Experimental Education in Mixed Ability Classroom

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Abstract: The teachers always have to deal with the mixed abilities classes as every individual has different learning abilities, strengths and weaknesses. The role of a teacher is to make a balance in teaching-strategies for the students of different levels of abilities. In today's challenging learning scenario, the role of the teacher has become a complex one. Every student learns and progresses at different speed. An inspiring teacher always has to formulate such effective teaching-strategies that are useful for all the students. In such a situation, the experimental education becomes a best means for the teachers. In experimental education, the teachers/educators engage themselves with learners with their direct experience, and focus on the various dimensions of teaching-process i.e. to increase knowledge, developing different skills, clarifying concepts and developing the pupils' capacity to enhance their ability in learning. The present paper focuses on the bound role of a teacher in motivating the students to learn according to their different ability-levels and to prepare them to face the competitive and challenging scenario of the present times. Some experimental education's strategies have been discussed that can be implemented in teaching-learning process for the direct experience—the preparation of lesson-plan, use of visual and modern techniques, students' responses, offering choices and more important developing a healthy and congenial relationship with the learners.

Key words- Formulate experimental, dimensions, strategies, techniques, responses, congenial.

For a teacher, it is always a problem to prepare the teaching-plan when he/she faces the students having different abilities. He/she cannot prepare the lesson only for the intelligent students or for the weak or average students. He/she has to take care of all the students and to keep in mind that the teaching-strategies should be of such type that would be beneficial to all the students as they should not be useful only to the intelligent students or the medium or the average students. The teaching strategies should not hamper the progress of the bright students and should not discourage to the medium and average students. The teacher should not involve such teaching strategies as to decrease the learning speed of the intelligent students, and to increase the frustration and boredom of the mediocre students. At such a situation experimental education is useful in teaching-learning process.

Through experimental education, the educators engage themselves with learners using their direct experience, and focus on to increase knowledge, developing different skills, clarifying concepts and developing the pupil's capacity to enhance their ability in learning. Experimental education is necessary to create the ability in students, to use their knowledge and promoting the team work, presentation and communication skills. Experimental learning is
activity based. It helps in gaining knowledge through self-experience on simply by hearing, direction or reading about a topic.

In a mixed ability class room, there is always difference in the level of learning and understanding of a fact or a concept. The teacher needs to make an effort to adjust his/her teaching to the needs, mental level and interest of the students. The teacher's approach should be to adopt the different methods that should suit to the active learning process.

A teacher should try to work on the following steps, considering the students as different individuals:

1. Teaching Methods: - After recognizing the circumstances and ability of the learners, the teachers must adopt different and suitable methods to ensure the students with an active learning. They should work on the fact that they are teaching to the students who are different individuals. They are different in many ways. Some are quick while others are slow. Some are intelligent while some are at low or overage level. Some are confident, and some are shy. Some can work together in a group or with friends while others are happy in working alone. With such circumstances, a teacher should act according to their abilities, be a facilitator, a friend and a psychologist to deal with the different-ability learners.

2. Assignment of Home work: - If the same homework is given to the students, it will either be easy for some students or difficult for others. If the homework is easy, the intelligent student would not learn anything with that and if the homework is too difficult, the weak student won't learn anything. So, they should be given different homework tasks-easy task for the weak students and challenging tasks to the bright students.

3. Class room teaching: - In class room teaching, the teacher should be clear to teaching lesson. She/he should describe every aspect of the lesson. She/he should pay attention on the weak students whether they are getting to that or not. At the end of the lesson, the teacher should summarize what has been taught during the period, so that, with a quick view, the students can establish a connect with the lesson from beginning to the ending. In the last, the teacher should give some time to the students so that they can ask about any query or gaps in understanding.

4. Motivating student's responses: - It is the duty of a teacher to observe the behaviour of the students that cause boredom, frustration and demotivation. The behavioural aspects can be noticed during the teaching process, assigning of tasks, free time activities, inefficiency in work properly and lack of enthusiasm. Free time activities are involved with different contents which appeal to the interest of the students. The students are asked to choose an activity according to their choice. The teachers can make assignments that can be appealing to the multiple intelligences of the students. They can pick the activities from simple to complex. The teacher should organize such tasks and activities that would be in capability of the students, and that should be organized and monitored in such a way as to ensure a feedback from the learners.

5. Effective strategies for the mixed ability classes: - In order to achieve effective learning target, the teachers should take some innovative and challenging approaches. This target can be achieved by beginning with small steps. New and totally different methods can frustrate to the learning-powers of the students. Small steps give them time to think over the new procedure, that is being used, and its results.

6. Offering choices: - Offering choices in doing the activities encourages the students to work at their best. They can be given many topics- learning vocabulary, learning grammatical structure of a sentence, fill in the blanks, learning the phonetic symbols and how to pronounce a sentence. The activities should be prepared from the basic points of the topic, from simple to complex one. The teaching strategies may be wide or limited but if there would be a wide range of strategies, they would provide more opportunities to the learners. The curriculum should be designed with the clear objectives as what is to be learnt. In curriculum, the work level should be appropriate to the learners.

7. Arrangement of materials: - Though text books are designed for a homogenous classroom group, but the different students react to the text books differently. Some find the text books bore or hard whereas some take it as easy or interesting. Some find the topics as creating the feeling of dullness while others find that enjoyable. Now it is the duty of a teacher to arrange the materials so as to make the topics interesting for the learners in the class.

8. Participation of the students: - In the classroom activities, all the students should be given chances to participate in the activities. The students should be motivated to use their chance as much as is possible for them. The teacher should be aware that he is not to talk too much and organize and arrange the activities as to arouse the interests of the different students.

9. Arrangement of tasks with a variety of answers: - A teacher should try to arrange such tasks that would have a variety of possible correct answers. This experiment would give the students chances to express
themselves. They will not be demotivated as they will have different answer to give. They will not have to think only one answer. For example, in English classroom, they can be given to write a letter, a story on a topic in which they would express their different ideas and would not be forced to give a single answer.

10. Arrangement of tasks according to the personality of the students: - The teacher should try to know the personality of the students as what they like and what they can perform. Knowing their personality will help the teacher to prepare the tasks for them. When the students will perform the tasks by personalizing them, they will feel interest in the given tasks as some students may like games, some competitions, some role play and some speech etc. So, different types of tasks should be prepared according to the students' interest as it will create an interesting atmosphere in the class and will also create a variety in the teaching process.

11. Activities in group or pair: - Different activities should be prepared by the teacher for different students as according to their different levels of interest, attention, learning ways, multiple intelligences, learning capability, knowledge and psychological aspects. Along with the single activities, group or pair activities can be prepared as that will be useful for the weak learners. They will learn from their partners who are quick in the tasks. In the group, strong students will do the complicated tasks and the weak students will do the easy tasks as group members.

12. Activities that can be involved in the mixed ability classroom: - The teacher can include such brain storming activities as:

- The students can be given a topic to write on.
- They can be asked to suggest some one-words related to the topic.
- One-word can be given by the teacher and other co-related words can be asked. For example, the word 'school' is given by the teacher and other words- 'teacher', 'students', 'library', 'books', 'bag', 'lecture' etc. can be asked from the students.
- They can be asked the questions of general knowledge.
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- Any game related to words- formation can be tried.
- The students can be said to describe the topics related to their visit of some places etc.

13. Preparing the diaries: - The students can be motivated to write a diary of their thoughts. The teachers can elaborate their thoughts. This activity can create an atmosphere of personal communication between the students and the teacher. Reflection is a crucial part of the experiential learning.

14. No comparisons, and to create a discipline atmosphere: - The teacher should not compare the students in the classroom. By it, the teachers would be able to create a lively and co-operative atmosphere. They should give value to each student's contribution in the teaching process. The quick students finish their tasks more quickly than the weak students. The teachers should manage the class as the quick students should not create indiscipline while waiting for others to finish their tasks.

15. Taking care of personal and psychological factors: - The teacher should try to understand the personal and psychological factors that influence to the capability of the students. For example, lack of support in the family, lack of encouragement, lack of facilities, low self-confidence or the effects of some crisis or stress. The teacher should observe the behavioural aspects and personal factors while teaching to the students.

Thus, in a mixed ability class, where the students are different in many ways, the role of a teacher is to recognize the needs of the students as individuals and to shape the teaching strategies as to create an active and interesting atmosphere in the classroom. By establishing an emotional and helping bond with the students, the teachers can prepare the students to face the challenges of the modern era.

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