

Towards Correcting Pedagogical Practices

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Growing debate in education

- The growing Academic debates have brought into question the purpose of education, selection of knowledge and pedagogic approaches.

- Purpose of education in neoliberal era
- Teach to test

primary aim of education

- In this neoliberal era policy makers perceive the importance of the wider aims of education, but economic gains from education are seen to be primary;
- Education is seen to be central to the reconstruction of the nation-state in a globalized world (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough & Halsey, 2006)

Education a Business enterprise

- Parental choice, testing regimes and the 'new managerialism' assumes that educational institutions can be run as businesses (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough & Halsey, 2006). (*New managerialism' is stripping public services of moral and ethical values and replacing them with the market language of costs, efficiencies, profits and competition.
- As a result, changing emphasis on education as 'deliverables' and 'outcomes' that reminds of some products.

Teach to Test

- Economic efficiency proposed educational agenda of enhanced learner assessment, teacher accountability and effectiveness.
- In this frame pedagogic enterprise is to 'teach to test' and the central thrust of pedagogic practice is one of 'control' and 'outcomes'.
- As testing regimes lead to market competition between institutions, they change the very nature of teaching and learning.

Fundamental Change in Thinking & Purpose-convergence bet Economic & Educational Discourses

- It has shrunk the space for pure social & natural sciences in formal learning due to the exclusive emphasis on vocational & applied disciplines.
- The result is a narrow focus on skill-based, **instrumentalist aims** of education.
- More importantly, these reforms reflect a fundamental shift in thinking about education and its purposes, across the world.
- Education reduced to 'minimized the purpose of life to mean individual free choice'. This has replaced the idea of 'collective agents and structures' with the 'utility maximizing individual'.
- There appears to be a "convergence between economic and educational discourses, with the former coming to give the latter its substance and content"

Test Based Reform

- As Economy gives content and substance to Education, data becomes important. The state/national level conversation is always around aggregate data that hides more than it shows.
- Teachers evaluate test papers and give marks. If you ask a teacher, Why they do so. They will tell you that tests make students serious about studies/measure students' performance/achievement
- Test results are seldom used to improve teaching. & it is the **Achilles heel (weak spot) of test-based reform.**

Changing idea of Knowledge

- While early sociological theorists made explicit the relationship between knowledge, social control and cultural reproduction (Apple, 1982; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977),
- Post-modernist and post-structuralist discourse serves to challenge the very idea of knowledge (Ball, 1993; Middleton, 1995; Moore & Muller, 1999; Weiner, 1994).

- ▶ examining dominant mode of teaching learning in our institutions
- ▶ Features of desired institutions

Features of Existing Institutions

- ▶ Schools & colleges, the most important place of learning and creativity but unable to provide meaningful education
- ▶ sites for the exercise of artificial discipline and creation of learners as passive and docile entities
- ▶ Students evaluated in terms of passed on information by teachers and texts (including e texts) and display of discipline and conformist behavior acquired in controlled institutional setting.
- ▶ Institutions can produce successful professionals who are fit to work and give results in a controlled setting based on the kind of knowledge they have received in schools, colleges and universities.
- ▶ They are generally unfit to give results in a different context and setting due to their inability to generate knowledge and manipulate skills suited to new context and setting.
- ▶ The school is unable to allow creativity and originality in students.

Existing pedagogical practices

- Classroom teaching-learning has an important place in formal education system
- Existing pedagogical practices and ways of learning provide little scope for nurturing human potential and creativity
- There is little scope for free exploration of knowledge.

Existing Context contd...

- Learning is labeled in terms of qualification
- Qualifications lead to differential access to resources in society.
- Differential access to resources not only depend on level of qualifications but also on the institutions which provide qualifications.

Features of desired Institutions

- Allow learners to think differently and create knowledge in a flexible environment.
- Practice of learner centred education
- Stress-free learning environment and evaluation

Changing Role of teacher

- ▶ Acceptance of the fact that learner constructs knowledge opens up a whole new dimension of pedagogy.
- ▶ The role of teacher has become more challenging than before.
- ▶ Role shifted from passing knowledge to prepare students for constructing knowledge
- ▶ Very challenging task for a teacher to rethink and explore ways to make students able to construct knowledge.
- ▶ A whole new vision required to understand learner in the changing pedagogical perspectives.
- ▶ Contd...

Contd...

- The constructivist teacher provides tools such as problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities with which students formulate and test their ideas, draw conclusions and inferences, and pool and convey their knowledge in a collaborative learning environment.
- Constructivism transforms the student from a passive recipient of information to an active participant in the learning process.

Understanding Learners

- ▶ Learners also learn at their own pace.
- ▶ Slow learners also have capacity to learn. It is just that they take some more time to learn.
- ▶ This may happen due to various reasons, for example, they may not have any prior knowledge about concept being taught.
- ▶ Learners have multi-dimensional and different levels of different intelligences.
- ▶ Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation also play significant role in constructing knowledge by learners. Contd...

Contd...

- ▶ Imbalance between individual tasks and cooperative activities also lead to disinterest in meaningful learning activities.
- ▶ Too many individual tasks will make learner feel that they are working in isolation and look for other ways of social interaction.
- ▶ Too many group activities, may make a learner feel that his individual need to accomplish a task independently is not met.
- ▶ Heightening the levels of curiosity and interest in knowing more is a key to learning. Contd....

Contd...

- Developing mutual trust and companionship is crucial for success in learning.
- Accepting the proposition that students are active learners and construct their knowledge through past experiences, current understanding and the questions that puzzle them.

- Understanding constructivism &
- Constructivist pedagogy

From Behavioral theories to Cognitive Theories

- Decades ago, Pavlov and Skinner came up with behavioural theories of classical and operant conditioning.
- These theories justified the use of repetition and practice, rewards and punishments, recognition and shame to get children learn.
- Cognitive theories of Piaget and Vygotsky revolutionized the education scenario and brought the role of the learner in learning. Contd...

Contd...

- Piaget focused on the student as an active learner, Learning understood as a process, learners construct new knowledge from their existing one.
- According to Vygotsky, learner construct knowledge with help of peers and persons with whom he/she often interact.

Socio-cognitive Theory of Piaget

- ▶ Piaget's theory states that learning takes place by creating "mental maps" or schemes.
- ▶ These maps or schemes are added to and adapted as needed to help them understand their environment.
- ▶ Structure becomes more complex as learner develops.
- ▶ cognitive conflict created by social interaction drives intellectual development.
- ▶ Contradiction between the learner's existing understanding & current experiences leads to disequilibrium.
- ▶ Disequilibrium "forces the subject to go beyond his current state and strike out in new directions."
- ▶ Among peers, there is mutual control over the interaction, therefore, social interaction between equals is more likely to lead to cognitive development

Social constructivism of Vygotsky

- ▶ It **emphasizes the effects of one's environment** (family, friends, culture & background) have on learning. Today, *Constructivism* seems to prevail, incorporating Cognitive and Social aspects.
- ▶ "The **social dimension of consciousness is primary** in time and in fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary."
- ▶ **Higher mental functioning has its origins in social interaction.** An individual's cognitive structures & processes emerge from their interactions with others
- Focus on interaction between people of varying levels of expertise (zone of proximal development). Development is seen as the result of learning, *not* its precondition.
- * The ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. Thus, the term "proximal" refers to those skills that the learner is "close" to mastering.
- *The zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been defined as: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).
- ▶ Human action, on both the social and individual planes, is mediated by tools and signs (semiotics).
- ▶ These tools and signs (a) facilitate co-construction of knowledge, and (b) are internalized to aid future independent activity. Learning (and Development) is the result from a complex interplay of mediational tools, the individual, and the social world.

Summing Up Social Constructivism

- ▶ Summing up social constructivism we can say that the individual is thoroughly social – Separating the individual from social influences is not possible.
- ▶ Learning is culturally and contextually specific – the sociocultural contexts in which teaching and learning occur are critical to learning itself.
- ▶ Cognition is not separate from social, motivational, emotional, and identity processes.
- ▶ The study of generalization (transfer) is the study of processes not personal/situational attributes.

Strategies for Using constructivism in Pedagogy

- Small Group Activities
- Learner Developed Instruction
- Metacognition and Reflection

Small Group Activities

- In traditional classroom training, small group exercises involve the more conventional notion of cooperation and sharing
- learners work in small groups on an assigned project or problem under the guidance of the teacher who monitors the groups, making sure the learners are staying on task and are coming up with the correct answers (if there is a right or a best answer). This is known as cooperative learning.

Learner Developed Instruction

- ▶ It involves learners working together in small groups to develop their own answer through sharing and interaction and reaching consensus, not necessarily a known answer.
- ▶ Here it is important to include participant requests in the design process . This is because the learners bring some form of prior knowledge to presentations. These conceptions (and misconceptions) should become part of the design process for the experience you are trying to create.
- ▶ Monitoring the groups or correcting "wrong" impressions is not the role of the trainer since there is no authority on what the answer should be.

Metacognition

- Metacognition allows the learner to plan, set time lines, allocate resources. It also refers to the ability to reflect on one's own performance. Reflection allows the learners the opportunity to develop, assess, and organize their thoughts.

Activities Used in Constructivist learning

- ▶ Asking questions, identifying situations where the learners' perceptions vary, brainstorming etc. are some of the activities which are frequently used in constructivist learning.
- ▶ For constructivist learning the learners are promoted to look for information, experiment with materials, observe phenomena, conduct an experiment, design a model, collect and organize data, employ problem-solving strategies, Select appropriate resources, review and critique solutions etc.

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