

## The Changed Role of Teachers

**Rachana Misra, Educationist**

Education must involve the creative process of knowledge construction. The curriculum has to be designed so as to promote enquiry based and experiential learning through structured and unstructured activities that not only concretize learning, but also stimulate higher order thinking skills, creative as well as critical thinking skills.

The goals of education as defined above are attainable only through planned, directed and sustained effort. Teachers' training becomes a necessity in this context. Training is an integral part of personal and professional growth and must be approached with due sobriety and seriousness. Present times are characterized by evolution; by an environment defined by unrelenting change where everything from knowledge, ideals and values are being continuously redefined and permanency lies only in dynamism. We, the educators, would do well to understand that the responsibility to bring order from chaos and prepare the youth for the challenges of the real world, lies with us. We have to bring a change in our thinking before we take up the challenge of educational reform.

Albert Einstein once said that 'everything has changed except our thinking'. It is this thinking of ours that needs to be altered, modified, reshaped. To give our children the ability to think out of the box, we need to set free their imagination, not shackle it with convention. It was again Einstein who said, 'imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited, whereas imagination encompasses the whole world'. We must understand and accept that today's imagination is tomorrow's reality. Who would have believed in the 1950s that one day man would not only walk on the moon, but also devise methods of trying to contact extra-terrestrial life? X-men and Star Trek may not really be that far-fetched after all!

Children do need conditioning in certain respects. That is how society is prevented from being disintegrated. However, if we stunt the child's imagination and condition his approach towards learning as merely information gathering and accepting, we will end up creating an army of mediocre clones mired in conventionality. When there is no one to challenge accepted paradigms and beliefs, where will progress, discovery, improvement and refinement come from?

Educators have to aim at promoting development of individual identity, personal faith, firmness of character and inherent strength. Everyone should be encouraged to dream, for on dreams tomorrows will be built. Believe that everything is possible. The only question is 'how'?

A teacher's role as educator entails a frightening amount of responsibility. So, developing proficiency and competency are of primary importance for a teacher. To successfully shoulder her responsibility, a teacher must develop generic skill sets that build up what is termed as SKALP i.e, Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes based on Learning Preferences. Research has shown that based on the four types of Learning Preferences, learners may be categorized as Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists.

Life skills and emotional intelligence need to be developed to better understand the students' needs, learning styles, constraints, limitations, shortcomings, potential as well as talents.

Teachers must be aware of the importance of developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in students right from elementary level. Currently, HOTS are only superficially covered in senior classes with very little directed effort. The Higher Order Thinking Skills are represented in the Bloom's Pyramid where sequential development of skills are addressed as we go from bottom to top.

Evaluation  
Synthesis  
Analysis  
Application  
Comprehension  
Knowledge

Teachers are expected to know the pedagogy that will help develop these skills in students.

A teacher is expected to help children develop study skills – time management, stress management, note making, test taking, memory enhancing methods, recall, improving concentration, goal setting, planning and organizing etc.

The amount of information students are expected to memorize and recall is mind-boggling. The brain stores information by creating mind maps based on association/links with previously stored knowledge. The teachers must know how to create associations in the child's brain to sharpen his memory and recall.

A teacher must have basic knowledge of behavior management in the classroom. This includes cooperative discipline, motivation and classroom organization. Use of noise-meters in class are effective in teaching students to maintain self-discipline.

A relatively new theory relevant to today's teaching methodologies is the theory of Multiple Intelligences proposed by Dr. Howard Gardner in 1983. According to this theory, there are at least eight types of intelligences and each individual has a predominance of one or more of these. The predominance helps the educator recognize the learning preference of the child.

The various MIs are: Logical-Mathematical, Verbal-Linguistic, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Spatial, Naturalistic . Knowledge of MI helps educators 'customize' education to the learning preferences and styles of the students.

We commonly hear of activity-based learning, play way method of learning, learning by doing, Montessori method of teaching, lecture method of teaching and project method of teaching-learning. Each of these methods is effective depending on the choice of topic, age-group of the children,

developmental level of the children, receptivity and mindset of the children and so on. There is no one magical technique that can be applied to all subjects or topics.

We need to get the right mix of the pedagogical techniques and teachers' competence to come up with an effective strategy for the teaching-learning process that can actually help in knowledge constru