
BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHER EDUCATION FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

“Utilizing best practices in my classroom positively impacts students by providing motivation to learn and promoting success in a global world.” (NC Teacher, 2006)

Teacher education is a program related with teacher proficiency and competence that would make them competent enough to face new challenges in the education. Now a day the field of education is not only limited with books but has broadened in various new horizons. Development and changes in education have affected teacher education necessitating review and reforms. It demands understanding with investigative minds, assimilating the required transformations, accommodating and responding to the universal needs. We also need to train teachers with new perspectives as the outer world is in the classroom and schools are opening to the world. The pre- service and in – service teacher education programs have shown paradigm shift with its emphasis on globalization and individualization. This main purpose of this paper is to indicate main changes that has incurred in the teacher education in India and also provide an overview of trends, reforms and innovations in the teacher education (integrated teaching, teacher curriculum and teacher innovations). It also discusses the need of teacher education program to be innovative and various practices that can be included. It has been recognized that teacher education program should be structured and modified in a way that enables them to respond dynamically to the new problems and challenges in the field of education.

The article explains what are best practices and their importance in the teacher Education. It also listed some types of best practices that can be used to make teacher education effective.

Keywords: Teacher proficiency, cooperative learning, constructivism, Innovative practices, blended learning, Reflective teaching.

Introduction

It is unfortunate, but true, that some academics teach students without having much formal knowledge of how students learn. Many lecturers know how they learnt/learn best, but do not necessarily consider how their students learn and if the way they teach is predicated on enabling learning to happen. Nor do they necessarily have the concepts to understand, explain and articulate the process they sense is happening in their students.

According to NCTE (1998) “teacher is the most important element in any educational program. He plays a central role in implementation of education process at any stage. The level of achievement of learner is determined by teacher competence.” So the quality of education basically depends on the quality of teachers.

Kothari commission has very rightly said, “The destiny of India is being shaped in this classroom.” As the population in India is growing very rapidly day by day the need of well of well qualified and professionally trained teachers will also increase in the coming years. So lots of efforts should be made to improve teacher education. Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service components are complimentary to each other. Education is

instrumental in the preparation of teachers who can in their practice ensure transformative learning, where teacher and learner, learner and learner are co-constructors of knowledge. Today there are new expectations for education where the focus is on having teachers- be futurist leaders to ensure sustainable education. The paradigm shift is from teacher dominated classroom practices to that of partnership between the teacher and the learners and their peers. The key role of educational institutions is reflected in a variety of initiatives taken to transform the nature and function of education-both formal as well as non-formal. University accessibility to quality education is considered essential for development. This has necessitated improvement in the system of teacher education so as to prepare quality teachers.

What Are Best Practices?

Best practices are an inherent part of a curriculum that exemplifies the connection and relevance identified in educational research. They interject rigor into the curriculum by developing thinking and problem-solving skills through integration and active learning. Relationships are built through opportunities for communication and teamwork. Best practices are applicable to all grade levels and provide the building blocks for instruction. Best practices motivate, engage and prompt students to learn and achieve. Students who receive a balanced curriculum and possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to transfer and connect ideas and concepts across disciplines will be successful as measured by standardized tests and other indicators of student success. Four best practices for teachers include teaching a balanced curriculum, teaching an integrated curriculum, differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs and providing active learning opportunities for students to internalize learning.

There is a wide variation among countries with regard to what they believe constitutes an innovation, reform or development in the teaching learning process. For example, the use of colored chalk and basis audio-visual materials may be regarded as being an educational innovation in some development regions, whereas in other more affluent countries innovations may refer to the development and use of sophisticated technologies and methods, practices etc. in our country also this electronic technology has dramatically penetrated into every area of our society and every aspect of our social and cultural lives. Today's children have grown up with remote controls and they spend more time in computers, internet, playing video games etc. than reading books; even toys are now filled with buttons and blinking lights. In such a condition, it is very important to form on "How can we educate this New Generation?" To answer this, a supportive environment, one in which they can create their own ideas; both individually and collaboratively, must be provided. It is a promotion of new ideas and practices in education and training. There has been seen a tremendous shift in the ways and means of education services over the years. Research and innovations play an important role in improving the quality of teachers and the training imparted to them for all levels of teaching. They demand to introduce new ideas and practices in classroom transaction and other curricular and co-curricular activities. The teacher's effectiveness can be enhanced with good leadership and appropriate teaching methodologies. No teacher education programmer can prepare teachers for all situations that they will encounter. Teacher themselves will have to make the final choice from among many alternatives. The purpose of teacher education education is to prepare teachers who have professional competencies to lead the nation for ward through their manifold roles.

Why Are Best Practices Important?

Thomas L. Friedman, author of "The World is Flat", refers to a twenty-first century world that will be very different from the one in which we were educated. To survive in a new, globally competitive world, today's children will need creativity, problem-solving abilities, and a passion

for learning, a dedicated work ethic and lifelong learning opportunities. Students can develop these abilities through instruction based on Best Practice teaching strategies. . Now a day the field of education is not only limited with books but has broadened in various new horizons. Development and changes in education have affected teacher education necessitating review and reforms.

In their book, *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan share their definition for "best practices," which they define as existing practices that already possess a high level of widely-agreed effectiveness.

Best Practices Look Like?

1. What communication skills did you use effectively?
2. What communication skills did you use less effectively?
3. How will you maintain your strengths?
4. How will you remove your weaknesses?
5. Be dynamic and revisited periodically.
6. Recognize diversity and cultural and historical contexts.
7. Not lead to dominance of one specific view or approach.
8. Promote quality of performance.
9. Project materials and books are numerous.
10. Students are engaged and focused on their work.
11. Give more emphasis on learning by doing.

Best Practices must be used to enhance quality of Teacher Education

1. Lecture Practices-

Effective ways to present new information orally to fit differences in learners

At times information must be transmitted orally to a passive listening audience. But research has shown that after 10 to 20 minutes of continuous lecture, assimilation falls off rapidly. If the teacher must rely on the oral presentation of material, these techniques enhance learner retention.

2. Group Discussion Triggers-

Effective ways to present a common experience to engage a group in a discussion

Awareness of complexity and enhanced understanding results when learners discuss the meaning of events with each other. But to be successful, group need a common experience to draw them into participation, establish a personal connection with the content, and provide a shared referent from which to exemplify their ideas. There are many kinds of triggers but all are designed to precede group discussion. Participants, therefore, become connected with both a concrete example of the content and each other.

3. Thoughtful Questions-Formulate questions that foster engagement and confidence

What does it mean to think? Some people would like to be able to "think better " – or more often want other people's thinking to improve. But research shows that everyone is capable of thinking- the problem is to stop teachers from precluding it. The right kind of questions help- they focus the learner's attention upon applying their current understanding to the content of current experience in a natural way. Success after

perseverance to answer these questions shows learners that they know how to “think.” Note that none of these kinds of questions ask for recall of non-discoverable information (didactic question).

4. Reflective Responses -

To Learner Contributions establish mutually beneficial communication by reflective listening

When a learner contributes to the discussion or asks a question, taking the initiative to learn, what is the best way to respond? To facilitate self-discovery and self-appropriated learning, effective teachers respond without changing the topic and share their own information or perspective with mutual respect and without domination. There three reflective responses, when used in sequence, constitute a responding convention,” a standard way to develop habits of talking that releases the potentialities of the learner and promote mutually significant sharing by both the teacher and the learner. Used in this order they sequence the amount of teacher control.

5. Rewarding Learner-

Participation support learner actions with effective, well-timed positives

All teaching moves learners into area of risk and incompetence. So often the job of a teacher is to find nascent deftness when it is easier to notice the maladroitness. The methods chosen to administer those positives, however, send messages about what is important to achieve. Are learners supposed to work toward external approval or their own performance? Are grades the true reward? Or are learners supposed to learn to enjoy the quest itself? Teachers answer these questions through the manner in which they support improvement. The best rewards are not contrived, foster personal reflection and independence, and actually work, that is, learners maintain new abilities or do better.

6. Active Learning Strategies-Foster activeness and constructive participation

All research on people, and on their brains, shows we learn by doing. Learning is a constructing process. Here are the choices available in the literature on teaching. The problem is selecting the type of activity to match the purpose the teacher has in mind.

7. Cooperative Group Assignments- Assign Formal Cooperative Tasks

One form of active learning deserves special attention because it overtly places the learners as workers, demands that each process beliefs and construct expression with co-workers, and forces the achievement of a group goal. That interdependence affects three broad and interrelated outcomes: effort exerted to achieve, quality of relationship among participants, and psychosocial adjustment. Ninety years of research and 600 studies show cooperative learning results in more higher level reasoning, more frequent generation of new ideas and solutions, and greater transfer of what is learned within one situation to another. Cooperative learning groups embrace five key elements: positive interaction. Typically three to five learners are placed in heterogeneous groups. All cooperative designs have specific objectives, performance criteria and reward systems. In order for them to be successful, teachers must expect to spend time building cooperative skills and enforcing group self-assessment of them.

8. Goals to Grades Connections- Goals, Objectives, Measures, Criteria and Grades Agree

A formidable obstacle every teacher faces is how to analyze the content of a course, predetermine the outcomes desired, and communicate the necessary performance expectations to learners in a detailed, congruous syllabus that logically connects goals to the measures for grades. That is, the objectives follow from the goals, the requirements are demonstrations of performance of those objectives, and the evaluation methods reflect attainment of the objectives to measurable criteria. This is rarely simple-at times teachers need their own cooperative learning groups in order to solve the myriad of problems in coordinating course goals, uncovering the traditional discontinuities between goals and grading, and clarifying assessment.

9. Modeling- Represent openness, learning, and trust

As a paragon of personal development, a teacher faces interpersonal challenges in every action he or she takes to engage, facilitate, catalyze, and give life to the opportunity to learn. Great teachers teach by example. It is the authentic life that that instructs. These attitudinal qualities of being connected to learning in delight, illumination, and even rapture have been described in many ways, but none perhaps than by Carl Rogers "Buzz Groups: This is a large group of students subdivided into smaller groups of 4-5 students to consider issue surrounding a problem.

10. Double Loop Feedback- Promote the awareness of how one learns to learn

The times when the teacher corrects performance are often the most difficult as well as the most significant. It is easier to identify error and deficiencies in the actions of others than to communicate corrections to them in a way that continues their continued engagement. Because people rarely produce actions that do not make sense to them (they act intentionally), they naturally tend to become defensive, confused, or ashamed when criticized or given advice. Yet individualized correction is often the key to improved performance. An effective feedback procedure enables reflection and self-correction without fostering hostility or defensiveness.

Double loop feedback is a method of providing correctives in a way that maintains the learner's continued engagement in the process of acquiring competence and self-confidence. It sequences the statement teacher's make by starting with least inferential and examining both the learner's performance and the evaluator's assumptions at each stage. In double loop learning an open- ended cycle is created where the teacher and the learner cooperatively examine both the learner's performance and the underlying perspectives the teacher brings to regard that performance.

Optimal correction is possible when both parties responsible work for error detection at each level of inference before proceeding to the next. In order words, get the facts right first; then work to agree upon what "most people would agree" those facts to mean. As opposed to the natural tendency to think of judgment and opinions first, this procedure holds them in abeyance.

11. Climate Setting-Regulate the physical and mental climate

A large portion of teaching effectiveness involves setting the stage; it comes with the territory. Solve comfort issues first and the learning path is smoother. Research shows that successful teachers spend 10% of classroom time optimizing the arrangement of

the physical setting as well as the psychological setting- a climate of collaborativeness, supportiveness, openness, pleasure and humanness.

Conclusion:

Since the teacher is the pivot of the entire educational system and is the main catalytic agent for introducing desirable changes in the teaching learning process, all attempts need be made for motivating teachers to become innovative and creative. It goes without saying that a self-motivated and really industrious teacher can utilize his own resources to keep himself abreast of new knowledge and skills. It has been recognized that teacher education program should be structured and modified in a way that enables them to respond dynamically to the new problems and challenges in the field of education, then only teacher can help in national development.

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