

ROLE OF MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF CONCEPT ATTAINMENT BEHAVIOUR AMONG SCHOOL LEARNERS

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Abstract: Present school education is very much overburdened and creates a lot of mental obstacles in the process of learning. As we know that healthy mind is the primary condition for learning of any subject, the unhealthy mental condition leads to stress and resultants in the form of poor attainment of concepts. The poor attainment of concepts decreases learning. Therefore to maintain the attainment of the learners towards concepts of their school subjects, some physical and mental exercises are needed. Such exercises will support learners to be in active mental state. Over the last few years mindfulness based practices are being used as techniques or devices which enhance the consciousness of learners. The term mindfulness indicates a state of consciousness or alertness which was introduced by Jonkabat Zinn in 1979 at University of Massachusetts. It has set up its roots in foreign countries with a well-structured theoretical frame. The term concept attainment behaviour is an output of collective efforts of Jerome Bruner, Jacqueline Goodnow and George Austin (1967). The paper is conceptual in nature and highlights a conceptual background of mindfulness based practices and concept attainment behaviour. The paper also explains a theoretical relationship between mindfulness and concept attainment that how mindfulness based practices enhance consciousness and alertness which work as a key element for the expression of concept attainment behaviour among learners.

Index Terms - Mindfulness based practices, Concept attainment behaviour, Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning is the process of enrichment of knowledge and behaviour. Enrichment of knowledge is associated with subject. All subjects are designed with well-defined content. The systematic learning of the content develops the conceptual understanding of the subject. The conceptual understanding can only be enriched by paying proper attention towards concepts. During teaching learning process the learner accumulates the knowledge and retains it in the mind in the form of concepts. As the learners reach to higher classes, their learning tasks also increase and teacher expects that learner should always be attentive during teaching learning process. Our present education system is already overburdened and creates a lot of mental pressure on learners to always do the best. Although the learners have potential to do their studies efficiently but sometimes their mental condition doesn't support them. The mental health also plays a significant role in learning process. The unhealthy mental condition leads to stress and results in poor attainment of concepts and low performance. Therefore to enhance and maintain the attainment of the learners some physical and mental exercises are needed, which will keep them in active mental state.

II. WHAT ARE MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES?

Mindfulness based practices are those practices which keep the learner's mind in a state of alertness or conscientiousness and they enhance the mindfulness among learners. Mindfulness means the mental state or quality of being mindful or aware of something or fully present in a specific moment. Mindfulness has its origin in the eightfold path of Buddhism. The eight fold paths of Buddhism are right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right samadhi. Right mindfulness is the seventh element of Buddhism which indicates the alertness of mind towards phenomena or event. In ancient period mindfulness was used as a meditation practice for concentration improvement. In modern context the mindfulness is introduced by Jon kabatzinn. He used mindfulness as a Stress reduction therapy in clinical environment at University of Massachusetts in 1979. Zinn (1979) explained mindfulness as a mental awareness towards thoughts, feeling, physical sensation and surrounding environment. Mindfulness is a psychological process which holds one's attention to the experiences occurring in the present moment (Wikipedia, October 2018). Mindfulness can be defined as state of consciousness which includes self-awareness and attention with core qualities of being openness, receptiveness and non-judgemental (Brown & Ryan 2003). So as the essence of the above definition, it can be stated that mindfulness is the ability of an individual learner to be fully present or aware of where he is and what he is doing and not overly reactive by what's going on around him. It is a conscious state of the learner about events and things which happen in his surroundings.

III. WHICH MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES ARE FOR SCHOOL LEARNERS?

Mindfulness based practices work as technique as well as therapy. The practices reduce various cognitive ailments like stress and mental pain. Earlier these mindfulness practices were used in clinical setting for the treatment of severe mental health problems. As we know that our education system is very much overburdened. The learners are unable to cope up with it and easily get stressed. So mindfulness based practices can also be useful in school environment. Here we are presenting some mindfulness based practices that can be used to maintain the mindfulness among learners such as

- (a) **Imagery Practices:** The imagery practices include soft music, videos and games. These practices stimulate good hormones in learner's body and secretion of good hormones maintains a homeostatic balance in his body. If the body is chemically balanced the learner can work attentively.
- (b) **Meditation Practices:** Meditation practices train the mind to work in a non-judgemental mode. During meditation the learner can focus on the present moment and does not think about anything else. He purposely concentrates on what's happening around him. Such practices generate positive vibes in the learner.
- (c) **Exercise Practices:** The exercises are also mindful practices. The exercises maintain physical and chemical equilibrium in learner's body system. Various activities may be the part of exercise such as deep breathing, walking, posing, palming, heartbeat counting and body scanning.

IV. HOW SCHOOL LEARNERS ARE BENEFITTED THROUGH MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES?

Mindfulness plays a positive role in learning process. Some benefits of mindfulness are presented below:

- (a) **Increases sensory awareness:** Mindfulness based practices keep the learner in active mental state. The learners become more aware about the things which happen in their surroundings. Learning by doing is very important for learners and their senses are the gateways of knowledge. As the sensory awareness of learners will increase, they will observe the things more attentively and react consciously.
- (b) **Control of cognition:** Cognitive control is a mental process which belongs to the working memory of learner's brain. Cognitive control supports flexible, adaptive responses and complex goal directed thought which generates in the mind of learners. Mindful practices make the learners mentally strong so they easily think about the thoughts, ideas and phenomena. Cognition control develops a sense of self control among learners and they don't react without understanding the things or phenomena.
- (c) **Control of emotions:** In Mindful state the learner can visualize his surrounding without the cloud of feelings and bias. These practices help to stimulate good hormonal balance in learner's body. These practices reduce the problems related to behaviour and aggression and generate positive emotions among learners. The positive emotions improve the level of happiness and keep the learners mentally stable.
- (d) **Regulation of attention:** Regulation of attention doesn't mean to remove all the thoughts from mind but to arrange the thoughts without being caught up in them. Mindfulness practices train the learners that how to regulate or direct attention on particular object and thing. These practices also develop a sense of clarity in thinking process.
- (e) **Acceptance of thoughts:** Mindfulness is a practice of paying attention on present moment. By these practices, the learner can think in a non-judgemental mode. He can freely accept the thoughts, ideas, and feelings without analysing them. The practices keep the learners free from biases and enable to behave like open minded persons.
- (f) **Promote well-beingness:** Mindfulness based practices promote well-beingness among learners. The practices make the learner physically and mentally sound. When the learners will be in healthy mental state, they can easily focus their attention towards learning process.

As the paper deals with mindfulness based practices and concept attainment behaviour, hence next we will discuss what concept attainment behaviour is

V. WHAT IS CONCEPT ATTAINMENT BEHAVIOUR?

The term concept attainment behaviour came in to existence by the collective efforts of Bruner, Goodnow and Austin in the year 1967. Concept attainment behaviour involves various cognitive tasks which are externalized in the form of observable behaviour. The concept attainment behaviour helps learner in achieving, retaining and transforming the information which are necessary for learning a concept. Every subject has its knowledge in the form of concepts. Concepts work as key builders lock for structuring the knowledge. In simple words we can say that concept is general idea about something but in psychological words, concept can be termed as mental categories of things, objects and events. Mental categories are formed on the basis of common set of features or attributes. The common set of features help in the attainment of concept. The attainment of concept is essential for better understanding of any subject. According to Bruner, the Concept attainment process is not just a simple recall about objects, events and things. It is a constructive learning process in which the learner comprehends the commonness of the things in a generalized form of idea. The generalized form of idea is the concept and it can be a definition, rule and principle. Here we can say that concept attainment is mental thought process in which learner differentiates various objects, things and classes and tries to find out the relation between them for their generalization. Concept attainment behaviour involves meaning of concept, nature of concept, and basis of understanding a concept. Bruner analysed the five basic elements of a concept follows as:

- (a) **Name:** It is the term given to the category of objects, events, phenomena. Such as Flower, Fruit, etc.
- (b) **Examples:** Examples refer to the instances of the concepts. The examples are positive and negative. Positive examples are the instances of the concept.
- (c) **Attribute:** Attributes denotes the characteristics of specific concepts which help to distinguish instance from non- instances of the concept. The attributes may be relevant, irrelevant and criterion related.
- (d) **Attribute value:** Attribute value includes the acceptable range for any given relevant attribute.
- (e) **The Rule:** Rule is presented in the form of definition and involves the relevant and criterion related attributes of concept.

VI. WHICH STAGES FOLLOWED BY LEARNERS DURING CONCEPT ATTAINMENT BEHAVIOUR?

According to Jerome Bruner, the concept attainment behaviour is expressed through some stages by the learners which are given here sequentially:

- (a) **Identification:** This is the initial stage of concept attainment behaviour. Here the learners already have previous information regarding concept. They only focus on the basic characteristics of the objects, things etc.. These basic characteristics help them to identify the concept.
- (b) **Classification:** At this stage the learners try to identify the commonness in all objects or things. The commonness or similarities among objects separate them from other objects. These similarities form the common attributes of these objects. The dissimilarities among objects are also important here. It also helps in classifying the objects and things.
- (c) **Definition:** All the essential features of objects and things are comprehended by the learner here. The essential features are presented in a definable form or statement.
- (d) **Generalization:** At this stage the learner checks the definition and establishes the validity of the concept. Validity of concept means that the definition of the concept will remain same in any situation.

VII. WHICH FACTORS AFFECT THE CENCEPT ATTAINMENT BEHAVIOUR OF LEARNER?

The concept attainment behaviour of learner is affected by below mentioned factors.

- (a) **The definition of task:** It is connected with the objective of behaviour. It includes the prior set of learner that means learner seeks to learn a concept or just collects the isolated facts. What are the expectancies of learner about the concept, what constituent's success in learning of concept?
- (b) **The nature of instances encountered:** The instances shows the attributes of a concept. The number and kind of attributes of examples and non-examples, the order and frequency of presentation of examples and non-examples, the amount of information required to ensure concept attainment.
- (c) **Nature of validation:** The validation involves verification of sources, frequency, immediacy, ambiguity and directness or indirectness of instances..
- (d) **Anticipated consequences of categorization:** It includes the likelihood of anticipated consequences and expected value of these consequences. The validation process helps in making a correct categorization of instances.
- (e) **Nature of imposed restrictions:** The restrictions imposed on selection of strategies by the conditions under which the subject must work.

VIII. HOW MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES SUPPORTS IN CONCEPT ATTAINMENT BEHAVIOUR OF LEARNER:

Mindful practices play an important role in process of learning. The learning of every subject occurs in the form of concepts. The concepts are the basic components of learning. The learner's attention is the primary condition for teaching- learning process. As the learners reach in higher classes, subject concepts shift from simple to abstract and learners should be more mindful for retaining of abstract concepts. These mindfulness based practices train the learners that how to be mindful during learning process. The concept attainment behaviour is directly associated with learning. The learning involves certain processes such as attention, sensation, perception, concept formation and finally concept attainment. The attention is the primary condition for learning which alerts learner's mind to listen or concentrate on specific concept. Sensation involves the act of listening, looking at or concentrating on a topic. Perception is a process based on past experiences in which stimuli are detected and assigned as meaning terms. In concept attainment, perception is the process of getting to know objects and objective facts by the use of the senses (Woodworth & Marquis 1962). As we perceive the things we frame concepts. The concept formation involves concept in itself. The concepts give a whole idea to all our experiences with regard to a particular object, event and person. The concept formation is directly linked with the concept attainment. If the learner will be mentally alert, he or she will focus on thought process which works as a basis for concept attainment. The mindfulness is associated with concept attainment behaviour. If the learner will be mindful, he will be able to attain the concept systematically and develop a better understanding of concepts. So the mindfulness based practices play a significant role in the concept attainment behaviour of learners.

IX. CONCLUSION:

Learning is a systematic process and concentration of learner plays an important role in this process. Mindfulness based practices are innovative ways of releasing stress and developing consciousness among learners. The mindfulness based practices maintain mindfulness and enhances the retention capacities of learners. As we know that in present context, the teacher's role is not simply to teach an academic curriculum but also to maintain a conducive learning environment in which learners feel mentally healthy. The mindfulness based practices play an important role in this direction by increasing a deep sense of attentiveness among learners. The practices enable the learners to cope with academic stress and promote wellness among them. The mindfulness based practices also help in flourishing the natural thinking power of learners. During learning process, the learners assimilate the newer knowledge with their schema and retain in the form of concept. The mental consciousness enhances their recalling power and supports them in arranging information logically. The logical manner of information helps in maintaining the attainment of concept. Concept attainment behaviour is linked with cognitive outcomes which includes achievement and performance. If the learners attain the concepts properly, their performance will be improved. So finally it can be conclude here that these mindfulness based practices should definitely be incorporated in school education for better concept attainment of every subject.

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