



Analyzing Tools of Effective Teaching for Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comprehensive overview of different teaching pedagogies used by teachers in context of higher education as effective teaching is reflected by effective learning among students. A total of 100 students (20 students in each group, thereby making five groups) in the age range of (18-20 years) studying Humanities stream from colleges of Chandigarh were chosen as sample for the present study. Students were taught the same topic but with different teaching pedagogies. Their opinion and reasoning regarding teaching methods, its effectiveness and understanding were noted down and teacher's evaluation in terms of achievement test from five groups of students was prepared. Keeping in mind, both important parameters i.e. student's perception regarding the most effective teaching method and correspondingly an evaluation from the teacher was taken into consideration. The results revealed multimedia method as the most effective where as case study as the least effective method of teaching.

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Introduction

"Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children"
(Walter Elias Disney)

Education – the word in itself is illuminating, rich and complete. It leads to light, paves direction and imparts knowledge. The importance of education and knowledge is being extolled all over the world and is evident since ancient era of Vedas and Ramayana to recent times. Initially the self-help gurus, and now even writers have taken up the challenge of how to impart education among students. Human capital is the need of an hour which can be fabricated with education itself and so great emphasis should be placed on the ways and methods employed to teach students by their teachers.

When a teacher is effective in his/her teaching, it directly proves to benefit students as their grades go up, become intellectual, and decrease in rate of failures and drop-outs is witnessed where as indirectly too, teachers uplift students by means of inculcating positive thinking, emotional support, making them learn to be resilient and sound mental health.

These days colleges and universities follow a procedure in which students provide feedback at the end of each course or semester. Such ratings of instructor effectiveness have been a hot topic since they were first employed in mid 1920's (Chang, 2001) and they create an enormous challenge for nearly every institution that uses them (Hoyt & Pallett, 1999). Research indicates that students are the most qualified sources to report on the extent to which the learning experience was productive, informative, satisfying, or worthwhile. Also, there is substantial research linking student satisfaction to effective teaching (Theall and Franklin, 2001). Murray (1994) revealed that student ratings for teaching tend to be reliable, valid, relatively unbiased and useful.

Conceptualization of Effective Teaching

Effective Teaching has been defined differently by different authors; each gave a different definition in their works, some of which are presented below:

Centra (1993) defined effective teaching as "that which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures".

Braskamp & Ory, (1994) define effective teaching as the "creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs; shaping those situations is what successful teachers have learned to do effectively".

A meta-analysis on 31 studies by Feldman (1998) revealed that students identified characteristics they associated with good teaching and effective instruction, hence opined that students emphasized the importance of teachers being interesting, having good elocutionary skills, being available and helpful.

Layne, (2012) asserted that effective teaching incorporated three most important abilities; to cultivate thinking skills, stimulate interest in the subject and motivate students to learn.

Weimer, (2013) defined effective teaching by comparing the words and phrases students used to describe effective and ineffective teachers and the top three words used to characterize teachers with highest ratings were interesting, approachable and clarity.

An attempt has been made to pull out a common feature from various conceptualizations of effective teaching given by the researchers listed above. Nowadays, the concept is looked upon not just from delivering and teaching in classroom perspective but has shifted its focus to learning and recalling amongst students as well. Teaching and learning are closely related, hence, learning being the flip side of teaching.

Methodology

Sample

Pilot sample

Initially prior to the selection of final sample for the present study, researcher conducted a pilot study on 180 students in the age range of (18-20 years, Humanities stream from colleges of Chandigarh in order to assess IQ using General Mental Ability Test of Intelligence by (Jalota, 1976).

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Those students who were found to be above average in intelligence were formed as final sample. Another inclusion criteria was that students from intact families and urban middle class were only included for the study.

Final sample

The results from the pilot study revealed only 100 students from 180 as 'above average' in IQ so they formed part of the final study. The researcher conducted Survey on these 100 students (20 students in each group i.e. five groups) in the age range of (18-20 years) studying in Humanities stream from colleges of Chandigarh, using Interview as a technique on students from higher education level. Also, teacher's evaluation was taken into consideration regarding students understanding and learning of the concept in the class by means of achievement test.

Design of the Present Study

Since the focus of the study was to analyze different teaching methods, the researcher used qualitative technique of survey, interview and disguised participant observation method on five different group of students and their respective teachers who basically taught the same topic but with different teaching pedagogies. The content, time taken for teaching, difficulty level of the topic was kept uniform for all the groups. Further, their viewpoints regarding teaching methods involved in the classroom, its usefulness and efficacy were noted down and teacher's appraisal regarding student's performance was taken into consideration.

Results and Discussion

The results of the present study were quite interesting. Teaching tools in terms of its effectiveness both by the teacher and students are presented below in a hierarchical form, the most effectual being at the top and least effectual at the bottom.

- Multimedia
- Workshop
- Lecture
- Role Play
- Case study

A detailed probe into the analysis of the survey revealed the following major key points. The first and foremost teaching tool as evident from the findings of the present study was *Multimedia method*. These days many institutions are practising this tool in their classrooms, hence, changing the term from classroom to smartroom. It is quite obvious that when we actually see things through audio-visual aids, multi-sensory interactive presentation, things become simple and very easy to understand. It created interest, involvement, among students and even maintained their curiosity level throughout the class. Less distraction was the major factor that was seen.

Secondly, *Workshop* emerged to be effective tool among higher education students. It kind of gave chance to other people from the same profession and most importantly they could actually learn through some sort of performance or actually carrying out things themselves. Their participation and contribution being associated with something kept their nervous system juggling throughout.

Thirdly, *Lecture method or chalk-and talk method* proved to be useful. The teacher provided knowledge related to topic, shared information amongst them and so the students were also seen at an ease as they were already used to such an atmosphere for learning.

Fourthly, teachers and students gave their consensus to *Role play* method. Here, students enjoyed the situation and

different roles they were given to enact or play. It gave them the opportunity to have a say and they even utilised creative thinking and new ways to make concepts simple and easy to comprehend.

Fifthly, *Case study* as a tool stood as the least efficacious method amongst students. Though it offered some background, story-line behind the concept, probably it went as an anecdote and students took it with an easy-going attitude only.

The present study is a humble endeavour to understand teacher student relationship, thus, the researcher sense that in class in order to improve proficiency and productivity amongst students, it's imperative to practice few strategies. The ensuing section provides some strategies that are in actual simple psychologically based exercises that can be engaged in any classroom setting.

• **Using Mnemonics** - Since childhood, we all know and are able to recall the colours of rainbow by using a mnemonic i.e. VIBGYOR. Similar goes to the usage of abbreviations like OMG, LOL, ASAP etc. Students already relate to this practice, so it's just a matter of training them in classroom with their text, for example: when there are so many points to learn, students can simply learn its first alphabet or relating it with oneself, any object, picture etc and remember it using a mnemonic (McCabe, et al, 2011).

• **Following Chunking** - The term chunking though introduced in 1950's still holds relevance till date (Miller, 1956). It's so simple and we might have come across it quite number of times in our day to day basis, for example: remembering a phone number like 9 888 -- --. It means clubbing things together on basis of shape, size, concept etc to make it form one chunk or cluster. It would be beneficial to students to remember few chunks which would cover lot of material or text.

• **Pictorial and Figural presentation** - Presentation of the concept in a hierarchical form would help students to understand the basic concept of 'what comes under what'. It simply clarifies the whole notion of the topic and overcomes the problem of confusion and perplexity amongst students.

• **Implication/ Practical to theoretical Approach** - Instead of going from theoretical to practical in our approach in classroom with students, it seems that teachers should move in an opposite direction. Damodharan and Rengarajan (2007) named it as "Z to A approach" thereby laying emphasis on that a lecture must begin from the practical part of the topic in class; practical here implies the usage or applied aspect of the topic which helps to better form groundwork to have a hold on the topic. Not only this, it also serves the dual purpose, firstly, arousing interest and secondly, easy to recall for students.

• **Usage of Reinforcement** - The term reinforce means to strengthen and it refers to any stimulus which increases the probability of a specific response (Skinner, 1938). For example teachers can reinforce their students directly by praising, rewarding by giving some gift (book or pen) or indirectly conveying warmth through non-verbal signals i.e. a nod, an encouraging smile, a pat on the shoulder.

In support of the results of the present study Goe, Bell & Little (2008) suggested that teacher effectiveness can be broken down into following indicators:

- Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help them learn as demonstrated on test-based measures.
- Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal and social outcomes for students.

- They use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging lecture opportunities, monitor student progress formatively.
- Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents to ensure students success, particularly success of students with special needs and those who are at high risk of failure.

Final Remark!

Teaching and learning are interpersonal strengths that together produce through a combination of interaction and encouragement behaviours that would facilitate students. Thus, the present research can be beneficial to faculty as it can help improve their teaching skills; related judgements like hiring, promotion, rewards and awards, also, assist administrators with respect to personnel decisions. Also, it would be important for students as they can learn quite simpler ways to enhance their learning and eventually memory techniques to score well.

In nutshell, Confucious very rightly quoted that, "I hear and I forget, I see and I believe, I do and I understand". It goes in line with the emergence of Multimedia method as the most effective tool.

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