Inclusive Education and Reflective Practice

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Heterogeneity among MMS Students

- In order to explain statistical concept of frequency distribution I started enquiring about the subject of graduation of the students in the classroom.
- To explain ordinal scale I asked them to choose an alternative from given three choices: I like mathematics, I cannot say, I dislike mathematics.
- This interaction enabled me to know that there was a great heterogeneity among the learners in terms of their educational background, performance profile and educational opportunities.
- This situation demanded that I use Inclusive Strategy of Education in the classroom.
Principle of Inclusive Education

- The guiding principle that informs the inclusive education is that educational institutions should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote and nomadic populations, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994: 59).
Development of Inclusive Philosophy

- After World War II importance was given to the education of students with special needs. Special institutions were opened in large numbers in western countries.
- During the 1960s the idea of normalization came into fore. The traditional segregation of learners with special needs in separate special institutions was increasingly challenged.
- Presently, inclusive philosophy has become central to the policies of large number of developed and developing countries and has emerged as an important aspect of international discussions about how best to respond to learners who experience difficulties in learning.
UNESCO Initiatives

- UNESCO in its Salamanca Statement on principle, policy and practice in special needs education (UNESCO, 1994) proclaimed that Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system.

- The above statement brings out high hopes for the benefits derived from inclusive education.
Benefits of Inclusive Education

- **Education for all**: Inclusion is about restructuring provision for learners with disabilities. It means extending educational opportunities to a wider range of marginalised groups who may be historically have had little access to schooling.

- **Efficient use of resources**: Inclusion is a cost effective form of education in a highly resource intensive venture as education has to compete with a wide range of other social and economic priorities for its share of funds. It is also cost effective as inclusion seems to promise not only the attainments of learners with disabilities but also the attainments of all learners.
Benefits continued

- **Decentralization**: inclusive education can be seen as the overall move towards decentralization. Segregated systems require that the national or local governments maintain a sector of special institutions and make decisions about which students should attend them. This requires the retention of funding and decision making powers at centre. Inclusion, on the other hand, makes possible somewhat greater degree of decentralization.

- **Building an inclusive society**: Inclusive education system can establish coherent and all-encompassing education system in the context of societies that are somewhat diverse and indeed be marked by deep divisions.
The Inclusive Institution

- It is necessary to create an inclusive learning environment in the institute. An inclusive learning environment can be created in any course regardless of discipline because it is about respecting students and valuing them as partners in teaching and learning.
- It is also necessary to respect diversity in learner population. It essentially means
  - Developing genuine respect for all people
  - Combating prejudice and discriminatory practices
  - Drawing on different strengths of human resources
  - Acknowledging and supporting the rights of all learners
  - Developing a flexible curriculum that meets the diverse needs of the learner population
The Inclusive Classroom

- **Teachers’ attitudes**: Since teachers are people who make learning possible, their own attitudes, beliefs and feelings with regard to happenings in the classroom are of crucial importance.

- **An inclusive environment**: It involves identifying the diverse needs of learners, maintaining appropriate psychosocial environment, providing suitable physical environment and organizing the classroom suitably.

- **The curriculum**: In the information age the teachers’ role has changed from the transmitter of the knowledge to that of the facilitator who encourages learners to construct their own knowledge and become independent learners.

- To achieve the above goals reflection on the part of teachers is important.
Meaning of Reflection

- Reflection implies conscious thinking and modification of a planned lesson, within a classroom context, while actually teaching. This idea has been advocated first by John Dewey, a well known educationalist.
- Reflection by its very nature is problem centered and a teaching approach can be called reflective only if it is deliberately directed towards the solution of a specific practical problem.
- The purpose of reflection is to continually understand one’s own teaching practice within the relevant context and use the understanding for making the necessary changes in teaching.
Characteristics of Reflection

- Relation of reflection with action: whether reflection is on-action or reflection is in-action.
- Time frame within which reflection takes place: whether reflection culminates immediately or is a systematic long term activity.
- Relation of reflection with problem solving: whether solving problems is an inherent natural characteristics of reflection or is reflection separable from the process of finding solutions to real problems.
- Framing of practical problems: whether reflection takes the narrow view of solving problems or a wider (historic, cultural, political, etc.) view in framing and reframing practical problems to which solutions are to being sought.
Associative Methods

- Reflective thinking can be enhanced through following associative methods
  - The magnifying glass as a means of reflection on teaching.
  - The learning history as a means of reflecting on becoming a member of teaching tribe.
  - The fantasy journey as an immersion into the inner world of teaching.
The Magnifying Glass

- To improve didactic competencies in higher education in the university of Innsbruck (Austria) an action research type of programme proved most suitable to meet participants’ needs and interests.
- In the Austrian programme teachers were given a sheet of paper containing an illustration of a full-page-sized magnifying glass. They were asked to express their own problems, fears or expectations concerning their teaching by drawing them into the blank part of the lens of the magnifying glass.
- Some expressed themselves in a short text while some expressed themselves through drawings. The completed sheets were hung up on the walls and studied by everybody leading to a lively discussion.
The Learning History

- The participants were asked to sit in small groups. Then they were asked to pair off with the partner and ‘just get to know each other’.
- The participants were then asked to put down their learning histories from when they first went to school on a large sheet of poster paper.
- The posters were spread across the floor and everybody started walking around trying to get an idea of the learning histories of other members.
- The producer of each poster first gave some background information. Then the other participants were encouraged to ask questions.
The Fantasy Journey

- The participants are guided on a fantasy journey through a situation where they try to deal with one of the objectives of the seminar like dealing with learning difficulties.
- The participants then exchange their opinions in small groups. The members in the group offer an outside perspective which often opens up new areas of awareness though commenting, questioning, interpreting, etc.
- Experiences of teacher exchange programmes between India and United Kingdom has been quite rewarding in this context.
Learning Difficulties

- MMS students have genuine learning difficulties. They can be enlisted as follows:
  - Poor linguistic capability to deal with technical terms and to communicate effectively.
  - Inadequate preparation of mathematical skills like problem solving, visualization, graphical presentation, etc.
  - Negative attitude towards the learning of mathematics.
- I tried to overcome these difficulties through certain techniques enumerated in next slide.
Teaching Strategies

- Revision of basic mathematical skills like operations on fractions, solving equations, understanding symbolic language, etc.
- Explaining the meaning of technical terms like correlation, hypothesis, regression, etc.
- Encouraging weak students to come forward and solve problem on white board.
- Motivational anecdotes and stories to create interest among students.
- Bringing out relevance of the concept being discussed through examples.
Some Experiences

- BMC Project (1980-87): Conducted studies on learning hurdles and provided remedial inputs through Saturday sessions. Leisure time during vacation was used for personality development.

Importance of Reflection

- “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches” – George Bernard Shaw.
- “He who can, does. He who understands teaches” – Shulman
- Teacher has to understand the subject matter knowledge (SMK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and curricular knowledge (CK).
- Understanding comes through reflection, cultivating the habit if reflection is, therefore, essential, this skill is useful in all walks of life.
Thank you

Any question?
Please remember today Dec 21) is the smallest day in northern hemisphere.

Even this butterfly reflects on its experiences, Why can’t we?
References

- Mundry, Susan (2005). What Experience has Taught us about Professional Development, A Monograph, Columbus, Ohio: Eisenhower National Clearinghouse