a system imparts group learning, peer activities through collaborative approach. Learner-centric indicates liberty to enjoy learning but it nowhere eradicate situational guidance. But, it is also a sorry figure to accept that , in many other cases, learning through learner-centric classroom is a far cry. The teachers, instead being a guide and facilitator, make too many decisions both about teaching (suited to their own perspective) and about learning.

Are Teachers Above All?

Perhaps, it would not be wrong to point out that perceptions exist that teachers are exalted and their sole decisions alone can carry out the educational objectives. The need analysis of the learners and strategic planning according to their needs are left out. The psychology of the learners remain ignored. Traditional lecture method of instruction, late arrival in class even in time-bound class hours , water tight competition for tuition classes, thrusting of information with limited or no scope of application (encouraging rote learning), loops in evaluation system, partial or unskilled marking criteria remain the same where they were . Routine class sessions back to back remind us of the Industrial/Factory model of education system. It is here, the teacher's guidance becomes effective where they facilitate the process of learning yet the control to monitor a well-balanced educational atmosphere is equally important.

Focus on Learners

Undoubtedly, attention is to be administered that the learners do not miss or neglect the course curriculum while being independent or that every learner learns and none are affected by

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peer mismanagement or groupies. Relationship and rapport with their guide is indispensable to devise an approachable and workable learning environment. The age group of UG and PG students range between 18-25 and 20-30 respectively. The pros and cons of the psychology of the learners at this age is extremely sensitive. As Facilitators it needs undaunted quintessence and zeal to guide the future prospects of the learners as much as to be a responsible citizen and a good human being. The learners are shaped and molded through the educational process.

Facilitators

The requisite skill, patience, expertise and a keen observational ability are the keys to a facilitator to develop a team of learners who shoulder the various roles and responsibilities of the society in future. However, it is not the lone responsibility of a facilitator. In a country of second largest population (till date) in the world it requires systematic change and proper implementation of policies to enable learner-centered classroom in practical. It cannot be said that such a concept exists only as a belief of some educators aiming to propagate. But, it is also not to be shouldered only by some. Such an implementation needs thorough analysis and re-modification.

Curriculum

Curriculum needs to be revamped at regular intervals in accordance to the need of the time. Facilitators need opportunities and scope to be trained and skilled in their own areas. But, it has to be ensured that every facilitator gets equal chances for self-development, training and up-gradation and it should be a continuous process. Strict vigilance and alertness required that it does not remain a power game or a fruit to be enjoyed only by a few.

Monitoring

Equally important is monitoring the proper functioning and application of the self-developmental trainings so undergone. It requires monitoring in all educational Institutions concerned with learner's future. Mushroom like growth of small or big scale Institutions without a proper learning environment or basic teaching motivation are bound to fall flat. Local authorities are to analyze and be a strict vigilant about the scope and justification of such

permissions even before the intrusion of the higher or governmental authorities. The contribution in educational funding or expenditure in education sector are also of paramount importance. As facilitators we remain a part of the stakeholders in education and the protocol is a chain of process.

Learner-Centered Classroom Is Not A Myth

Finally, it would, perhaps, not be wrong to summarize by pointing out that undoubtedly the learner-centered classroom is not a myth altogether nor a belief which exists only in imagination, but, a hard core reality. This reality could be made practical only at a microscopic level and we are yet to journey miles and mile. It can be achieved only when our psychology really wants to make it happen . The teacher paves the steps to this achievement by being an eternal guide and source of inspiration and motivation --- more intrinsic than extrinsic. It is not an autocratic vest of power.

Rationale for conducting the systematic review

- Numerous evidences in our own known environment indicate the dire need of soul-searching and introspection on the part of the facilitators. The facilitators bear the solemn responsibility of building a Nation by shaping the learners according to their learning trajectories and careers. A learner can be shaped and guided towards competence only when the trainer is self-guided (to positivity and personal growth).
- This situation desperately needs facilitators' self-control on the sense of self-satisfaction and stagnation. Educational interventions by the authorities, in certain cases, are in high need through the implementation and compulsion of attending trainings and self-development programs and monitoring their applications in the classroom situation the inertia of which can lead to serious infringement.
- An in-depth understanding and realization of all the factors mentioned, the disadvantages faced by the under privileged suggesting potential factors for low academic performance / under achievement.
- Appeal to the concerned authorities to provide scope and exposure to those facilitators who aim to upgrade and update but are far from the benefits.

Method

As applicable, the present study is bent on Qualitative Research method . After formulating the study topic, some literature reviews were studied and relevant research reports from electronic databases were analyzed. The method of data collection also included minute observations of learner’s behavior in and off the classroom situations, anecdotal records as maintained. The personal experiences in teaching has been of immense help and worked as a tool in collecting and analyzing data .

Limitations of the Study

The study was initiated as a part of evaluating the impact of learning-teaching with a view to create necessary awareness and self-motivated actions there from. Observations were made in association with direct contact with the learners and fellow facilitators in and around our environment where we come across facilitators of all kind – those who remain to be inspirational and some others who turn us down or with whom T S Eliot’s great saying can be applicable “Between the motion /And the act / Falls the Shadow”.

Owing to huge number of theses only a few of the Literature Reviews on students’ aspirations and expectations and factors related to under achievements could be studied for analysis. Due to shortage of time and scope it was difficult to manage reading all of them and hence, it is possible some significant information might have been missed. Many other factors are associated in relation to the topic of the present study. The study is relevant to West Bengal context (rural and semi-urban) and the target learners are UG and PG students studying technical courses (B Tech / BBA / MBA) and exceptions in all related cases , situations and factors are applicable. However, these situations might be applicable (correlational) to certain similar cases that we come across/share in our environment outside West Bengal.

Conclusion

The study aimed to analyze a range of factors , limited in range and scope , linked to under achievement of learners and steady fall of moral values and the role of student-teacher relationship in educational attainment of these learners . However, it needs special mention in

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this , that it is not only the role of educational Institutions and the educator alone to bring in the desired changes but the parents/guardian too need to cooperate hand in hand as one of the important stakeholders involved in the education of the children. However , the study does not cover full range of diagnosis and intend to carry on with further analysis of the same . it is extremely crucial to address these concerns to support and sincerely give our best to reduce under achievement, risk experiences, depression, participation gap and further psychological disorders in future.

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