

MANAGING A CLASSROOM: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

In today's teaching -learning environment classroom is a very important place. It is a physical and psychological ground for teaching and learning activities. Generally, it is considered as a place where teacher and some students meet regularly for a predefined period of time for the routine discussion of different topics, but there are more connotations of it. The present work offers perspectives on a better classroom.

Keywords: Teacher, Classroom, Teaching, Barriers, Teacher as Manager.

In ancient times, the Indian education system was teacher-centered, and the same was there in medieval phases. *Guru* (teacher) imparted knowledge to the *Shishya* (pupil) at the *Gurukul* or the *Ashrama*. The teaching-learning process was personalized and subjective. In many cases, it is seen that the content and learning objectives varied in different contexts for different learners. The educators used to decide the methods of teaching and learning and learners received knowledge from Guru mostly through oral and personal communication. Memorization was resorted to because books or *this* was either less popular or were perishable. The education was localized depending upon the teacher's expertise available locally. Many students had to move distant places in search of Gurus and experts in the domains of their choice. The same methods continued until the early centuries of the second millennium. "However with the emergence of industrial society, when more manpower was needed in various trades, production and service centers, educational institutions started admitting more students to fulfill the needs of industrial society. The form of education changed from personalized education to mass education, and a mechanism of a classroom with a large number of students instructed by a teacher/lecturer was evolved." (Takwale,7)

In today's formal teaching-learning environment classroom has become a very important place. It is a physical and psychological ground for teaching and learning activities. In its popular import, I am talking here the general understanding of the classroom. It is a place where a teacher and some students meet regularly for a predefined period of time.

Within the broader limits, the composition of the classroom group is arbitrary and the motivations and needs of the participants do not determine the schedule of meetings. In addition to it a classroom functions under a “norm of rationality” which specifies that activities involving all students must go on during meetings and that these activities must have a justification.

In recent years we have seen many types of research on classroom management. They have visualized a classroom in many ways. A teacher puts his/ her observation on a given topic, controls student's interaction, phrases a question, and monitors different levels of involvement in work.

Setting the cadence of the class is a key factor, and the role of the teacher is significant. He finds appropriate students for answering the questions, anticipates interruptions, and judges whether particular students are violating classroom rules. The simultaneous occurrence of multiple elements shortens the time frame and confers immediacy to the flow of classroom experience. Decisions must be made rapidly with little time for reflection. At the same time, these qualities of classrooms life together with a high frequency of interruptions make the course of events at a given moment unpredictably. Finally, since the history of a classroom group extends over several months, actions on one occasion set a precedent for actions at a later instance. Hence early decisions are crucial as flexibility decreases as the year progresses. Kaushik and Sharma further write, “given this combination of properties, a classroom is indeed a complex environment.”(97)

Classroom situation is more or less the ‘Communication – Situation’. Many teachers, in their early careers, feel many types of problems in classroom situations. In many cases, they feel anxious and even horrified. Different types of internal and external problems emerge in a classroom. To cite here, the views of Issac Sequeira, who presents quite an apt comment on the problems being faced by teachers in classrooms:

In most cases there is absolute pandemonium on that occasion in his encounter with students the goes to the first class with great trepidation yet with high ideals of bringing the light of knowledge to his students and what he meets with is a solid wall of resistance – catcall boos, stamping of the feet paper darts and what have you. This is the acid-test – a test not of his knowledge in his subject but of his patience and dedication to the profession. (Sequiera, Talk .)

He further suggests the ways out:

If he (teacher) is rarely dedicated and has a fairly good command over his subject he will soon wither his initial storm because students will quieten down when they are convinced that the teacher knows what he is talking about, and is competent in his subject. Getting over the first hurdle is very important, however, many potential good teachers have given up the profession because they have allowed this first profession, have allowed the experience to

disillusion them so that they have become uninspired and uninspiring teachers. (Sequiera, Talk.)

Teaching is a perfect blend of professional and general communication. It is science as well as an art. Performance in a classroom requires the principles of technical communication. It is a process, not an event. A teacher becomes successful, and the teaching becomes meaningful when the learner understands different meanings of the lesson imparted by a teacher. If the flow of communication remains seamless, teaching goes on well, and with barriers, the communication loses its sway. I see the barriers s problems, these are, in main, as follows.

Teacher-Centered Problems

- (i) Lack of confidence
- (ii) Lack of training
- (iii) Lack of subject knowledge
- (iv) Lack of communication ability
- (v) Lack of interest
- (vi) Lack of teaching aptitude
- (vii) Lack of motivation

Learner-centered Problems

- (i) Lack of attention
- (ii) Poor level of understanding
- (iii) Very high level of understanding
- (iv) Unmotivated
- (v) Lack of Interest
- (vi) Deleterious social environment
- (vii) Undefined expectations

Organizational Problems

- (i) Physical problems
- (ii) Managerial Problems
- (iii) Motivational Issues
- (iv)

Although teaching is learner-centered, yet the role of the teacher is no less. Teacher plays a major role in controlling the entire system involved in the teaching-learning process. Besides being the master of the subject the teacher teaches. He is expected to have a higher degree of emotional quotient and behavioral skills. Complete training in teaching –both formal and informal, is equally required. The teacher should be motivated towards his task and should

have taken teaching as a choice, not as a burden. A good teacher is a good motivator. He should realize the responsibility towards the students and society. Further, he should consider teaching as a challenge, and feel a sense of achievement after every contact hour with students.

Students willingly or unwillingly also become a part if there occurs a failure of classroom teaching. In a classroom generally, four types of students are found. It is presented below.

Students in Class			
Hyperactive Their I.Q. level is very high. They can understand the lesson in lesser time than expected by the teacher and they keep on showering questions. The problem lies in the fact of their being the class. If the teacher responds only to them the other students of the class feel ignored and they create problems	Active They are the ideal students. They read the lesson well in the class, remain mentally academically and physically active. They are disciplined and responding.	Dull These are the students with fewer I.Q. They try to learn the lesson but most of the time the lesson bounces above their mind.	Disturbing They are so because of several factors. Sometimes it is because they are mere intelligent but less motivated towards studies. In some cases, they are not cultured and they aim at disturbing the class only. In some cases, I have found that they have been forced to be there is the school by their parents.

A successful teacher is a good manager. He manages all these categories of students and prepares a state of the art lesson plan for successful teaching in the class. For overcoming the classroom problems a teacher should devise a lesson in such a way that every student of the class could find some food for thought in a way or the other.

The organizational or physical environment in the Institutions equally creates barriers in the successful teaching-learning process. The institutions in both the sectors-the private sector and the public sector, have their own problems. Sometimes the classrooms are not fit to use the state of the art teaching aids and devices, and in some conditions, they are not equipped with the trained human resources. Sometimes the norms and standards for constructing school buildings are ignored. In such a case, the situation turns ugly and indirectly that leads to classroom problems.

A teacher must have adequate knowledge of his/her lesson. He must be able to talk like an expert and at the same time like a layman. He must be worth listening from the beginning to the end of the class. Moreover, the teacher should be capable enough to make the student think even after the class because teaching is a process, not an event. In contemporary times when technology has greatly affected the teaching-learning scenario, the role of a teacher is shifting towards being a motivator. It is my humble submission that for a successful class, motivation is more important than mere classroom teaching. In the present socio- academic environment, where the market has a large interference in our lives, most of the students come to the educational institutions without motivation or clear aim. Many times, it becomes an artifact of “status symbol” or “at worst postponed unemployment.”

Conclusion: Teaching is both a science and art. With systemic and scientific knowledge, pragmatic knowledge is also expected from the teacher because one is always a manager of diversified expectations. I suggest the following points towards cutting the barriers in teaching:

- (1) A teacher should realize that she/he is a teacher.
- (2) She/he should be flexible in behavior.
- (3) A teacher should have sound knowledge of her/his subject with adequate training and confidence.
- (4) A teacher should be adept in the art of questioning.
- (5) A teacher should involve the students in the process class.
- (6) A teacher should raise the issues that motivate and force the students towards thinking.
- (7) A teacher should be honest in praising the students.
- (8) A teacher should avoid any type of bias or prejudices.
- (9) A teacher should apply the methods of teaching after action research and diagnosis.
- (10) A teacher should use audio-visual aids as per the requirement of the teaching content.
- (11) A teacher should be a good manager.
- (12) The teacher should be disciplined and punctual.

Note: This is the revised and updated version of my article ‘Dealing with Classroom problems’, in *Principles and Methods of Teaching English* for M.A. English, Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, 2006. I place on record the said article as the basic text for it.

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