

Examining the Factors That Influence Students' Participation in Class Room Dialogue and their Learning Outcomes: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT--*Education plays an important role for everyone to succeed in life and get something different. It helps a lot in lessening the challenges of life or difficulties of life. Knowledge gained throughout the education period enables every individual to be confident about their life. Transfer of Knowledge has always been the accepted norm of teaching and learning in the traditions of the schooling system in rural India since ancient times. The 'Gurukul' system of teaching converted to the missionary schools' format during and post the British rule in India. This concomitant of two cultures has had a debilitating impact on the overall teaching in itself. This has been further impacted upon by the onslaught of Information Communication Technology (ICT) which has revolutionized the learning at lightning speed. Due to this, the rural schooling system in India has been finding itself at the darker end of the tunnel. The objective of the research is to find the aspects of opening a healthy dialogue between students and teachers, especially in the rural setting to make the vital step towards fostering world-class learning and teaching. The sample of study were the schools in a rural area of Bilaspur District, Himachal Pradesh, Northern India with emphasis on Government schools. The methodology adopted was the conduction of focused group discussion among teachers and principals of rural government schools. The outcomes of the discussions are the sample drawn upon for the study findings. The study findings show that most teachers have been experimenting with the promotion of interactive dialogue methods in the classroom setting but have not met with little success as several socio-economic and socio-psychological parameters need to be addressed/ considered before attaining any success in this research*

Keywords--*Teaching, learning, Dialogue, Classroom, Rural, Outcomes*

I. INTRODUCTION

Creating a suitable learning environment for students to actively participate in and complete the required course material is a challenge for most school teachers and learners. This is especially so for the learners of this advanced age of communications. An effective way of promoting active participation is by encouraging interactive dialogue in the classroom. Years of passive education and the fear of making mistakes has made the students from the primary and middle school level itself extremely reluctant to enter into dialogue in the classrooms. We must

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understand that the essential pre-requisite for classroom dialogue is a sustainable atmosphere of trust within the classrooms.

Creating an open dialogue means that every contribution is useful. Every contribution must be acknowledged instead of being severely and critically assessed. It must be understood by the teacher and the learners that not every question can be answered immediately. The response of the teacher makes the students feel more comfortable about asking questions and participating actively in class. A dialogue is opened. Creating an open dialogue will transform into confidence-building among students to feel free to view their opinions.

Classroom dialogue has been referred to as the language of learning. Classroom dialogue focuses on identifying and promoting teacher-child or child-child interactions in school settings. It has been acknowledged to be the most beneficial for children's learning and development. It is characterized by open questions and discussions. (Howe & Abedin, 2013; Mercer & Dawes, 2014; Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2015; Walshaw & Anthony, 2008; Webb, 2009). The majority of the rural school classroom talk is dominated by recitation giving little space to shared thinking and reasoning. Howe and Abedin (2013) concluded that shows "how classroom dialogue is organized than about whether certain modes of organization are more beneficial than others". Language learning, identity formation, and learning lead to collective ability to reason and think together. Christine Edwards-Groves (2018) studied on knowing Pedagogical Dialogues for learning Establishing a repertoire of classroom Interaction practices as Core Teaching Practice and found that the study centered on supporting PSTs understand dialogically as core to teaching and to practice enacting quality pedagogical dialogues in classrooms with students.

Thus, classroom dialogue becomes the setting in which children's learning takes place. Several Scholars view classroom talk as socially productive and are interactionally configured to support shared thinking, and collective problem solving (Howe & Abedin, 2013). This study is based on a quasi-participant qualitative design to study the possibilities of productive classroom dialogue for the improvement of children's oral communicative abilities.

Most of the times the class is unable to resist the temptation to laugh at some mistakes made by a fellow student but it is largely the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that what is obvious to some may not be as obvious to others and simple mistakes should not preclude the student from participating in the future. In this manner, the teacher can assure the student's self-pride and also help in establishing a platform for interactive dialogue in a healthy classroom atmosphere.

The urban schools have swung into action impressively by the introduction of several innovative inputs. It is the rural schools that are lacking and having a tough time trying to catch-up. The students going to these schools have the dual burden of increased expectations from parents and teachers and their aspirations in the face of a learner's atmosphere that discourages dialogue. In most schools' students are hesitant to discuss their curriculum-related academic and other problems with the teachers for fear of being rebuffed and even ridiculed in front of their classmates.

II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The paper reviews the aspects of opening a healthy dialogue between students and teachers especially in the rural setting to make the vital step towards fostering world-class learning and teaching. Not much work has been

done in this field. There is scope for further avenues of research opening up among the academic faculty and researcher. To find out the best possible way of teaching through dialogue with the help of local resources.

III. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research is to find the aspects of opening a healthy dialogue between students and teachers especially in the rural setting to make the vital step towards fostering world-class learning and teaching. Not much work has been done in this field. There is scope for further avenues of research opening up among the academic faculty and researcher. To find out the best possible way of teaching through dialogue with the help of local resources.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Over 65 principals and science teachers of rural government schools of Bilaspur District, Himachal Pradesh, Northern India discussed classroom teaching strategy whereby the researcher-led the discussion on the promotion of healthy dialogue among rural students. The 65 teachers included 13 principals, 20 Vice Principals, and 32 science teachers. The sample of the study was the schools with an emphasis on Government schools.

The research tool was an interview guide. All teachers (including Principals and Vice Principals) were asked to give their views on how they coped with THE classroom that was a two-way teaching-learning process. The empirical study is based on both primary and secondary data. The data collection has been done across the bi-annual meeting of teacher representatives. The data has been collected in the meetings held in the years 2018 and 2019. The Focus Group Discussions were an open discussion on various topics about classroom teaching. The qualitative inputs of the teachers have been used in the current study.

V. RESULTS

Based on an analysis of data collected through discussion and interview guide following findings were formulated: Teachers were aware of a few types of dialogues which are discussed as under-

- Questions and Answers

The most common ways in which dialogue in the classroom is initiated. Anytime during the lecture.

- Small-Group Discussions

The class is divided into groups and discusses some points from the syllabus. Then each group shares their findings with the entire class.

Oral examinations

The teacher puts question orally one to one with students and they attempt to answer the question

Challenges faced by Teachers in adopting Dialogue Technique for Teaching:

Classroom Behavior and Obstacles to Creative Dialogue-

- There were several aberrations observable in the classroom interactions by the teachers of the selected schools.

- Some Students tend to take over every discussion. Such students interrupt constantly and indulge in long commentaries.

- Some students are reluctant to participate because they are feeling shy, or uncomfortable.

Some unique challenges shared by the teachers are discussed as under:

- There are several socio-cultural and psychosocial barriers to fostering free dialogue in the classroom situation. These can be enumerated as:

- Rural schoolchildren are gender divisive. The boys and girls are asked to sit separately or tend to sit separately because of their inclinations, parental instructions, or even their socio-cultural bindings.

- Caste divisions are also present in the seating and interaction patterns of the rural school students. In a class, these may be available separate seating arrangements based on the caste affiliations of the students and their parents.

- Class considerations also tend to play a decisive role in the various interactive process with the students' class dynamics. This may influence directly and indirectly the ability of students to participate in a healthy dialogue with the class teacher as also other students.

- It is the socio-economic status of the student or his or her parent's occupational status ends up having a major impact on the overall well-being of the students. It also determines his or her participation in the classroom setting.

The above considerations tend to work on the psyche of the particular students themselves as also on the teacher besides other students. There are some barriers to communication that need to consider. Some interactive barriers are drawn from the narratives of the students themselves.

"I belonged to 'Choti Jaat' (lower caste). At first, I was not even allowed to sit in the class. I stood outside and learned the lessons. After an inspection. I was made to sit inside the class but on the floor next to the back wall of the classroom. Who will let me talk? (14-year-old boy in 7th class)

"As a girl, I come quietly and go back quietly. I try not to draw attention to myself. There are many instructions that I get from my mother. We girls sit together and try our best not to attract attention" (12 years old girl in 8th class)

"I am the zamindar's son. The teacher cannot dare to offend me. I can talk when I want. I have often asked the teacher to discuss topics other than the ones scheduled for class". (13 years old boy in 6th class)

VI. DISCUSSION

The importance of Dialogue in participant learning and improving learning outcomes is indispensable. The interview and discussion held with the participant teachers yielded some fruitful suggestions. The outcome of the discussion is summarized as under:

6.1 Teachers were made aware of certain other types of dialogues that they can practice in the classroom.

Stephen Rader and Tracy Summerville (Ref) have discussed the types of dialogue possible in the classroom.

They have been delineated as follows:

Types of Dialogue

6.1.1 Questions and Answers

Among the most common ways in which dialogue in the classroom is invited. Anytime during the lecture or at a specific time student are allowed to share their doubts or views on the subject. Questions must evolve into a two-way process. It means students, as well as teachers, can ask questions.

6.1.2. Pairing and Sharing

This technique allows the students to interact with each other and peers to work out problems that have been assigned. Shared work in large classroom settings is a conducive healthy discussion and drawing of solutions with each other and also with the class. Teacher supervision all through the exercise is essential to ensure that the students are discussing the problem and not indulging in idle gossip. This form of pairing /sharing is useful to build classroom rapport among students. Most of the times students are more comfortable talking to each other, they may hesitate in talking and voicing their opinion in front of a large class. this technique also helps in developing better understanding among students.

6.1.3. Small Focused Group Discussions

The class can be divided into groups and students work through a single problem as the instructor designs different problems for each group. The teacher has each group share their findings with the entire class. This is a stage of healthy interaction, debate, and discussion.

6.1.4. Informal Debates

Discussions can be initiated as informal debates in the classroom. They can begin unexpectedly and are encouraged by outlining the different argument positions including reasoning, assumptions, and all available and known facts. The students must understand that the debate is not tangential to lecture material. The teacher must point out how the students can use ideas and concepts from the course material and supplement them with other resources to argue a point. This will help students to express more freely and understand easily. this activity is an important part of confidence-building too.

6.1.5. Formal Debates

Formal debates are another useful tool to get the students engaged in careful research. They can be encouraged to experiment with presentation techniques. The competitive nature of debate can often spark student interest. This will encourage students to be more focused and dedicated to the subject. The debate rules should be clearly explained. The students can have their research done beforehand as an assignment before setting up the debate. Once their performance is linked to some form of appraisal the students participate at first because they have to and later the active participation in the debate becomes rewarding enough by itself.

6.1.6. Presentations

The appraisal incentive can be used for asking the class to make Individual and group presentations as tools to teach the skills and value of direct oral communication. Presentations can be taxing for students as in the beginning they are wrought with anxiety and fear. Clear, well-researched content which is organized and clear presentations would entail participatory hard work among the students. In itself, it is a doubly rewarding exercise as students are familiarized with the subject content as they also are in a position to explain their viewpoint on it. It must be ensured by the teacher that every student is involved in preparing presentation especially in the case of a group presentation.

6.1.7. Oral examinations:

Oral examinations have proven to be a traditionally effective way of determining how the student's articulate ideas learned in the class. A student who has done the

course readings are capable of having a one-on-one discussion about the course. During the open-ended interview session, the teacher can gauge the aspects of the course that had the maximum impact on the student. A grading template must be evolved by the teacher so that all forms of answers given by the students can be considered and the student's talents can be tested to the maximum. A healthy mix of questions posed to the students can get them to give structured responses that are based on the student's understanding of the subject as also their research potential and investigative abilities.

6.2 Suggestions provided by the teachers after an informal session of brainstorming:

6.2.1. The most significant part of creating a classroom dialogue is that it can only be effective and educational if all the students in the class have done their reading. One way to encourage this would be to get any random student to give a summary of the important points of all the lessons so that the class may recapitulate and reinforce the learning. Thus, all the students have to prepare for each class.

6.2.2. A more structured form of classroom dialogue can be fostered through informal class presentations or even formal presentations. Such presentations have the students spending considerable time working on the course material. They may even be ready to participate in extemporaneous discussions, so well prepared they become. It will help students to become more confident and knowledgeable.

6.2.3. To maintain the class dynamics, it is the responsibility of the teacher to help the student understand that the student's interjections are not welcome unless they have some constructive contribution to make to the class discussion. This can PROVE to be tricky and many times a difficult situation to deal with. Such a student is simply arrogant but not always.

6.2.4. This type of student who tries to overshadow the discussion with irrelevant content usually tends to have low self-esteem and uses this kind of bullying technique to keep others from finding out that they "don't know".

6.2.5. It was also stressed that Students must understand that knowledge is not about merely storing facts but knowing how to seek and find the answers to questions. Such classroom interactions need to be channelized in a manner that the students are focused to think critically.

6.2.6. The students must learn the importance of cultivating the skills of listening and thinking before speaking and debating.

6.2.7. In contrast for the students who are reluctant to participate, it was discussed that this might be because they are painfully shy, or they are largely unaware of the course material. Some students do not feel comfortable discussing until they are sure and have a chance to think or re-read their notes. It is, therefore, useful to devote time to each class for discussing the previous lecture and reviewing to give these "reflective" students a chance to participate.

6.2.8. The reluctant student needs to understand that each student is unique. Every student's individual needs must be considered to bring about total participation in the class.

6.2.9. Sometimes the intragroup discussions held between students may tend to be dominated by a single student who is either outspoken or understands the courseware better than the others. Usually, it is very assertive or most competent students who always tend to give their opinion or speak up.

6.2.10. Another problem with small group discussions is that in case the group does not understand the topic they may not participate at all or may wander into unproductive directions. To overcome this issue a suggestion was put forward to let the students select a topic related to some common problem of their life. It will make them feel connected to the issue and they will not fall short of the content.

6.2.11. Usually students do not volunteer or share the fact that they are not understanding the concept but if some careful questions are asked to test their understanding, it becomes clear how much they have understood and retained.

6.2.12. In some cases, it has been observed that many students are terrified at being asked a question in class. These students do not even raise their hand if they know and want to answer. It is difficult to evaluate whether the others do not understand, are too shy, or are not interested or even do not care.

6.2.13. To solve the concern of non-participation due to class, caste, or gender-related differentiation, the only solution that appeared plausible was to create awareness regarding equality and social justice not only among students but among all the residents. Some activities can be planned to achieve this equality and also the part of the curriculum designed to develop such values should be paid more attention to the teachers.

6.2.14. The involvement of Parents through PTM was also suggested. Parents are the best source to get authentic feedback about the real personality of the child.

VII. CONCLUSION

The creating of a dynamic dialogue in the classroom is essential for creating a community of learners and having a sense of social responsibility. Its long term, the broad-based impact has been demonstrated by Edward Zlotkowski when he says: "...what students reflect on results not just in greater technical mastery (i.e. course content) but also in an expanded appreciation of the contextual and social significance of the discipline in question and, most broadly, in "an enhanced sense of civic responsibility". Thus, students in a chemistry course may be asked to connect testing for lead in housing projects with what they have learned both in the classroom and in the laboratory while also processing their reactions to conditions in the housing projects and their evolving sense of children's rights to a safe environment".

Thus, classroom dialogue becomes the setting in which children's learning takes place. Classroom dialogues can play an important role in the personality development of rural students. Several scholars view classroom talk as socially productive and are interactively configured to support shared thinking, and collective problem-solving.

The results of the study bring forth a kind of classroom atmosphere that needs to be promoted to have an interested learners' group that is not afraid to contribute and thinks constantly about the course material and supplementing its practical implications. The students must never feel coerced into participating under duress or doing something they are not comfortable with. Usually, the teachers may find their students hesitant, reticent, or even distracted by the pressures and tension of examinations and marks aspired for. They become less engaged with the course material.

It is the sole responsibility of the teacher to work diligently towards creating a sustained and healthy dialogue in the classroom. The phenomenon revolves around creating trust. The underlying success of the approach lies in connecting theoretical precepts to easily understandable ideas having practical considerations. This approach is more involved with helping students to think on their own. It promotes their mental and psychological growth both within and outside the classroom.

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