

APPROACHES TO TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT-There is a growing concern about lack of quality in educational systems. Lying at the core of these systems are the teaching learning processes where transaction takes place. This paper tries to explore various views available on ascertaining good teaching learning processes. Some international and national models and their key parameters have been discussed in the paper. Use of these by the institutions can help to realise the objective of quality in education.

KEYWORDS- Education, Quality, Teaching learning processes, School, Parameters

INTRODUCTION

Just like the lack of unanimity on a definition of quality, an agreement of what constitutes quality teaching learning processes is difficult to pinpoint. Time and again numerous policies on education in India and UNICEF have reiterated the need to establish set parameters for agreement on the concept of quality. This will help to assess an institution in an objective manner. But this still stays elusive as it is not a construct that is constant in every situation. This may vary from situation to situation, school to school, context to context, region to region. However, adherence to a minimum agreed standard to what constitutes essentials and superlative parameters of quality can shed some light on good teaching learning processes.

There are numerous ways to describe what comprises good teaching practices. This paper tries to explore just a few of national and International bodies' suggestions which seem to be comprehensive in nature as a means to ascertain quality teaching learning processes.

APPROACH OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES

UNICEF describes quality education as on that has essentially five quality parameters. These are quality learners, environment, content, processes and outcomes. The quality processes here refers to the teaching practices which are child friendly in nature. It also points to good management of class and well planned evaluation techniques.

These processes will comprise of three main elements. These are Teachers, Supervision and support and Students. One cannot achieve quality without a quality facilitator. The teacher should have undergone suitable, rigorous and relevant pre service training to prepare her suitably for the role she is about to enter. This should comprise not only the subject competence but also teaching competence. Besides the pre service training, there should be ongoing modules to coach them into similar issues as pre service modules. The 'National Knowledge Commission' points to teachers to have passion for their teaching. Without the keenness, we may have concerns related to their regularity in school. The management of the institution should ensure that teachers avoid engagements of pupils into learning related practices and not involve them in managerial or other work. The needs of variety of students coming from different backgrounds, cultures, learning styles have to be met. This can be possible by adopting a diverse method. Research points to learning having a long term retention when active approach is involved. This can be achieved by dynamic methods like critical thinking problems and team work approach. The feedback needs to be two pronged. The duration of these needs to be continuous, as has been recommended by CBSE too. Also as suggested by National Curriculum Framework 2005, the shift needs to be made from rote based exams to reformed application based evaluation systems. A teacher needs to display her responsibility to the process of learning by displaying certain values. This includes regularly conveying what is expected out of students. She needs to provide thinking homework, consistent feedback on their progress and encouragement to take part in varied curricular aspects. A teacher cannot motivate children if she is herself dissatisfied. Her own working space and the number of students in one class should be appropriate for her comfort. Again, it is difficult to expect quality teaching happening in dearth of sufficient allowances, teaching learning resources like textbooks, stationery etc.

The second element is supervision and support. An effective school needs to be routinely supervised to sustain quality processes. Without an effective management and leader, the schools will lose quality in no time. The principal herself needs to be trained constantly for the skills expected of an effective leader. Only then can she lead a team which is motivated. She needs to exhibit sensitivity towards freedom of teachers in the organisation and constantly allow them to be active members to take decisions in the matters of concern to the school. Support to a student also needs to be in the form of additional resources to those lagging behind due to cultural reasons. There may not be supervision at home or the medium of communication could be different from that used in schools. This needs to be plugged with the teacher's support. The teachers could also make use of ICT to supplement the materials provided to these students. There should be open channels of communication to allow a student contact when in need. The students can be strengthened by way of multiple ways of teaching methods used in the transaction. The needs of students and not teachers, will determine the day to day administration and activities.

The third element is the pivot of the school, which is the learner herself. This should be the first and the last area of importance in all the transactions. As mentioned she needs to feel supported at all times in school. This will foster a positive climate. The duration allocated to let her practice the content and transaction should be appropriate. Active methods of teaching have been said to augment the learning further.

The other method of ensuring effective teaching learning processes is the one proposed by Stanford University, USA. They delineate it as a sum of five practices. They have then formulated questions related to each practice. As mentioned earlier all the questions may not be applied to all institutions, but may serve as a benchmark to streamline the practices within any school. Firstly, is the 'design of the curricula'-what are the steps involved in its formulation and feedback. The staff should take support of studies conducted, experts in the field and even alumni. The steps used to internalise this understanding; the methods used to provide feedback on the issue; the supervisory bodies involved in the feedback mechanism; the heterogeneous constitution of the supervisory committee to invite a multi-dimensional view; these are the key points to ponder.

Second aspect is the 'Pedagogical Design'. What are the steps leading to decision on which practices need to be followed; openness of teachers to critically look at their practices together; what all needs to be included in the 'pedagogical methods'; Do these methods evolve over passage of time by incorporating modern methods like ICT; need due consideration.

Thirdly, is the 'Implementation quality' pertaining to the efficiency with which teachers are teaching. The various communication channels included in concept of 'teaching'; the encouragement and recognition provided to efficient teachers; modes of teacher feedback- involvement of the head, colleagues or children; the utilisation of these feedback information as training modules or sharing to learn. These help to make up the actual teaching process efficient.

'Outcome assessment' makes up the fourth dimension of this model. This involves the modes in which students are assessed and integrating these to bring about changes in teaching practices. The amount of conventional modes of testing involved in the process; the non-conventional ways to get feedback on teaching learning process like satisfaction from alumni and contentment of students; responsible approach to incorporate changes in accordance with the feedback.

Lastly is the 'Resource Provision' which encompasses the human capital, monetary funds and the infrastructural resources. The key points to be checked are if sufficient importance accorded to the teaching practices that guarantee quality; if enough encouragement provided to facilitate 'quality environment'; if support provided to faculty who wish to improve their teaching practices.

Yet another effective and convenient method to identify quality in classrooms is by use of Stallings classroom observation system. A University of Stanford faculty, Jane Stallings created this in 1970's. It has been used by 'World Bank Education Global Practice' in 2015. It is a simple, reliable and effective measure. It uses quantifiable measures like to observe processes like, "*teacher's use of instructional time; teachers' use of materials including information and communications technology; core pedagogical practices used and Teachers' ability to keep students engaged*".

The criterion developed by The New Teacher project in 2011 is equally comprehensive. This is an organisation whose criteria are being used by numerous school in United States to identify effective teaching learning practices. These focus on the aims of lesson, practices used for delivery and carrying out activities in class, physical structures in the class including use of bulletin and black boards, managing the class, activities used to occupy children, formative feedback of student's understanding and summative feedback.

APPROACH OF NATIONAL BODIES

NCERT started the 'Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan', as per the recommendations in Eleventh Five year Plan. The main focus of this as given by NCERT is, "*to improve the quality of education being imparted at secondary level by making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms*". The parameters decided by the body for school progress are "*the quality of teaching; the assessment of learning; the physical resources available; students' health and safety; and, the quality of leadership*".

This is a comprehensive procedure which has three documents in all. The assessments are at the level of school, district and state. The school tool is further divided into four parts: school, teachers, classroom processes and management committee. They have divided the teaching learning processes into various parameters, such as: "*Learning Resources, Classroom and Laboratory Processes, Teacher Development and Subject specific classroom processes*".

The learning resources pertain to the resources available to the educator for use in the teaching learning process. The facilities granted by the school need to be conducive; the frequency of using various laboratories or library, the manner in which the use of these facilities assist quality teaching; access and frequency of using ICT in the classes; the ways in which using ICT has helped children; the manner in which society members have assisted in learning.

Activities going on in the Classrooms and laboratories are an important parameter to gauge the learning process. Points to remember while preparing the classes; the major methodologies (lecture method, discussion methods, ICT assisted, active learning method etc.) used and their frequency in the classroom by a teacher; the frequency of using differentiated homework or activities in class; ways in which extra help is provided to a child; the pattern of formative and summative assessment used in school; networking with teachers across schools.

The teacher development entails various ways in which a teacher engages herself to improve her efficiency. These include the themes on which in service workshops have taken place; their frequency; how they were of assistance to the teaching learning process and the supervisory activities going on in school.

The classroom procedures are comprised of teaching methodologies, involvement of the student, managing the class and various procedures that are specifically suggested for various disciplines. The teaching methods should include- various ways in which feedback is taken from students; the language of instruction as well as the language used to support some learners; planning of the lesson; linking the topic to children's daily experiences; feedback to bring out the learning gaps and assignments to evoke thinking abilities.

The student's involvement is gauged by the language they are using to communicate with peers; the degree of interaction with each other, with teacher and with the proceedings in class and the concerns raised by the learner.

The manner a class is handled can be in following ways: the teacher addressing the entire group or some individuals specifically; the children deserving special needs are catered to; the approach towards negative behaviour or incorrect learning; comfort level of the students with teacher and comfort in the aspects of transaction like clarity, pronunciation and proficiency.

The subject related classroom practices should be visible in Maths, Science, Social Science and Languages. In maths, it could be the strategies to approach a problem, use of appropriate notations, use of logical analysis in writing steps etc. Linguistic class practices could have activities designed to improve grammar and reading competence, correction of pronunciation, using alternate strategies like drama to approach a topic, engaging children to utilize tools like dictionary. There could be more linking of daily life experiences in Science and Social Science subjects. Skills like approximation, prediction, Measuring and innovation should be seen in Science classes. Social Science could involve some specific assignments like community related projects and searching for other information database.

CONCLUSION

Improving the quality has always been the main focus ever since India moved closer to the Universal Literacy targets and the attention shifted from quantity to quality. To improve education, teaching learning processes are at the crux of the matter as these are responsible for most of the learning taking place. In order to provide credible education, the teachers, the head and the management need to constantly reflect on the classroom processes taking place within their institution. As each school decides what is the meaning of quality for their institution. They can use an amalgamation of both, the parameters laid out by the educational bodies as well as inputs from their own unique environment. And thus create their own novel formula for moving closer to what they believe as quality. After all, quality is not an absolute concept, but a relative one.

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