

Knowing Educational Psychology: A Tool to Smoothen the Teaching-Learning Process

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Abstract

When the idea of an efficient teacher comes in our mind, the first thing that we consider as the prominent issue is whether that person has proper knowledge of the subject that s/he is going to teach. The secondary concern surfaces whether that person is knowledgeable enough to present the subject matter. Now, one question that most of us never think about or simply ignore is: Are all these qualities enough to be a successful teacher? Who is going to answer this question? Who is going to judge whether a teacher is 'perfect' or not? Will the judge be another senior teacher or a prominent educationist in that field or the students who always closely observe the activities of the teacher? Some people may raise the objection saying how students can judge the teacher as they are not mature enough for having lack of knowledge and sufficient experiences of life beyond the classroom. To tackle such questions, one great source of help is to know theories and practices of educational psychology in depth as it fundamentally challenges the notion of considering the students as machines that run with different types of programs. It strongly asserts that the students are not machines, they are human beings with frequently changing characteristics, emotions, desires, moods, responses/reactions and so on. So, one of the objectives of this paper is to show how, by understanding the psychology of the students, a teacher can provide them proper guidance. Also, this paper aims at finding out different important issues/concerns by exploring and contextualizing various prominent psychological theories of education to create an overall positive as well as enabling educational environment both for the teacher and the learners. To attain this end, this paper uses insights from educational psychology in particular to keep the frame of discussion focused and manageable.

Keywords: Educational psychology, Teaching learning process, Theories of education, Classroom environment

Introduction

When we contemplate what makes an effective teacher, the first thing that comes to mind is whether or not the person knows enough about the subject being taught. The secondary concern is whether or not that person is adequately qualified to give the subject. Now, here's something that most of us do not think about or just overlook: Are all of these qualities required to be a successful teacher? Who will react to this question? Who will decide if a teacher is 'perfect'? Will the judge be another senior instructor or a well-known educator in that field, or will it be the

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pupils who are always watching the teacher's activities? Some may argue that students are unable to evaluate the teacher because they lack the required knowledge and experiences outside of the classroom. To solve such challenges, it is necessary to get a solid grasp of educational psychology's ideas and methodologies, since they fundamentally contradict the concept of students as machines capable of running a variety of programs. It offers a compelling argument that students are not machines, but rather living, breathing human beings with continually changing characteristics, emotions, needs, moods, responses/ reactions, and so on.

In this regard, insights from educational psychology comes in handy. Educational psychology is concerned with the psychological aspects of teaching and of formal learning process in [educational institutions]. (Bhatia 18) For further understanding of educational psychology, we may focus on the definition of it by some psychologists. According to B. F. Skinner, "Educational psychology is that branch of psychology which deals with teaching and learning and also covers the entire range and behavior of the personality as related to education" (as cited in Kumari, Sundari and Rao, 2006). According to Peel:

Educational psychology helps the teacher to understand the development of his pupils, the range and limits of their capacities, the process by which they learn and their social relationships. (as cited in Manichander, 2015).

Based on the above definitions, we can say that educational psychology is the implementation of the knowledge of psychology in the context of education. In this process of implementation some issues are involved:

1. Proper understanding among the teacher and the students
2. Consideration of the impact of heredity and environment in human life
3. The impact of some basic or innate qualities of human beings

As an instructor, if we want to develop a cordial connection with our pupils, we must first understand them, and in order to comprehend them, we must examine certain aspects of their life. And the most critical factor to consider when it comes to pupils is their behavior. However, this is not a simple process since behavior is not a constant issue in any human being's lifestyle because behavior is a person's reaction to a certain situation. Thus, if circumstances change, a person's behavior may alter as well. All behavior is describable as an attempt on the part of an individual to bring about some state of affairs – either to effect a change from one state of affairs to another, or to maintain a currently existing one (Ossorio, 2006).

2. Different Processes of Assessment to Understand Human Behaviour

2.1 Introspection and Objective Observation

To evaluate a person's behavior, we may use techniques such as 'introspection' and 'objective observation'. When introspection or subjective observation is involved, the judgment may be erroneous. For instance, when we want to examine our anger, the anger may vanish, implying that the object of observation may not be readily identified throughout this process. On the other hand, since it is a wholly subjective approach, it will expose just the mental processes of a single person, making it ineffective for obtaining universal or generalized information about human behavior. The solution to this difficulty is 'objective observation,' in which another person or persons examine the target individual, which eliminates the gaps that occur in 'subjective observation.' In the case of 'objective observation,' the case study method is extremely effective because it enables an overall assessment of the target person to be made through the observations of teachers, parents, doctors, classmates, friends, relatives, neighbors, and other associated persons at various stages of that person's life. Without this evaluation, it will be impossible for the educator to grasp the target person's real behavior, since understanding a person's behavior requires analyzing their reaction to various 'stimuli' in various contexts.

2.2 Longitudinal Method and Cross-sectional Approach

Additionally, we may use the 'longitudinal technique' and the 'cross-sectional approach' to determine the behavioral differences between two groups of individuals at various phases of their lives and throughout human history. In the instance of the 'longitudinal technique,' a teacher would analyze the progressive physical and mental changes, referred to as growth and development, of a group of children at various ages in order to comprehend how their behavior changes as a result of their physical and mental changes. On the other hand, by using a 'cross-sectional method,' the instructor may ascertain the variations and distinctions in the behavior of children of the same age throughout human history. It is true that students aged 15 in 1950 did not act in the same manner as students aged 15 now do. Thus, a teacher is not expected to be biased while making a judgment; that is, the teacher is not expected to anticipate precisely the same kind of behavior that he or she displayed when they were the same age as the pupils they are dealing with. While there are certain established social norms that the instructor may push children to follow, even these standards are not constant, since they fluctuate with the demands of different ages and circumstances. For instance, in the past, there was a significant divide between professors and students, and students were always fearful of teachers due to their dominance and penchant for punishing pupils. However, the situation has changed dramatically in recent years as professors have become more approachable to pupils, punishment is prohibited in classrooms, and

therefore the formerly chasm between teachers and students has been narrowed.

2.3 Guess Who and Sociometry

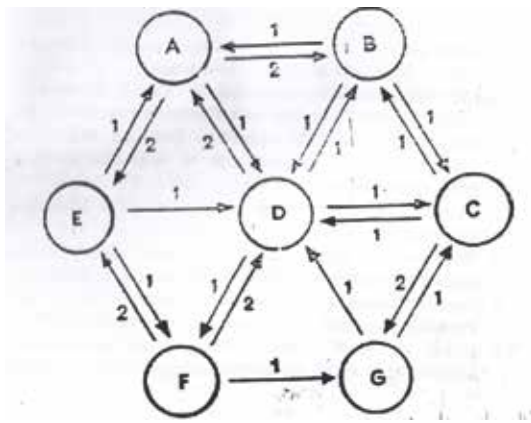
To establish, maintain and develop such kind of friendly atmosphere in the classroom, the teachers can implement some other methods such as 'Guess Who' and 'Sociometry'. In the method of 'Guess Who', the teacher will at first give description of some of the students such as:

1. The student is always ready to help others.
2. The student is good at sharing.
3. The student tries to dominate the others in the class.
4. The student is always trying to create such situation where s/he can fight with the others.
5. The student is very good at study but is unwilling to participate in group study.

And then the teacher may ask the whole class to write down the names of their classmates that they think match with the descriptions and submit those names to the teachers. The teacher will not expose the result of this survey directly to the students as this exposure may create a kind of misunderstanding among the students or the students may not feel comfortable to participate in this process. Through this process the teacher will be able to understand the interpersonal relationships among the students and will get the opportunity to take some initiatives to correct them if the teacher finds necessary.

'Sociometry' is another very effective method to understand the interpersonal relations among the students in a class. Here the teacher will declare that s/he needs some groups consisting of 4/5 members to assign the students in some group work. For this purpose, students will write down the names of 3/4 of her/his classmates with whom s/he is interested to be involved in the group work. In this case also neither the students nor the teacher will expose these choices. After analysing the choices of the students, the name that will come for the highest number s/he will be considered as the 'star' or 'central figure'. On the other hand, the names that will come for lesser number, they will be considered 'isolates'. From this observation the teacher will be able to find out the student who has a kind of leadership quality and to whom most of the students of the class trust. This student can be made the class captain or class representative and can be assigned for some tasks for the betterment of her/his classmates or can be made the team leader of any task where the whole class will work as a team or group. But the most benefited part of this assessment is the finding of 'isolates' of the class and the teacher's main concern will be those students who fail to establish proper communication with the other classmates. This is a very serious issue and the teacher has to take necessary initiatives to help those students to overcome this issue. The teacher will try to find out the 'maladjustment'

within those students during their developmental stages from childhood.



In the above diagram, 'D' is the start or central figure and 'G' is the isolate.

Typically, some professors make the mistake of neglecting this sort of pupil, believing them to be weak and incapable of progress. We must consider that every human being is born with certain potentialities, and only a few of them are given the opportunity to develop those potentialities via the use of an appropriate environment that is equipped with the required tools and direction. Few people, on the other hand, are so privileged. As a result, we must examine these factors and, if feasible, establish a learning atmosphere in which students may freely express their requirements. Some may emphasize the problem of genetics in determining human behavior and its influence on the development of intellectual capacity in this context. So, the two additional factors that a teacher should examine while evaluating a kid are 'Heredity' and 'Environment.'

2.4 Heredity and Environment

Heredity is the inborn nature or innate qualities that are related to the genetic construction of a human being and achieved from parent or fore-fathers. On the other hand, environment is everything in the surrounding of a human being that influences the human behaviour. In this context, some common accusations of some of the teachers can be pointed out where in the name of the influence of heredity, blame the weak students as a factor for lowering the standard of the class and ignore them. They may make such analogy saying that "mangoes cannot grow out of cotton seeds" (Bhatia 89). This is true "but if one works with knowledge and understanding, one can improve the quality of mangoes by a careful regulation of the environment as one can make cotton grow into productive plants and yield a larger harvest" (ibid). So, as a teacher when we are going to deal with the students in a class, this is quite usual that all the students will not perform at the same pace -

some will be faster and some will be slower but if we neglect the slower ones simply blaming their inborn qualities, our responsibility as teachers will be neglected because the success of a teacher lies in the improvement of the weaker ones as the better ones will perform well automatically if the slightest effort and guidance are given to them.

We may compare a student's heredity to a plant's seed. Only a higher-quality seed can assure a higher-quality plant and, eventually, a higher-quality fruit. Proper soil, sunshine, water, and manure are also critical for maximum productivity. Thus, when we engage with a student as a teacher, we must guarantee that all required factors are in place to enable the student to maximize the use of all intrinsic abilities. Yes, we cannot completely ignore the impact of heredity and expect to produce cotton from mango trees, but we can create an environment conducive to the production of high-quality mango and cotton; this means accepting the genetic constraint and attempting to maximize a student's output within that constraint.

2.5 Emotional and Social Development

Sometimes we forget that our students are not machines rather they are human beings. The emotional development of a student is very very essential to prepare her/him as an acceptable member of the society because one of the important goals of education is to “[grow the] ability of an individual to live, move and work as a member of society,…” (Bhatia 119). If anyone wants to become successful, efficient and happy in life, the healthy development of emotion is as important as the acquisition of knowledge and skill. It is found that when a student is worried or anxious or annoyed in or indifferent to any situation, s/he cannot concentrate and pay full attention to the assigned task at that situation. Sometimes students find some situations either at institution or at home creates fear in them, punishment and rebuke make them shy and nervous. So, as a teacher, we should always be careful in our observation whether any of our student is going through such kind of mental stress or not. If, we need to take some initiatives to help them come out of such impacts. Only through cooperation, motivation, friendly attitude, and inspiration, we can help our students to overcome such emotional barriers in the learning process and make them attentive, free and confident in study.

2.6 Social facilitation, Social inhibition, and Mental Hygiene

When the presence of others functions as a positive stimulus that motivates or inspires a person to do something, it is called social facilitation. It is found that we eat more when we eat in the company of others, children play with enjoyment with other playmates. In the same way, the force of learning increases when we get someone to share our ideas and have some discussion with others. On the other hand, sometimes it is found that this same presence of others may create a barrier in the

process of learning for some students. This is known as social inhibition. This usually happens for those who are shy and worried about what the others will say about their performance. From my real teaching experience, I have found several such cases especially when students are asked to come in front of the class and say something. In such situation, the cooperation both from the teacher and the other classmates are necessary because the student who feels shy and worried, s/he needs to provide such classroom environment where s/he will find a quite friendly, supportive environment that will help her/him to overcome those negative concerns. In this way, the maladjustment that was prevailing in the earlier stages of the development in the student's life will be removed and a sort of satisfying personal adjustments and mental health will be promoted in her/his life which is known as mental hygiene. By ensuring mental hygiene, it becomes easier for the teachers to motivate the students. And motivation is very effective for engaging students in the tasks according to the plan of the teachers. Being aware of, monitoring and responding constructively to students' motivation signals during instruction is an important teaching skill. This is so because classroom motivation is a reliable predictor of students' subsequent engagement, learning and achievement (Ames, 1992; Bandura, 1997; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

3. Three Kinds of Teachers

According to Jim Scrivener, there are three kinds of teachers – the explainer, the involver, and the enabler. When a teacher functions as an explainer, s/he “relies mainly on ‘explaining’ or ‘lecturing’ as a way of conveying information to the students”. (6) The teacher as involver not only knows the subject matter that is being dealt with but “is also familiar with the teaching methodology; [s/he] is able to use appropriate teaching and organizational procedures and techniques to help [her/his] students learn about the subject matter.” (ibid) The teacher as enabler not only “knows about the subject matter and about the methodology, but also has an awareness of how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling withing [her/his] class. [S/he] actively responds to this in [her/his] planning and working methods and in building effective working relationships and a good classroom atmosphere. [Her/his] own personality and attitude are an active encouragement to learning.” (ibid)

Type of teacher	Subject matter	Methodology	People
Explainer	✓		
Involver	✓	✓	
Enabler	✓	✓	✓

Figure 2: Three types of Teachers

So, for the effective teaching-learning process, we need the third type of teacher - that is, teacher the enabler who in addition to having knowledge of the subject matter and the methodology will also have the knowledge of the students s/he is going to teach.

4. Inductive and Deductive Teaching

The most important difference between these two methods lies in the role of the teacher. Inductive teaching and learning begin with general principles and eventually getting to applications, the instruction begins with specifics – a set of observations or experimental data to interpret, a case study to analyze, or a complex real-world problem to solve. This is learner centered, meaning that it imposes more responsibility on students for their own learning than the traditional lecture-based deductive approach does (Prince & Fielder 2006). Moreover, research argues that the main difference between these two methods is the direction of the flow of information. Decoo (1996) understands education as a process that goes from the general to the specific. It is seen to facilitate the learners' acquisition by "making learners notice structures that they might not otherwise have noticed" (Ellis 1993, 1995, as quoted by Ruin 1996:104).

5. Play-Way-Method in Teaching

When we work, we do it seriously and choose it intentionally, in a planned way. The attention of the worker is always divided as the result is outside of the work and while working, one part of the mind of the worker is focused on the activity s/he is involved, and another part is always thinking about the result for which s/he is working. For this reason, work is never free and spontaneous like play. Because "play is engaged in for its own sake rather than for any ulterior goal or end." (Bhatia 174) While we play, we get the benefit and enjoyment directly and instantly out of the action and situation. We do not think about the end. And that is why our attention is fixed in the activity itself. So, in case of teaching-learning process, it should also be formed/planned in such a way as if students will not consider it as a work which is burden to them, rather they should feel interest in it as if they are involved in games and so their concentration will be fixed to the activity. So, learning through enjoyment should be the motto of teaching-learning process.

6. The Benefits of the Knowledge of Psychology for Teachers

Psychology expertise may assist a teacher in a variety of ways in carrying out her or his duties in the classroom. It will assist her in learning about and

comprehending the most vital feature of educational institutions: pupils. Because of this knowledge, the teacher will feel more confident when dealing with the students and will have the managerial power to control the class, rather than using the threat of punishment and rebuke, by implementing various plans based on her/his prior knowledge of the students' sentiments and emotions. This understanding of psychology will also assist teachers in assessing themselves, setting goals, and taking initiatives for their personal development so that, when reflecting on their professional accomplishments, they will not feel jealous of their colleagues or hopeless, believing that they are being neglected by the authority and not receiving the appropriate professional benefit from the institution for their caliber. Individual happiness is critical for instructors because how can they inspire positive motivation in their pupils if they are dissatisfied and demotivated themselves? When a teacher starts preparing preparations – picking course materials and appropriate techniques to help the students actively and attentively engage in the learning process – with a contented mind and good understanding of the pupils, the best outcome can be achieved. When a teacher greets students by their first names, recognizes when they are joyful or frightened, and handles those concerns in a kind manner while assuring them that s/he is ready to assist them in any way possible, the students develop a sense of trust and dependence on their instructor. Because of their affection for and faith in the instructor, pupils in such a setting are always eager to obey any direction. As a result, the teacher's ideas for a successful learning process in the classroom become simpler to implement.

7. Conclusion

Students are the various pieces of equipment, and teaching is an art form. So, only when there is a suitable combination of the artist's concept and the correct resources are accessible according to the artists' demands, can a good piece of artwork be made. Teaching is not just imparting information to pupils, but also gaining an understanding of their minds and wants and devising strategies to address those requirements. According to Sir John Adams, in the sentence "The master taught John Latin", the master not only should have knowledge of Latin but also of John. "Teach the child rather than teach the subject is the essential principle of new education." (Bhatia 34-35) So, from this perspective understanding the student is very essential for the proper and effective execution of teaching-learning process, and the knowledge of psychology and the implementation of that knowledge in the field of education, that is teaching-learning process, can only help a teacher to reach that goal.

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