

CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS IN EDUCATION

Learning Is Endless



“ I moved on from ‘Chalk and Talk’ method to a ‘Flip Classroom.’

“ True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own

With a strong belief in this adage I started my teaching career 22 years back. This journey of more than 2 decades of teaching has given me necessary experience to share my learning with the other educators of my genre.

Let me take you down the memory lane, when I was a beginner, but a revolutionary. Yes, I call myself a revolutionary because I refused to teach the core subjects in the traditional way. English, History, Geography, Biology were the subjects taught through “Drill and kill” ways. I term it so, because the drill method would give us the retention but not the understanding. The comprehension comes through hands on experience. As such I started converting my History, Geography lessons into a flow chart pattern. The cumbersome learning of history turned into a quick grip of the chronology. Geography lessons were now interpreted well through, flow charts and learning changed hands with comprehension. Now, these were my secondary subjects. Teaching English was in my DNA and so I moved on from chalk and talk method to a Flip classroom. The transition was not easy, it took almost a decade to establish a result-oriented class with this change of teaching pedagogy.

From lectures to discussions, from me on the podium to my students being on the pedestal, from the teacher's Talk Time to the student's Talk Time the journey was a challenge. I took up the flip classrooms method as an experiment. Believe me-it worked. Having given an insight to my class as a facilitator, I would divide them into groups, gave them their tasks and it was a treat to watch them.

I realise that while teaching in a conventional style only enhances the reading and learning skills of the scholar, the modern technique enabled all the 4 skills to be polished equally well. The beautiful mind map made by my scholars on even the most boring chapters made it easy to absorb.

I realise that Direct Instruction learning gives teachers a disciplined class, a perfect decorum and a uniform work. While enquiry learning gives teachers a disorganised class, an unsuitable decorum and perhaps a disorderly and divergent learning. But, this is real learning. No two individuals are the same, so how can we expect the same learning outcome from each scholar? when we give lectures, they cherry-pick what suits them and their rationale; and leave the rest. 100% learning doesn't happen. The learners are not eccentric, they are not abnormal, they are in fact original. Hence, we must appreciate and imbibe the unconventional ways of teaching.

Next time any teacher goes to a class, instead of telling them what will be taught, let us ask them what they want to learn. Instead of giving them a topic for writing, take topics from them, divide them into groups and ask them to give a digital or verbal presentation after a preparation time. We'll observe a change in the learning outcome.

- ▶ By giving an opportunity to learners to pick and choose what they want to learn is allowing them to explore;
- ▶ Grammar cannot be memorized through rule, fixing in the mind is not retention for application; and
- ▶ Application is only possible when we allow them to discuss, deliberate and debate.

These 3D's are the real mantra for a progressive classroom in the K-12 schools of the 21st century. When we see the class debating a certain issue, chapter, theory, we can pitch in as a moderator to facilitate the right learning. We have seen the transition in the teaching pedagogy, but we have only seen.

Today's generation needs direction and not instruction. This can be nurtured right from the primary classes to the senior most classes.

Next time when you enter a class, try this:

- ▶ Interact
- ▶ Take a topic for discussion
- ▶ Divide the class into groups
- ▶ Change the seating pattern
- ▶ Give them time to discuss and deliberate
- ▶ Call them for debate
- ▶ Intervene only as a catalyst
- ▶ Do not hinder them from arguments
- ▶ Allow them to communicate, collaborate and think critically

As an educator at one of the premium institutions of the city, I was given a free hand by the school Principal and management to teach in the best possible way. To inspire is no easy job. It requires heterogeneous activities to facilitate and encourage the learners. Variety of students-engaging activities are a challenge to the teachers. Before we commence with these activities it is much essential that we know our learners well. But if you ask me, the most important requisite before we venture into all this is to become a role model. Students emulate, so if we want them to engage in class discussions, we should discuss. If we want them to be skilled at speaking, we should speak and if we want them to be enterprising, we should innovate!



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