

Need for Activating the Desire to Learn among Learners to Raise the Quality of Education

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Abstract

After the implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), India has witnessed increased access to education at the elementary level. As a consequence, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of children above the age of six years has risen to 87 per cent. But unfortunately, the quality of education has not kept pace with the quantitative expansion of education. At present, there is a learning crisis in India. Therefore, there is an urgent need of the country to end this crisis through a number of interventions. Effective training of both pre-service and in-service teachers is crucial to transform the instructional process from teacher-centred to learner-centred approach. Poor student achievement is often attributed to a lack of motivation. For more than a century, a reward and punishment model has been used in all the classrooms of the world to increase student motivation. Now, there is a lot of empirical evidence that external motivation in the form of reward is less effective than intrinsic motivation to improve the quality of education. Rewards do not activate desire for learning. The desire for learning is activated in the classroom learning environment if it is full of joy and excitement.

INTRODUCTION

Low Quality of Education— Need to Address the Issue

After the implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), India

has achieved incredible success in increasing the access to education at, elementary level. There is a primary and an upper primary school within the radii of one kilometre

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and three kilometres respectively from the residence of a child. This has facilitated an increase in the Net Enrolment Ratio to 87 per cent (NEUPA 2014–15). Only 10 per cent of children above the age of six years are still unreached.

On the other hand, the quality of education has not kept pace with quantitative expansion of education. The UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (2014) highlights that 90 per cent of children belonging to the disadvantaged sections of society remain illiterate even after four years of schooling. This holds good for 30 per cent students even after five to six years of schooling. The report concluded that there is a learning crisis in India. The children from the disadvantaged sections of society are the worst hit in this regard. The situation is resulting in the wastage of enormous human and material resources. Therefore, there is an urgent need to determine an approach through which the issue of low quality of education can be addressed appropriately.

Need to End Learning Crisis

Despite increased accessibility, many children are leaving schools unequipped with skills they need for life and work. One of the intervention is quality pre-service and in-service education of teachers to transform their instructional strategies from teacher-centred to learner-centred for transacting the curriculum. Teachers

need to be equipped with instructional strategies such as concept attainment, inquiry training, engaging learners in activities, collaborative learning and cooperative learning. They should also be trained in reflective teaching. They need to be urged to imbibe the values of professionalism, and must adhere to the code of professional ethics developed by their teachers' organisation. They need to be equipped with skills to generate joy in the classroom learning environment.

Teachers need to be provided effective training in theory of multiple intelligence. This is because students do not learn in one way. They learn in eight ways. An understanding of the theory of multiple intelligence would help teachers to understand the differential learning styles of students.

Appropriate infrastructure facilities and the adequacy of teaching workforce in a school also contribute to effective classroom learning. The state governments should address the said requirement in their schools.

DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The following are the main factors which determine the quality of education.

- Quality teachers
- Quality tools
- Appropriate nourishment of children, particularly during the first five years of their life

- Quality of classroom learning environment

Quality Teachers

It depends upon the quality of pre-service Teacher Education and professional development of in-service teachers on a continuing basis. At present, the quality of pre-service Teacher Education is low. Teachers being trained by colleges of education, both at the elementary and secondary education are by and large ill-equipped in terms of knowledge and skills to be effective performers at their workplace. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) also highlights that 'most products of teacher education programmes are neither proficient in general pedagogical skills nor they are adept at reflecting on the subject content of school texts'.

The report of the Justice Verma Commission also highlights this fact. Based on this, the Commission recommended an increase in the duration of secondary Teacher Education programme and M.Ed. course from one to two years, each with a view to improving the quality of these programmes. Similarly, the quality of professional development programme is low. This was revealed in a study conducted by the All India Primary Teachers' Federation (AIPTF) in 2008 in the States of Tamil Nadu and Bihar. By and large, teachers reported that the training curriculum

did not meet their learning needs. Besides, transactional approaches followed by resource persons to transact the training curriculum were not based on the learning style of adults.

Quality Tools

This stands for the curricula of school education and Teacher Education. As the global economy and the nature and demands of jobs change due to global integration, the growth of digital economy and education system needs to adapt too. The type of skills imparted at various levels of education need to change to ensure that the range of skills acquired by the learners are relevant. Similarly, the curriculum of pre-service Teacher Education programme needs to change in order to equip student teachers with requisite skills in the light of changes in school curriculum.

Appropriate Nourishment of Children, particularly during the First Five Years

The brain of a human being weighs about three pounds at the time of birth. The development of the brain depends upon the nourishment of the child, particularly during the first five years. The brain of a six-month-old is one-half and that of a three-year-old is three-fourth of its potential size. The brain of a five-year-old child is nine-tenth of its potential size (L.R. Allen 2015). Since the development of the brain of children depends

upon the level of their nourishment, the development of the brain of a malnourished children does not take place properly. As a consequence, their learning capacity is damaged. In India, about 40 per cent of children are malnourished due to poverty of their parents. This issue needs to be addressed on a priority basis.

Quality of Classroom Learning Environment

This is the most significant determinant of the quality of education. The learning environment in the classroom needs to be full of joy, laughter and excitement. Such an environment fosters intrinsic motivation and thereby improves the academic achievement of students. Teachers need to make education a joyful enterprise. Providing opportunities to the learners to meet their basic needs also contributes to quality learning environment.

Due to advances in pedagogical science, the role of teachers has undergone a substantial change. A teacher is no longer expected to dispense knowledge to one's students. Students are expected to create knowledge on their own. The teacher is required to create conditions in the classroom facilitating the creation of knowledge by students themselves. In such a situation, the learning climate in the classroom becomes lively. Learning is deeper and more sustainable. Teachers may also use problem solving approach for promoting learning. A classroom environment with joyful

activities creates desire for learning among learners.

EFFICACY OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT MODEL FOR IMPROVING LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS

Most schools and classrooms operate on the reward and punishment model for improving the academic achievement of learners. This model has been followed all over the world for more than a century or so. Rooted in nineteenth-century wisdom, this model is based on the belief that human behaviour is the result of environmental factors. Teacher Education programmes typically require the student teachers to learn how to systematically reward and punish students. After having lived with this model for more than a century, educationists, and social and biological scientists now find a number of shortcomings in this model and reject it as incomplete. This is because the model does not activate desire for learning. It only makes students complain more. They hardly develop any desire for learning and liking for school.

Educationists now hold the view that the system of rewarding students for academic achievement devalues the very thing we want, which is learning. A system of education based on rewards and punishment is fundamentally anti-educational. As a result of the operation of this model, 'some students do well, most

comply, but seldom do their best' (Sullo 2007). It hardly fosters or activates the desire to learn, which is highly essential for students to put in their best for improving their learning achievement.

There is substantial empirical evidence that demonstrates that the reward and punishment model is less effective than intrinsic motivation in improving the learning achievement of students. Some of these studies are reported below. These have been highlighted in a review of research conducted by Baranek (1996).

Amabile and Gitomer (1984) reported that the 'students approach and complete task differently than when rewards are not given, and their work is judged as less creative'.

Rewards can undermine intrinsic interest in an activity, and even deter a person from returning to an activity later on. External rewards, however, tend to have negative effects in school. Different forms of extrinsic motivation tend to take attention away from the most important aspect of school—a child's learning. In addition, rewards have been shown to have detrimental effects on the process of learning (Deci 1972; Festinger and Carlsmith 1959).

Masters and Janice (1973) found that rewards resulted in more errors in learning.

In the research conducted during the last 50 years, it has been found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have different effects on education. The presence of intrinsic motivation

produces many behaviours that result in success at school. These behaviours could include sustained interest in tasks, risk taking and conquering the new challenges (Amabile and Gitomer 1984).

Eric Jensen (1995), a noted author and educational consultant in the area of brain-based learning, writes—'if the learner is doing the task to get the reward, it will be understood, on some level that the task is inherently undesirable. Forget the use of rewards. Make school meaningful, relevant, and fun. Then you won't have to bribe students'.

Renowned author, consultant and speaker Alfie Kohn (1993) notes—'Fact 1: Young children don't need to be rewarded to learn... Fact 2: At any age rewards are less effective than intrinsic motivation for promoting effective learning... Fact 3: Rewards for learning undermine intrinsic motivation'.

Lori Kay Baranek (1996) conducted a review of research on the 'effectiveness of rewards on intrinsic motivation and learning for children in general education and special education'. On the basis of review of research, Lori reported that 'when rewards are given, they often have the opposite effect of what was intended. High achievement is seen among students who are motivated from inside. Therefore, instead of giving rewards, teachers need to consistently teach students to become intrinsically motivated'. He further reported that 'the use of rewards

undermines intrinsic motivation and results in the slower acquisition of skills and more errors in the learning process’.

On the basis of the review of research, Baranek concluded that ‘rewards, then should be replaced with teaching that is focused on the intrinsic motivation of the student. There is a need to train teachers in how to teach students so that they become intrinsically motivated, instead of just propelled along by the vision of the next external rewards’.

Finding ways to develop intrinsic motivation in students should be an important duty of every teacher’s planning on a daily basis. The behaviours associated with intrinsic motivation are crucial to developing lifelong learners.

BASIC NEEDS OF HUMAN BEINGS

Willam Glasser’s Choice Theory (1998) suggests that human beings are born with specific needs and they are genetically instructed to satisfy them. These are five basic needs. One of these is the physical need for survival and the rest four are basic psychological needs. These must be satisfied to be emotionally healthy. The other four needs are:

- Belonging or connecting
- Power or competence
- Freedom
- Fun

No human being wants to live in isolation. Every human being wants to connect oneself to others. This

drive (need) propels them to develop a relationship and to cooperate with others. The environment in the school should provide ample opportunities to students and the staff to satisfy the need to connect and feel a sense of belonging.

The second need is to gain power. Power is gained through competence. Each human being is genetically instructed to master new skills and gain competence. There is a need to create an environment in the school which fosters acquisition of competence on the part of students. The third need is that every human being is motivated to be free. The school should foster such an environment which provides adequate freedom to students within certain parameters. One of these parameters is that the satisfaction of the need for freedom of students does not infringe the freedom of other students. The second parameter is that the satisfaction of this need should be supportive of learning.

The fourth need of students is that they should have fun in the learning process. A joyless classroom never inspires students to do high quality academic work on a regular basis.

ACTIVATING THE DESIRE FOR LEARNING

Extrinsic rewards do not result in high student achievement.

The desire for learning is fostered in a classroom learning environment where a positive relationship exists between the teacher and the taught.

This dispels fear from the minds of learners. They feel encouraged to participate in the classroom talk. They do not hesitate in asking questions from the teacher and in responding to teachers' question(s). This learning environment in the classroom also fosters among students liking for the teachers and school, and their desire for learning. Students experience pleasure in the process of learning. Their interest in learning shoots up.

The desire for learning on the part of students is also activated when the teacher engages them in activities and they follow a child-centred approach in transacting the curriculum. The desire for learning

among students is activated when the teacher engages them in collaborative learning. In collaborative learning, students experience pleasure in completing the activity. They discuss, listen to others, learn from each other and the learning climate becomes lively. In such a situation, students are happy. These happy students are likely to do higher quality of academic work. Therefore, it can be concluded that the desire for learning is activated in a classroom learning environment which satisfies the basic needs of students, engages them in collaborative learning and fosters intrinsic motivation.

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