

Practising Innovative Teaching-learning in Schools: Challenges and Implications

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Introduction

The innovative teaching-learning as we perceive today is the outcome of a major transformation in education which is based on constructivist methodology and the presentation of the contents of teaching-learning through various modes and also using the creative approaches in the teaching and acquisition of knowledge through media and non-media strategies rather than confining the knowledge learning to the orthodox methodologies of teaching-learning in traditional classrooms. The term innovation is often used about the new pedagogical methods and induction of creativity in the entire process of teaching-learning which is generally different from traditional didactics of teaching-learning. The new classrooms using technological resources including the audio-visual equipment, computers, multimedia, internet and other tools of communication and also the use of skill development for better learning opportunities and employability exemplify the practice of innovation in teaching-learning today.

The concept of innovation is based on constructivist approach wherein the learners learn on their own constructs and the teacher's role is basically the preparation of a context, i.e. creation of an encouraging environment including preparation of learning materials through various means and creation of social situations for learning and ways for an individual to attain insights and understanding of problems which arise during learning where in teacher's main function is to encourage the student to construct what is desirable of him. All this implies constant innovations of procedures in development of pedagogic-didactic competence of a teacher in attaining the best learning outcome.

In view of the changing paradigms of teaching-learning, the innovative dimension demands professionalism and creative acumen on the part of teachers for creating contexts of learning but traditionally our teachers are still involved in such age old process of teaching without relevant content and context of teaching-learning. The innovative teaching-learning mandates creation of a setup in which the learning environment is supportive and productive from the point of view of learners. Keeping students in the comfort zone is one of the primary pre-requisite of the innovative setup with creativity and use of technological equipment and tools which facilitate to cherish the instructional objectives in such a setup. Thus,

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an environment is created for students to pursue inquiries and express themselves in such setup which ensures better learning outcomes in comparison to the traditional modes of teaching-learning.

As of prevailing innovative setup of schools in India, there is acute crisis of these innovative means as the majority of urban and rural schools are still limited in number even in providing the basic amenities of the traditional systems including the quality classrooms, libraries, laboratories and sanitation facilities as infrastructural requisites for teaching-learning. There is propaganda in our institutions about innovation and constructivist setups on the line of developments in the west whereas we portray a sorry figure in actual insights of schools in our country. Consequently, the challenges are immense and the pace of tortoise development in our schools denies access to the creation of innovative environment and means of the 21st century education.

Challenges of Creating Innovative Learning Environment

In pursuance of creating learning environment in Indian Schools, we should try to analyse two important components of learning environment, firstly the physical environment which includes classrooms, libraries, teaching-learning materials, laboratories, use of technology and sanitation facilities and secondly the human elements of building positive relationships, promoting a culture of value with utility and respect for individuals and their communities, using strategies that promote students' self-confidence and willingness to participate in learning and ensuring independence, interdependence and self-motivation of learners along with technologically skilled teachers.

In context of the first component, the real situation is dismal what we can observe in our Schools which still resemble the schools of 18th century and more older in the west so far as primary, upper primary and secondary schools are concerned. This can be better termed as concrete barriers in place of challenge. The second component as such is the lack of professionalism and delivery part of teachers which is still based on traditional modes of teaching in passive classroom environment and the same dismal situation is prevalent in our schools in traditional setups which deprive the new generation from creating their individual value and utility in wider perspectives of employability in the 21st century world of global education.

Innovative learning environments that reflect acumen of the teacher includes the following functional outputs of the teacher for establishing innovative learning environment:

- Supporting students to learn at their own pace and constructs.

- Initiating students- teachers' collaboration in teaching-learning process.
- Using flexible and responsive means related to the values, needs and interests of individual students.
- Using strategies that grant freedom of thinking and learning.
- Making teaching aids and tools for the suitability of the learners.
- Developing teaching-learning from the previous knowledge, experience and skills of the learners.
- Transferring and synchronising technological experiences to the new generation based on need.

Effectiveness of Teacher and Innovative Teaching-learning Process

In practical teaching-learning situations, effectiveness of teachers is proved through initiation of the following measures to create an innovative teaching-learning environment in schools:

- ✓ Planning sequences of content-knowledge interrelationship from lower to higher classes.
- ✓ Initiating substantive discussion of ideas in relation to actual learning of the students.
- ✓ Promoting students' learning from knowledge level to understanding, application, analysis and synthesis or reflective level.
- ✓ Stressing on the quality of learning reciprocal to the desired expectations of learning.
- ✓ Using strategies that support reflective level of developments in students.
- ✓ Using strategies to develop investigating and problem solving skills leading to innovation.
- ✓ Using strategies to foster imagination and creativity as innovative constituent of teaching-learning.

The effectiveness of teachers can apparently be visible in students with the above initiations whereby students move from independence to self-dependence. This can be made feasible by motivating students to work in T-L situations involving deliberated decision making as to what and how students learn and bear the responsibilities as part of teaching-learning in various contexts. Such actions lead the students to perform with self-dependence and confidence which manifests and proves the effectiveness of the teacher.

Innovative Practices and Need of Learners

In most learning situations and environments, students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are often not reflected and considered for innovation and learning. Innovation in teaching-learning mandates a range of strategies used to monitor and respond to students' varied needs. Their interests and thinking must be pre-determined to pave the way to stride forward towards the area of their need and interests as desirable innovation in teaching-learning. A variety of teaching strategies are used to accommodate the range of abilities and interests of the learners with respect to their need so that a compatible effort is made for effective learning through innovative means.

The following measures reflect effective teaching-learning based on innovation-need relationships :

- ❖ Strategies which are flexible and responsive to the values, needs and interests of learners.
- ❖ Independence in thought and actions of the learners.
- ❖ Delivery of programmed instructions.
- ❖ Observational pattern of formative assessment for initiation of corrective and remedial measures.
- ❖ A range of strategies that support the different ways of thinking and learning of the learners.
- ❖ Building the teaching-learning on students' prior experiences, knowledge and skills.
- ❖ Flexibility in using the prescribed T-L contents, its presentation and evaluation.

Innovative Means and Evaluation

Evaluation and assessment contribute to re-organise the entire process of teaching-learning so that the desired learning is imbibed in learners in a cycle of learning. In this respect, students are challenged to inquire, question and engage with significant ideas and practices, so that they move beyond surface understanding to develop higher order insights and flexible thinking which require formative assessment through various means. To support this, teaching sequences should be sustained and responsive and explore ideas and practices which can be assessed at different levels of teaching-learning. Assessment

practices are an integral part of teaching and learning. It contributes to planning at a number of levels. Assessment criteria are explicit and feedback is designed to support students' further learning and encourage them to assimilate learning and take responsibility of their own learning.

In innovative learning environments the teacher can initiate the following measures to ensure assessment and evaluation intended to attain or acquire knowledge in behavioural terms:

- ❖ Designing assessment practices that reflect the full range of learning program objectives through formative and summative assessments.
- ❖ Directing the assessments to be made in behavioural terms.
- ❖ Ensuring that students receive frequent constructive feedback that supports further learning.
- ❖ Making assessment criteria explicit with overt understanding.
- ❖ Using assessment practices that encourage reflection and self-assessment.
- ❖ Using evidence from assessment for further planning and cyclic teaching-learning.

Innovative teaching-learning through Instructional Model

The Instructional Model of innovative teaching-learning is based on the following components which develop an insight understanding of what constitutes high quality innovative practices in the classroom.

- Ensuring Involvement of students in the process of teaching-learning with their participation in experiential learning and expressions to attain the learning goals.
- Initiating enquiry mode through planned and structured tools during the teaching-learning session.
- Presenting new concepts and contents through language and other means to invite learners into process of innovative teaching-learning.
- Organising and training in effective communication skills and inculcating higher order thinking and using the same in identifying problems and resolving it.
- Assessing student's performance within a framework of learning objectives both scholastic and co-scholastic attainments.

Conclusion

Innovation in teaching-learning is a process that empowers students to become leaders in which they develop the ability to think within and beyond a concept, create something new, apply knowledge in a new situation, work together to find a new and convenient way, communicate well with others and bring forth a commendable change in existing situation with an aim to prove effectiveness and efficiency in teaching and learning.

Innovative teaching-learning can be initiated by taking into consideration examples of innovations already in use including the technological advancements as used in smart classes as well as the tools which are used in contemporary classrooms. In this respect student's learning needs and the teaching-learning are supposed to be synchronised in relation to their current and future needs based on their interest and aims. This can be initiated by supporting students to engage in contemporary practices as per their needs and knowledge domain. In learning environments, the teacher should plan the teaching-learning in such a way that the students get opportunity to interact with the community and also make use of technologies that help to sustain their productive existence in society.

As of making effective use of inducting innovation in school education, it is mandatory to create liberality and flexibility in the teaching-learning process by the teachers for inviting new ideas from students, making use of their expertise as well as to provide all technological support and ensuring conducive environment to them which are considered to be necessary components for innovative teaching-learning at school level. Building trust and making self-confidence of students are the two other pre-requisites which the teachers must ensure to promote innovative teaching-learning within and outside the classrooms of the school.

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