



TEACHERS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

INTRODUCTION

A good teacher is one who can inspire hope, ignite imagination and enhance the love of learning. In the words of Albert Einstein “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge”(Calaprice, 2000). We teachers should be encouraging and supportive and perform the role of human facilitator in teaching learning situations so that the learners can discover their talents; realize their physical, social, intellectual, spiritual and moral potentials to the fullest; and develop desirable social and human values. The Kothari Commission of India in recognizing the importance of teachers states that the destiny of India is being shaped in her classroom (NCERT, 1970). Dr. Radhakrishnan aptly remarked, “The teachers place in society is of vital importance. He acts as the point for the transmission of intellectual tradition and technical skills from generations to generations and helps to keep the lamp of civilization burning”. Unfortunately, in many countries including India, teaching is treated as a second profession and the society is at risk of losing our talented minds to the confines of traditional professions.

What makes a good teacher?

- Is it the warmth, the humour or the ability to care about the students?
- Is it planning, hardworking, and self-discipline?
- Is it about leadership, enthusiasm, a contagious love of learning, and good communication ability?

Most people would agree with me that the most important factor in educational reconstruction is the teacher - his personal qualities, his educational qualifications, his

professional skills and the place that he occupies in the community. Here, we must keep in mind that great teachers are the ones who inspire their learners to achieve – not just in tests and examinations, but in life. Excellent exam results can be the fuel to power young minds to achieve further and to discover more – but they are certainly not the end in the learning journey. The 2014 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report titled “Education for All” highlighted the need in India for "trained motivated teachers" to make sure learners are meeting basic standards. A brilliant teacher encourages a wider world view to the learners by giving them wider examples or perspectives, or using pedagogies and assessment techniques that develop learners' cognitive, social and emotional skills. They are intentional; responsible for their learners; reflective as learners themselves; innovative and equipped for future challenges; engaged intellectually; and ready to make a difference.

- A good teacher must: Understand the subject being taught and can create learning experiences that makes the aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
- A good teacher must: Understand how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- A good teacher must: Understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- A good teacher must: Use various instructional strategies to encourage student's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
- A good teacher must motivate and manage the classroom to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- A good teacher must: Use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active enquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- A good teacher must: Plan instructions based upon knowledge of the subject matter, the students, the community and the curriculum goals.
- He uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.

- He continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally. And last but not the least,
- He fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Teachers of yesteryears

In ancient India, the teacher occupied a very respectable place in society and were regarded as holy persons. He was the legendary guru, the dispenser of knowledge and spiritual caretaker of his students. He had the greatest role in molding the future of a country. Of all professions he was the noblest, the most difficult, and the most important. He had to cultivate in himself-humility, compassion and the spirit of loving. He was an ideal example to his pupils. He was expected to devote his life to the course of teaching in the missionary spirit of self-sacrifice, and the society laid down the principle that both the public and the state would help the learned teacher and the educational institution very liberally. The teacher would teach both secular as well as religious arts and sciences. His duty was to lead the students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.

Since the Guru was expected to train the Brahmachari- the student ethical values, he naturally should possess all the quality. For the Hindus, teaching was considered to be a holy duty of the Brahmana class (Olivelle, 1999). The principal occupations for a Brahmana was worshipping the deity, teaching others how to worship the deity, studying the Vedic literatures, teaching the Vedic literatures, accepting charity from others and again giving charity to others. He should make his livelihood on the charity he received as exchange from these occupational duties. He was exempted from the levy of taxes. He was to observe control of the mind, control of the senses, austerity and penance, cleanliness, satisfaction, forgiveness, etc. He should be merciful, simplistic and truthful and surrender completely to Godhead (Olivelle, 2011).

The Gurukula system of education of ancient India was dedicated to learning all aspects of Dharma i.e. the principles of righteous living and comprise personal responsibilities towards himself, family, society, humanity, mother earth and nature. It prepared the student to face the toughest challenges of his future life. The ancient education system of India was highly prosperous, value-based and skill-focused. It laid great emphasis on

cultural heritage and responsibility towards the society and the nation. Upon the child's Upanayanam (traditional rites that marked the acceptance of the child as a student by the Guru), the then young person began a life in the Gurukula i.e. the household of the teacher dedicated to learning all aspects of dharma. The aspects of dharma are the principles of righteous living and comprise personal responsibilities towards himself, family, society, humanity, mother earth and nature. Traditional Vedic sciences, Phonetics, Grammar, Astronomy, Fine Arts, Economics, Laws, Art of Warfare along with the religious texts of the Vedas and Upanishads were studied during Brahmacharya. The Gurukula System of Education was dedicated to the highest ideals of 'all-round human development' i.e. physical (practical), mental (intellectual) and spiritual (religious) development leading to realization of Godhood. The system was based on the principle, "Experience is the best teacher." At the end of their training, the students thus emerged as responsible individuals who are well versed and learned in the Vedas and capable of facing the toughest challenges of life.

Teachers of today

Great emphasis is made on the theories and findings of great educationists and psychologists: Jean Piaget's Cognitive Developmental theory, Pavlov's and Skinner's Conditioning theory, Bandura's social learning theory, Erikson's Psycho-social theory, Kohlberg's theory of moral development, Vygotsky's socio-cultural development, Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence, to name a few. In the last few decades, the concept of Constructive Approach of Teaching has gain momentum. Constructivist learning is a student-driven process in which learners develop or construct their understanding of concepts by incorporating their own outside experiences and perspectives as well as those of other students rather than only receiving information from their instructor(Muijs and Reynolds 2005). The constructive approach of learning can be achieved:

- Through cooperative learning where students work together in small groups to help each other learn and discover and comprehend difficult concepts in groups.
- Through discovery learning where students learn largely on their own through active involvement and the teachers encourage them to have experiences and conduct experiments that permit them to discover principles for themselves.

- Through self-regulated learning when learners have knowledge of effective learning strategies and know-how and when to use them.
- Through active engagement which enable students to gain experiences that they can think about and reproduce and consequently develop a relationship with the information and concepts involved.
- Through intentionality where learning environments are designed with specific learning goals that help learners understand why the information they are working with is important and relevant.
- Through complexity where learners are exposed to and engaged in complicated tasks in order to develop higher order thinking skills.
- Through collaboration where individuals must balance their dependency on others with their own accountability to the groups in order to reach shared objectives.
- Through conversation where learners develop and expand their concepts of knowledge and information by exposing themselves to new information and alternatives.
- Through reflection where learners develop through reasoning and re-examine their ideas.
- Or Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding where students learn through the assistance provided by more competent peers or adults.

Need of the hour for the teachers

Teachers should be equipped well to guide the future generation in this fast changing society. The influence of a teacher indirectly extends over many generations; it transcends national and geographical boundaries, and it advances the cause of civilization and world order. The world today is rapidly changing and so in India, new goals are being set up and new techniques are being devised in order to read just our society to the new situation. The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) focused on education as, "Education ought to be related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people; and thereby made powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation". The Chattopadaya Committee Report of the National Commission on Teachers (1983-85) envisioned the New Teacher as one who communicates to the pupils the importance of i) the feeling for National integrity and unity, ii) the need for a scientific attitude and a commitment to

excellence in standards of work and action, iii) and concern for society. The Yashpal Committee Report (1990) titled 'Learning without Burden' noted that inadequate programmes of teacher preparation leads to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) expressed major concerns about the contexts, concerns and visions of Teacher Education and calls for preparing teachers for the learning society, empowering teachers in learning to learn, and making teacher education liberal, humanistic and responsive to the demands of inclusive education as envisaged by the Right to Education Act, 2009.

CONCLUSION

A growing concern is the erosion of ethical values amongst the youths of the country. There is a wide gap between the modern education system with that of the ancient Gurukul system as the moral side of education is absolutely ignored today. It may not be possible to completely lead a life full of control, but we should try to adapt to a way of living with ethical values. Here I quote the words of Albert Einstein "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning." I finish the discussion with the words of William Arthur Ward, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."