

TRANSFORMING YOUNG MINDS INTO CRITICAL MINDS

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Received : 30/10/2018

1st BPR : 11/11/2018

2nd BPR : 20/11/2018

Accepted : 01/12/2018

ABSTRACT

India has always remained on the top in terms of acumen of knowledge transfer and its assimilation. Since its ancient times, we Indians are known for our cultural heritage and knowledge acumen. Circumstances changed and we lacked behind the world but even today we Indians are in every part of India and well known for our knowledge and cultural heritage. The place of teacher is always remained in demand here. Teachers are thoughtful, epitome of knowledge, affable, courageous, humble, energetic and updated resourceful person of the society and nation. Shaping millions of minds and contributing immensely in the development of society and nation. The biggest problem now what we have in Education that the education is not for life, education is more business oriented than service oriented. Knowledge is given to young minds but the mind is in real not developed properly. Only a teacher who can shape the young minds in developing positive attitude towards society and nation. There is a dire need of developing these young minds into critical minds who can think not for their own progress and development rather look for society and national development. But the question arises in the mind that what a teacher can do in his/her classroom or society to bring this transformation. There are numbers of such techniques which can bring this transformation. Some of these techniques or ways are pointed in this article like- Interdisciplinary to Transdisciplinary learning, make them creative, enhancing metacognitive skills, developing emotional intelligence, and connecting knowledge to wisdom (real life). This article might be very much useful for the teachers as well as researchers.

Keywords : Young mind, Critical mind, Trans-discipline, Emotional Intelligent, Creativity.

1. Introduction

Mrs. Indira Gandhi said, "Nations wellbeing depends on teacher's wellbeing. Our teachers are the custodian of our future". "Teacher is just like a lamp, who burns itself to light others".

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said, "If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother, and the teacher."

A good teacher helps the students in to become a great human being, high quality professionals and great leaders who will play important or biggest role in personal development, social development and economic development. (Vijay Sharma; source: www.klientsolutech.com). A great teacher always helps us to become a good human being in the society and good citizen of the country. In this effort, it is important to shape the very young mind since from the early age of the child because once the child is mature or out of control to some extent then it is not impossible but difficult to give a desired shape. There

is an example from the person who make earthen pots from the clay. It is easy to give desired shape to the clay when it is soft, flexible and ready to be moulded whereas difficult to mould it again into a new shape once it gained the hardness, rigidity and lost readiness. Young minds are like the clay, a teacher has an ability to mould them into critical minds.

Teachers as transformer of change is changing and developing and growing so that when children leave school, they have met their full potential. So, it is not about making them into things, but it is about helping them achieve their life ambition. If that means that they want to be a plumber and the best plumber in the world, there is a transformer of change contribution there. A teacher as a transformer of change helping a child become literate gives them access to the world. A teacher as a transformer of change helping with numeracy and whatever curriculum area, it means that they can have a job, fill in a form and have a full life. Teachers can be a transformer of change in terms of policy direction, helping inform political thinking that meets the needs of young minds. Teachers know children and needs to meet the needs of children so hearing the professional voice of teachers to make sure that the policy direction is really strong. Teachers a transformer of change in their community by working with parents and families to make sure that children are healthy and strong and they are part of that. They transform lives in terms of educational experience, they transform lives in terms of including them in education and society, they transform and change lives in terms of what their life chances are going to be like. (Ellen Doherty, Director of Education and Professional Learning at the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)).

'Our country needs to open up the creative potential of the students. Rather than the systematic teaching, the educational institutions should focus to kindle the critical temper of the students when they are young. This is where the role of teachers becomes crucial, to inspire and motivate young minds, make them think critically and create curiosity for experimental learning.' (Ramji Raghavan, founder and chairman, Agastya International Foundation, Andhra Pradesh).

Still most of our education system is more on bookish knowledge or theoretical knowledge rather connecting the child to the real life. A teacher is more focusing on intellectual development of the child by covering his syllabus on time, hardly he is getting time for the development of other dimensions of development like moral development, social development, emotional development, ethical development and others. It is right that the syllabus is important to finish first but a teacher can do all these developments in a child with the syllabus itself by doing certain activities or performing a different role in the school or classroom. These young minds can be transformed easily into critical minds in the classroom itself.

Providing children with the breadth of skills they need to become healthy and active members of society requires the kind of learning that cultivates empathy, fosters resilience, encourages creativity, and promotes cognitive processing. Research shows that learning happens best when it is done in a way that is practical, relevant, and engaging—rather than theoretical and decontextualized—and that learning happens everywhere, anytime. (Rebecca Winthrop, Timothy P. Williams and Eileen McGivney).

Critical mind has the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent *thinking*. Someone with *critical thinking* skills is able to do the following: understand the logical connections between ideas.

There are certain techniques through which a teacher can transform the young minds into the critical minds.

2. Approaches: Young Minds into Critical Minds

- 2.1 Interdisciplinary to Transdisciplinary Approach
- 2.2 Cognition to Metacognition Approach
- 2.3 Knowledge to Wisdom Approach
- 2.4 Intelligent to Emotionally Intelligent Approach

- 2.5 Goals to Vision Approach
- 2.6 Creative Approach
- 2.7 Problem Solving Approach

All the approaches mentioned above are the need in the present scenario if the child to become critical and think for the society and nation. How a teacher can use these approaches in his teaching-learning process so that the child will become a critical thinker. A brief discussion or ways are given here which can be used by the teacher in teaching-learning process.

2.1. Interdisciplinary to Transdisciplinary Approach

An approach to curriculum integration that generates an understanding of themes and ideas that cut across disciplines and of the connections between different disciplines and their relationship to the real world. It normally emphasizes process and meaning rather than product and content by combining contents, theories, methodologies and perspectives from two or more disciplines. (Retrieved from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/i/interdisciplinary-approach>).

A Transdisciplinary approach refers to learning that is authentic and relevant to the real world. Learning is not confined by traditional subjects but is supported and enriched by them. Each Transdisciplinary Theme encompasses a vast swath of universal understandings common to all of humanity and open enough to embrace a variety of content areas. For example, the theme; Who we are, explores the nature of self, our personal beliefs and values, our personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health, human relationships, our rights and responsibilities and what it is to be human. This Transdisciplinary Theme is deeply investigated through different questions and explorations throughout the students learning journey, leaving them with a layered understanding of themselves and the connections they have with the rest of humanity. (Retrieved from <https://www.whatisib.com/a-transdisciplinary-approach.html>).

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Sharing of knowledge
- Faculty/Student exchange
- Composite institution
- Developing inter-disciplinary courses
- Developing trans-disciplinary courses
- Organising interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary seminars/ conferences
- Orientation programme
- Team teaching and Team Learning
- Shared Personal Practices

2.2. Cognition to Metacognition Approach

We all have a general cognition and a process of cognitive development is more or less same in all the individuals but very few of us develop our cognition to metacognition. Teachers have their focus on cognitive development among the young minds but it will be better if they look for metacognitive development among children.

Metacognition refers to learners' automatic awareness of their own knowledge and their ability to understand, control, and manipulate their own cognitive processes. Metacognition is often simply defined as "thinking about thinking." More specifically, Taylor (1999) defines metacognition as "an appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it requires, combined with the agility to make correct inferences about how to apply one's strategic knowledge to a particular situation, and to do so efficiently and reliably."

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Identifying "what you know" and "what you don't know."
- Talking About thinking
- Keeping a thinking journal
- Planning and self-regulation
- Debriefing the thinking process
- Self-evaluation

2.3. Knowledge to Wisdom Approach

Knowledge: gathered from learning and training and coaching

Wisdom: comes from day to day experiences. A state of being wise.

"Smoking is dangerous to health" is printed on every single cigarette box in this world but people do smoke it. Some people are heavy smokers. Why? All of them have this knowledge but they still smoke. So, Knowledge alone does not make big difference. It requires much more than knowledge to not to smoke which is Wisdom. (Neeraj Arora, 2013). There is a systematic path how wisdom might be achieved. There must be the role of teacher that how he converts the data into wisdom among young minds.

Data Information Knowledge Wisdom

Knowledge and Wisdom are different although they are related. Knowledge is complete and intrinsic within you. As a student of Knowledge, you learn to gain access to Knowledge, to learn of its meaning and purpose in life and to reclaim your relationship with it, your union with it and your mission with it. Wisdom is something you learn through activity in the world. It must be learned. Knowledge cannot be learned; it can only be reclaimed. Wisdom is something that you learn. It is relevant to your life here. Knowledge is relevant to your life everywhere. In other words, Knowledge is already complete within you, and you are learning to come into proximity to it and to reclaim your relationship with it. Wisdom is something that you develop as you go along. It is a set of skills in learning how to be in the world. It is related to your worldly experience, and in that regard, it is temporary. (Marshall Vian, 1993).

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Apply the Knowledge
- Strong Determination
- Make muscle memory stronger than mind memory
- Practice
- Self-introspection
- Making Notes
- Follow-Up

2.4. Intelligent to Emotionally Intelligent approach

It is not necessary to be highly Intelligent but more important to be emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to monitor and manage emotions in one-self and others (Mangal, S.K., 2004). This concept was come into 1990 by Mayer Salovey and Daniel Goleman. The education that we impart today focuses much on the cognitive (head) aspect and we seldom give importance to the affective (heart) aspect. It has been accepted by all that education should help the student to solve the challenges of life and make successful adjustment in life. The purpose of education should not be to simply provide food for the brain but it should replenish the heart as well. So, this article is very much useful for the young minds who are unable to adjust in the environment and leads a stressful life, by enhancing their emotional intelligence they can come out of such problems. Similarly, this article is very much useful for the teachers as well, how a teacher can enhance the emotional intelligence of the young minds for their

effective adjustment and understand their emotions for taking them a right decision in their life. In this regard, **Swami Vivekananda** has given a very nice quotation i.e. "It is the heart which takes one to the highest place where intellect can never reach".

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Taking the time for mindfulness
- Group Discussions
- Assigning group projects
- Role Plays
- Sharing Knowledge
- Mentoring
- Recognizing and naming emotions in oneself and others
- Understanding the causes of feelings
- Differentiating between emotion and the need to take action
- Preventing depression through "learned optimism"
- Managing anger through learned behaviour or distraction techniques
- Listening for the lessons of feelings
- Using "gut feelings" in decision making
- Developing listening skills

2.5. Goals to Vision approach

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step: Martin Luther King Jr.

Most of us, often interchangeably, use the terms 'vision' and 'goals' to our own liking. *Vision is the destination that one visualises and wants to achieve, but the path is unknown. This is where goals come into play. They help you to set the path for the rightful achievement of your vision, acting as milestones. However, many businesses have goals without a vision which may lead to a counterproductive situation at hand. These are two fundamentally different terms that need equal attention for, without one, the other can't be achieved. (Sromona Bhattacharyya, 2016).*

Life is baseless without forming a vision and to achieve this vision there requires certain goals. It will be more clear with the help of example, suppose, I want to reach on the 5th floor of a building. Here, to reach on 5th floor is my vision whereas how to reach on the 5th floor will act as goals. There may be different ways like; using stairs, using lift etc. Similarly, it is a role of the teacher towards young minds to help them to make their vision and set the goals to achieve the vision.

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Understand the self
- To realise the ability, potential and capability
- Opportunity to explore
- Freedom to work
- Time Management
- Decision making
- Divergent thinker
- Optimistic
- Collaborative

2.6. Creative Approach

Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterised by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Creativity involves two processes: thinking,

then producing. If anyone have ideas but don't act on them, he is imaginative but not creative. Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being. Creativity requires passion and commitment. It brings to our awareness what was previously hidden and points to new life. The experience is one of heightened consciousness: ecstasy." – (Rollo May, 1996).

"A product is creative when it is (a) novel and (b) appropriate. A novel product is original not predictable. The bigger the concept, and the more the product stimulates further work and ideas, the more the product is creative." (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995).

A creative approach helps young minds to bring creativity, technology, and project-based learning to connecting them to their life.

Following practices will develop this approach:

- Embrace creativity as a part of learning
- Use emotional connections
- Establish expressive freedom
- Gather outside resources
- Allow room for mistakes
- Allow space for creativity
- Give students time to ask questions
- Encourage curiosity
- Design multidisciplinary system
- Think divergently

2.7. Problem Solving Approach

Problem-solving approach is a process—an ongoing activity in which we take what we know to discover what we don't know. It involves overcoming obstacles by generating hypotheses, testing those predictions, and arriving at satisfactory solutions.

Problem-solving involves three basic functions: Seeking information, generating new knowledge, Making decisions. Problem-solving is, and should be, a very real part of the curriculum. It presupposes that young minds can take on some of the responsibility for their own learning and can take personal action to solve problems, resolve conflicts, discuss alternatives, and focus on thinking as a vital element of the curriculum. It provides young minds with opportunities to use their newly acquired knowledge in meaningful, real-life activities and assists them in working at higher levels of thinking.

A good way to become a systematic problem solver is to adopt the following five steps problem solving approach:

- Identification of the problem
- Analysing the problem
- Identifying decision criteria
- Develop multiple solutions
- Chose the optimal solution

3. Conclusion

Young minds of today are full of energy and potential just we need to identify and channelize it in a positive direction. A teacher's role in present scenario has become more challenging and demanding. It is the role of the teacher who can convert a young mind into a critical mind if he will change in some of his strategies of teaching. It is not only the mind which should be filled with knowledge, a teacher need to modify the behaviour of the young mind, it's not only the cognitive, it's all about affective and psychomotor domains of the behaviour as well, which are left behind by the teachers. The strategies mentioned in this article above will lead the young mind into a critical mind by modifying completely the

behaviour.

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