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### Healthy Practices in Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

#### Introduction:

Pedagogy is by far the most indispensable factor in the success of an educational effort. The teacher-dependant pedagogy of the past has to necessarily become learner centered because of (a) the need of the learner to face the challenges of a more competitive and complex world than before and (b) also because of the advancement of technology which has made available several devices for the teacher to actively use for the benefit of the learner. The paradigm shift from teacher-dependant protective learning often manifested in reproduction of ideas borrowed or stored, to learner centered independent inquiry is a welcome change. It is greatly facilitated by sharing a large quantity of information at the quickest possible time through information technology (IT) devices such as the internet. The way our institutions are coming to terms with these is remarkable. And that is what the healthy quality practices enumerated. It must be remembered however, that hardware cannot replace human ware. It is a tool made effective or ineffective according to the presence or absence of the imagination and resourcefulness of the learner-teacher partnership.

In our country, in the ancient days, "Vidya" or education was considered to be 'the third eye' of man, which gave him insight and mental strength. There is a common saying in India "Swadesh Pujiyate Raja, Vidvam Sarvatra Pujiyata". It means that the king's respect is limited to his own kingdom whereas a learned man is respected everywhere. 'Vedas' also meant "education". One of the six systems of Indian Thought, viz., Nyaya is based on the premise that salvation is attained through knowing the true knowledge. In the holy Quraan, the first soora 'Aqraa' also symbolizes education. Adi Granth, the holy Scripture of the Sikhs, says that he who philosophies education is a person who becomes the top savior of society. It is thus not difficult to conclude that religious scriptures have highlighted the importance of education right from the ancient days.

In the words of William Lyon (1970): "In my mind, teaching is not merely a life work, a profession, an occupation or a struggle, but a passion. I love to teach as a painter loves to paint, as a musician loves to play, as a singer loves to sing, and as a strong man rejoices to run a race".

On the quality of education, a policy perspective (1985) entitled 'Challenges of Education', it is said that "it is difficult to define quality, particularly, with reference to educational process. However, it could be stated that a quality-conscious system could produce people who have the attributes of functional and social relevance, mental ability and physical dexterity, efficacy and reliability, and, above all, the confidence and the capability to communicate effectively and exercise initiative and make innovation and experimentation with new situations. To these personal attributes, one could add the dimension of a value system, conducive to harmony, integration and the welfare of the weak and the disadvantaged."

The structure of teaching consists of three variables which operate in the process of teaching and create learning conditions for different situations. Firstly, the teacher is an independent variable, as he plans, organizes, leads and controls teaching. Secondly, the students are a dependent variable, since they are required to act according to the planning and guidance of the teacher. Thirdly, the intervening variable is the content and strategy of presentation which leads to interaction between the teacher and the taught. These three functions are performed by teaching, i.e. diagnostic, prescriptive and evaluative functions.

The Teaching-Learning process has four components: teacher, student, learning process and learning situation. Teaching and learning are interlinked. Teaching remains central to both learning and evaluation. There is inter-relatedness between teaching objectives, learning experiences and evaluation. Evaluation is a process of determining the extent to which an objective is achieved; the effectiveness of the learning experience provided in the class room; and the accomplishment of goals

set.

There are three phases of the teaching process: (i) pro-active phase; (ii) interactive phase; and (iii) post-active phase. In the proactive phase, the teacher formulates instructional objectives, decides the curriculum, employs the pedagogic technology and stimulation strategies. In the interactive phase of teaching, the teacher provides pupils verbal stimulation of various kinds, the operations involved being determination of the exact dimensions of behavioral changes using appropriate testing devices and thereafter planning units of syllabi and methods of teaching.

It is difficult to measure teaching effectiveness but it is easier to measure learning effectiveness, which, actually, is the true reflection of teaching effectiveness. Learning conditions are basic to understanding the concepts taught. There are five important purposes and functions of evaluation: (i) diagnostic, (ii) proactive, (iii) selective selection, (iv) grading and counseling; and (v) motivation to learning. Two categories of evaluation techniques that could be followed are: 'the quantitative technique' which includes oral, written and practical techniques. The 'qualitative technique' comprises cumulative record, anecdotes, observation, check list and rating scales.

### **Criteria of healthy quality Practices:**

On the strength of the available literature in the subject of teaching, learning and evaluation and on the basis of discussions on the topic, the following constructs in teaching, learning and evaluation have been worked out. They provide the rationale of the criteria for deciding the healthy quality practices in higher education.

### **Teaching Faculty Personality:**

The teaching effectiveness is linked with the human touch of learning. As such, the personality component of the teaching faculty becomes extremely important in the assigned task of disseminating knowledge and thereby developing the all-round personality of students. It could be further gauged from the following sub-constructs:

- Numerical strength of teachers vis-à-vis number of students;
- subject-wise pupil-teacher ratio;
- academic strength of the faculty, blend of age and youth (The professional
- satisfaction of teachers is very important from the point of view of their mental health, which plays an important role in the personality development of students;
- inter-personal relationship among faculty members;
- harmonious relationships among teachers, students, community / parents and the management; and
- policy of recruitment of teachers which should help in picking up the best among applicants.

### **Admission Policy:**

The institutions of higher learning are: government institutions; denominational grant-in-aid institutions; private grant-in-aid institutions; non-government un-aided institutions; and minority status institutions. Though the admission policy will vary in all these institutions, yet it is important that transparency in the admission process is observed and that these are made in consonance with the law of the land and state policy.

### **Preparation of Teaching Plan:**

- unitization of syllabi;
- distribution of curriculum vis-à-vis number of lectures;
- strategies to be evolved in teaching;
- comprehensive teaching plans;
- record of teaching, daily diary, etc.

### **Knowledge of Pedagogical Teaching Technology:**

- competence of teachers to handle different methods of teaching;
- expertise in handling the tools of teaching including teaching machines;
- capacity of teachers to produce of audio-visual aids; and
- expertise of teachers in the use of e-media and computer- aided packages.

**Reading Habits of Teachers:**

- reading habits of teachers as observed through the use of the library based on the frequency of use during the past three years as recorded by the library;
- availability, on the stacks, of the latest books on subjects
- average amount spent by the teachers annually on purchase of books; and
- the use of internet in down-loading the latest reading materials for enhancing pedagogic knowledge and improve skills in the use of education technology.

**Teaching Process:**

- use of the lecture method;
- combination of lecture method with other teaching methods;
- competence in the use of the black-board and other teaching aids;
- promotion of active listening in the classroom by teachers and students;
- competence of teachers to design enrichment and remedial programs for advanced learners and slow learners, respectively;
- competence of teachers to identify and group students according to ability, need for remedial coaching, potential for peer teaching-learning and group learning;
- competence of teachers to play the role of group leader/ facilitator/ provider of group structure vis-à-vis types of learning tasks; and
- competence of teachers to solve problems arising out of the gap between lecturing and its impact e.g. the short attention span of students, inaudibility of lecture, dependence on rote learning, absence of social interaction, scope for limitless boredom, etc.

**System of Evaluation:**

- information about the evaluation program given to students at-least a month before admission;
- policy of internal assessment;
- weekly, monthly and quarterly tests;
- transparency in evaluation;
- awarding marks / scores / percentile score;
- providing transcripts to students at the terminal stage of the career vis-à-vis the college / university;
- teacher's full understanding and use of various evaluation techniques;
- preparation of question banks; and
- evaluation to be made a tool of motivation to learning.

**Faculty Evaluation:**

- assessment by Head of the Department (HOD) and Principal;
- evaluation by peers;
- evaluation by outgoing students through a structured questionnaire on a 5- point scale and through an open-ended questionnaire. This structured questionnaire should definitely reflect the following components of the teacher assessment:
- Evaluation of teacher performance by the students who have recently completed their undergraduate or postgraduate program with special reference to teaching attributes, knowledge, academic qualification and research qualification
- Steps taken by the teachers for improving their subject knowledge
- Evaluation of the four components of teacher's authority, viz., social authority, subject authority, professional authority and charismatic authority.

**Description of Healthy Quality Practices:**

- Some colleges have a week's orientation for teachers to the use of the latest pedagogical teaching technology including audio-visual aids and teaching machines. Further, they are encouraged to discuss their problems arising out of the use of the above.
- Quite a good number of colleges hold departmental meetings of teachers to prepare teaching plans to be spread over the year. Mostly, the syllabi are unitized according to the number of terms during the program whereas more comprehensive teaching plans need to be prepared.
- Prospective students are also guided in the selection of subjects to be taken by them for their undergraduate program. In this context, their aptitude and academic merit are kept in view.
- Colleges that observe transparency in admission are highly appreciated by students, parents and

the society at large. The admissions made on merit and saturatory reservations are always appreciated.

- Some colleges conduct post-entrance diagnostic tests to assess the aptitude of students. They are assessed by teachers through frequent interactions. Such a practice helps teachers to classify students into different groups for providing the required kind of academic tasks.
- Teachers are encouraged to promote innovative pedagogy. Simulated teaching and micro level teaching are practiced by some teachers and the same are reviewed, and evaluated through discussion by staff, the HOD and the Principal.
- A centralized media facility is available in some colleges to augment and support the teaching learning process. Audio-visual equipment, such as over-head projector (OHP), slide projectors, models, charts, liquid crystal display (LCD) and teaching machines are made available.
- Learner-centered teaching methods such as group work, role play, project work, field visit, case study, debates, etc. supplement classroom teaching. In addition, modern tools of teaching are also employed for making teaching learning more effective.
- Some colleges have established language and commerce laboratories. The language laboratory is found useful to develop communication skills and also to teach different groups of students simultaneously according to their abilities.
- Some colleges make some innovative approaches to teaching-learning processes such as e-group and phone-groups for assignments and projects. Extensive use of e-mail is made for different groups.
- Field trips, educational trips, projects, surveys, seminars at departmental and institutional levels and guest lectures by experts from outside help students to develop the ability to learn on their own. Diverse teaching methods are used including focused group discussions, brain storming sessions, role plays, games, case discussions, home assignments, etc.
- Tests, assignments, term papers, learning projects, enrichment classes, and prompt evaluation of college tests and examinations are pointers of sustaining quality. Results are intimated to parents regularly.
- Objective-type tests, group discussions, oral presentations, open book tests and routine tests are employed in order to make assessment more skill-oriented.
- Teachers are given confidential feedback about their teaching effectiveness on the basis of an institutionalized mechanism of evaluating them. There is a scientifically designed Training Effectiveness Evaluation Model. This model is based on many variables and constructs that would determine effectiveness of teaching.

### **The Impact / Outcome:**

The healthy quality practices selected above have already proved to be instrumental in raising the performance level of certain institutions to that of a five star or A grade. It cannot be said that these higher grades were based on the criterion of Teaching, Learning and Evaluation listed above. Nevertheless the NAAC has given the highest weightage (around 40% for affiliated colleges) among its parameters for obvious reasons. It is equally true, however that this criterion is linked with others as well.

It needs to be kept in view that the quality of education and excellence of an institute on is directly linked with the quality of output of its graduates in different spheres. Every institution is known for its personality, thrust areas and quality of teaching; they bear a distinct stamp. It is, therefore, important to improve the standard of teaching, learning and evaluation. Adopting these practices is not difficult. Teachers feel that modern teaching technology needs to be used to improve the effectiveness of pedagogy. Such motivation may be exploited by making the equipment available.

### **Requirements for Adoption and Adaptation:**

It is to be remembered in this context that the lecture method continues to dominate the scene of higher education in the country, with the result that it ceases to motivate and inspire students to learn. At the same time, there is a strong realization among teachers that pedagogy should be learner centered. They agree that teaching does not aim at rote learning or mere comprehension but at effective learning involving application of mind and competency of communication. Audio-visual aids, and teaching machines will help in addition to generate greater interaction between teachers and learners. The use of educational technology cannot however be avoided in this knowledge era brought about by Information Technology.

In addition, certain small changes implemented by the educational institutions will help the learning climate. These steps could be:

- The lecture rooms may preferably be of the gallery type. The lecture rooms of science blocks need to be designed and furnished according to subject requirements. Also, the sliding black or white boards are more facilitative than fixed boards.
- There should be a provision for teaching aids and teaching machines with every department. However, where it is not possible, a central facility could be created for teachers of all departments for their classroom use.
- Teachers should be given orientation in student counseling. It will be important for them to know the socio-metric and psycho-metric techniques to identify different categories of students.
- There has to be some kind of mechanism by which students could be motivated, vis-à-vis, the accomplishment of completing the undergraduate or the postgraduate programs to avoid dropping out in the middle. Particularly, it is seen that in rural educational institutions, the dropout rate is high.

### **Conclusion:**

Teaching, learning and evaluation, the vital and crucial academic activity of any educational institution require meticulous planning and responsible execution chiefly through team work and coordination. Where any one of these receives inadequate attention, the other two may fall away bringing the whole educational efforts to little or no value. In the light of this caution, we may look upon the healthy quality practices as signposts that lead towards the goal of excellence to be reached only through quality enhancing measures.

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