DISCOURSE ON INNOVATIVE
TEACHING PRACTICES

PAYEL GANGULY

Asst. Professor, Gangadharpur sikshan Mandir

University of Calcutta, West Bengal

Abstract

It is pertinent to state that the teachers are the hub to quality education. Teachers must update, enrich and renew self in order to master the new method of teaching. It means that innovative teaching strategies are undertaken due to those needs to cope with pressure and problems from the social changes the need to utilize research findings geared towards teaching and learning, the need to explore opportunities with potential for education that is more relevant to the world and at the same time facilitating effective teaching and learning process. We are all that the realities of today's high complexities of tomorrow's world. These hands must be on desk to help teachers and students broaden their skills competencies if they are operate effective in the present world.

Key words*: innovation, reform, change, innovative teaching practices, teaching methodology.*

Introduction:

Changes are perceived as spice of life and excellent, enduring and good innovations are changes in positive direction as well as signals of advancement of an educational system. The 21st century is undoubtedly described as a millennium of knowledge explosion as a result of which innovation has been described as a roaring flame that overturns institutions, shift the value and direct the people's lives in the direction of change. However institutions have shown dynamism as a result

of many forces which bring them into being. Many nations have experienced versions of political system such as parliamentary or presidential just as their constitution have been reviewed over and over again, the same goes for economic parlance that the only thing that is permanent in man's life is change. Teaching strategies have not left out this issue and however have innovated policies, strategies, techniques, and methods that have been carried out to meet the needs of the learners in this 21st century.

Innovation, reform and change.

A definition of innovation would normally be the starting point for paper of this kind. By way of illustration, the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines innovation as 'the introduction of something new' or 'a new idea, method of device". It is noteworthy that most of the literature has steered clear of this logical but ultimately unhelpful approach. The reason is immediately clear if context is taken into account : what might be innovation in one setting may be routine in another. A related issue is the connection between innovation, change and reform. Innovation and reform are intersecting sub-sets in the broader domain of change, as illustrated in figure 1. Expressed simply, not all reform is innovational, not all innovation is reform; reform and innovation are examples of change.

Figure 1 : relationship between change, reform and innovation.
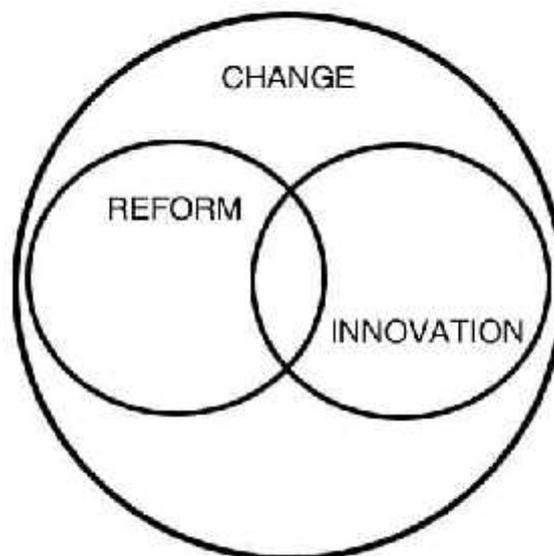
Traditional vs Modern teaching practices

In traditional method of education, more emphasis was laid on learning the theory with any practical approaches. Students learnt by memorizing than by understanding. Teachers are considered as learned scholars who talked continuously to the students without getting any response or feedback, resulting in insufficient interaction between teacher and students. A student's talent was not brought out in total as they were afraid of teachers and marks were the only criteria in judging the ability of the students. They learnt by memorizing lecture notes and text books rather than from experiences and real life situations. In this context, education is more of a burden and boring according to traditional practices of teaching.

With innovative methods of teaching, education has become fun and thrill to students. Now, education generates interest in the students due to the innovative methods of teaching and motivates them to learn and analyze most. Innovative methods of education produce students who are creative and can think critically and analytically. It produce students who are self – sufficient and are better able to solve problems. While traditional learning did not encourage students to ask "why", innovative learning encourages students to ask, "why not?" Innovative teaching practices made learning fun and it minimized the time taken to master the subject by easing phobia in more relaxing way. Confucius says, "I hear and I forget, I see and believe, I do and understand", hence, innovative technique involves more participation of students in doing things on their own by way of group exercises and collaborative learning and they understand better by doing, than by hearing and forgetting.

What is "Innovative teaching"?

Innovative teaching represents a construct, comprised of cluster of qualities including effective interaction with learners, openness to change, persistence, reflective practices, specifying of approach and discipline – embedded pedagogy.

Innovative teaching is more than thelight bulb that comes on when innovation occurs, more that going where no one has gone before. "Inventing" is "creating" and 'Innovation" is valueing, introducing and using 'invention'. Those individuals with flash-in-the-pan-creativity may be

exciting, but innovative teachers more properly include those who are alert to new ideas. Forge them into submitting uniquely their own, test them and persist until their students are engaged and their teaching is transformed.

Rogers(2003) identifies an innovation as "an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption". Innovative teaching practices are different, they are not brand new but rather are new applications of existing approaches and appear not to yet been widely adopted. Innovative teaching practices are often tried in an effort to make one's teaching more problem or challenge – both of these reasons connect to overall desire to improve students' learning.

Who are Innovative Teachers ?

Innovative teachers are risk takers as they are not locked into a single approach. When things in the classroom are not going well, they become reflective practitioners, something involving students in the analysis of classroom events as doing 'something different' is not at all threatening. The innovative teachers review his /her work through thefollowing questions :-

➢ Which teaching model am I using ?

➢ How does it apply in specific teaching situations ?

➢ How well is it working ?

An innovative teacher adds student – centered pedagogy, extended learning and ICT integration for innovative teaching practices. The model of which is given as follows :-

Chart 1 : Innovative Teaching Practices

Student centered pedagogies	Extended learning	ICT Integration
Personalised collaborative knowledge building	24 / 7 learning opportunities	By students
Self regulation	Global & cultural understanding	Higher level usage. (for knowledge building & creativity)

Characteristics of Innovative teachers

According to Bain's (2004) extensive longitudinal study focuses more specifically on the key characteristics of most effective and innovative teachers:-

- They create a 'natural critical learning environment' where students learn by confronting intriguing problems and authentic tasks; grappling with their own ideas and assumptions; working with others; and having the opportunity to try; fail; get feedback and be treated fairly.

- They trust their students, believe students want to learn, speak openly with their students and encourage students to be reflective.

- The expect more of their students, favouring outcomes that embody the kind of thinking and acting expected for life.

- They use their knowledge to develop techniques for grasping fundamental principles and organizing concepts that others can use to build their own understanding and abilities – they can simplify, clarify, analyze evaluate and are effective to adaptable learners.

> ➤ They have atleast an alternative understanding of constructivist theories of human learning – they focus on knowledge construction that is sustained and has substantial influence on how students think, act and feel.

Mc Carting 4 Mat Cycle of Learning (1996)

McCarthy represented a model used by many teachers un k-12 education. Her work is important to our consideration of first principled because she made the learning cycle epliet. McCarthy approached this idea from a consideration of student learning style but concluded that, although learners may have preference for varius approaches of learning, effective instruction require them to be involved in the whole cycle of learning activities.

Fig2: 4 MAT Approach of McCarthy.

Renewing refine, Integrate, adapt, represent, share, renew 9F ? 4	Meaning connect, examine, share, dialogue, reflect 1 WHY ?
HOW ?3 Operationalising Act, Practice, Tinker, Try, extend	2. WHAT ? Conceptualising, Acquire Knowledge, Understand theory, Imagine, Define

Nelson – collaborative problem solving (1999)

Nelson's theory emphasized problem solving and included all of the phases, but with more emphasis on application and less emphasis on demonstration. She attempted to provide "an integrated set of guideline……. to design and participate in authentic learning environments which invoke critical thinking, creativity and complex problem solving while developing important social interaction skills. She provided an extensive list of guidelines, and the source for these guideline, organized under nine process activities.

1. Build readiness

2. Form and norm groups

3. Determine a preliminary problem definition

4. Define and assign roles.

5. Engage in and iterative collaborative problem solving process.

6. Finalize the solution or project.

7. Synthesize and reflect.

8. Assess products and processes.

9. Provide closure.

Constructive Pedagogy- A Recent Trend

Constructive Pedagogy, a generic term is not a method but an approach based on the assumption that knowledge is constructed by the active participation of the individual in the cognitive process. Constructive pedagogy requires the creation of a complex learning environment where the source of information is not books and teachers any more; it is real life. Pupils have a chance to seek solution to real problems in life-like situations in a variety of ways with different techniques in groups. The phases of constructive education areas follow-

1. Arousing interest

2. Forming groups

3. Team development

4. Choosing a topic

5. Further division of the given topic.

6. Elaboration of a sub-topic

7. Preparation of the joint report by the group.

8.   Evaluation.

Conclusion

Teaching or following innovative teaching practices is always challenging. This experience is also extremely rewarding when these students begin enjoying the journey, which leads to mastering the concepts. The crossing from a basic background to a more advanced level by the students may be described as achieving the goal state from an initial state by reducing the distance between them, so, there is a need of goal programming exercise in which a number of a objective have to be attained simultaneously. The goals of this goal programming exercise can be, in some case, incompatible or in conflict with each other, some of these goals include minimizing the time taken to learn and hopefully, master the topic, maximizing the enjoyment from learning, minimizing the general fear associated with a particular subject, maximizing students' perception of the practical uses of the subject and minimizing the distance between theory and practice. The objectives should be ranked according to their priorities. It would be quite logical to place and hopefully master the topic and maximizing enjoyment at the top of the list.

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