

# 45. Teachers as Vehicles of Productivity in Education

*Prof. Brahma Nand Mishra, DTU, Delhi (Rtd.), India*

[bnmishra11@gmail.com](mailto:bnmishra11@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Pedagogical theory of today gives high priority to social components of learning characteristics. There is very little new which can be said about teachers, their role, the competencies and so on for the Productivity in Education. It is like one of these clichés which get repeated because they happen to be true and in the process of repetition we stop thinking about it. Therefore, over a period of time, certain things are spoken but they are not felt inside. They are not able to create the chemical change which should take place in us when we believe in something. And my purpose is to try and focus on that role once again with the hope that it might be able to excite the kind of chemical passion that this term, the Productivity in Education, deserves.*

**Index Terms**— *Productivity in Education, Teachers Training, Education Systems, Learning Components.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, we have embarked upon a very momentous change. All around us we see a significant shift. And this shift has been described variously such as: economic reforms, structural adjustments, industrial re-structuring, economic re-structuring, etc... All these terms have very specific meanings. But these terms are no longer terms being spoken in India alone.

In the language of economist, it would be easy to describe it in terms of changing or reducing the fiscal imbalance, increasing international trade, greater competitiveness, liberalization of the economy, all these kinds of terms can be said. And if in the structural adjustment we have to depend on international loans and so on then, that is a valid strategy. But at the end, in the very ultimate analysis, whether we succeed or not, will depend on whether we are able to create a human resource which is productive; whether we are able to create attitudes of international competition. Until that happens, no amount of structural adjustments, loans, no amount of balancing the imports and exports and balancing between revenues and expenditures, none of these will result in any substantial and sustainable gains. At the core of all social changes it is human factor which counts. In the end, it is the human resource that makes the difference.

Ultimately, it is human resource development which is at the core of any social growth and teachers are once again at the core of this entire process of human resource development.

Very often, education in times of structural adjustment may find resource crunch, it may also find that the focus has shifted from so-called social investment areas into productive areas like industry. Available figures show, how education is central to the whole process of development and consequently how teachers are central to that process of educational development..

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The two sectors viz. education and industry have roughly similar figures for employment, fixed asset and annual expenditure.

These two sectors are comparable. One can take help of statistics to prove it. But that will digress the issue. And yet what kind of effort is being put behind the educational system? In industry one would be terribly worried about efficiency, productivity, better management, preparing the managers, the work force for coping with the changing requirements and tasks. These are the issues consistently discussed day in and day out in the Institutes of Management all over the world. We have a whole set of institutions devoted entirely for looking at the organised industrial sector to focus on how to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. On the contrary, there is not even an agreed definition of productivity of an educational organisation. What does one mean by productivity of a university? What exactly is this? How can this be measured? There is no agreed

definition of productivity of the educational system. But not so of an industrial organisation. We know of efficiency of an industrial organisation. But what do we now about efficiency of an educational organisation? We know about sickness of an industrial organisation but do we really know what afflicts the educational institutions? The answer is we do not know and even if we know, we know it very vaguely. Is diabetes visible? Is it a disease? Ailments of educational system are very much like diabetes and they, thus, remain obscured. What about arthritis? One can live life with diabetes and arthritis. But what matters is the quality of life. The disease of the educational institutions is similar.

What is the prime mover in the case of educational organisation? It is the teacher. What kind of efforts do we put in while ensuring that the prime mover of this system has the right kind of skills and capabilities? Do we know what skills are to be acquired in the first place? Do we the faculty including the majority of us the Heads of Institutions know it? Do we have any needs-analysis or the profile of the teacher available with us? I think most of us including myself became teachers without any formal training. We were thrown at the deep end and we had to learn to swim. Some of us may have succeeded but a lot many sank not in the sense that they were thrown out of the system, but their inability to learn to swim has resulted in the kind of the educational decay which we see today; because they did not learn to swim.; because they were not able to act as prime movers, therefore, the standard of education has been a matter of such concern in our system. The fish rots from the head. Educational system is rotting from head to toe. It does not mean there is no oasis in the desert. But the number is too infinitesimal.

If we are going to survive in the changed times, I think, we have to professionalize education. What is the meaning of the word 'professional'? A person with a Bachelor's Degree in engineering or a Master's Degree in engineering or a Ph.D., the moment he gets the appointment letter that says he is a teacher, does that make him [professional? Does an appointment letter make a person professional? This calls for a reflection. In good international universities nobody without an earned Ph.D. is appointed as a teacher. It is presumed that while pursuing the Ph.D. degree, he has gone through the process of learning and training. In our country we can not say that this is happening. Even Ph.D. degrees are being put on sale in some cases. So, our situation is very different. Even a B.Tech. degree holder teaches. Therefore, the task for training is of paramount importance in our context than elsewhere.

For a person to be professional, it requires first of all, to know what is the practice in the profession. How many teachers- I mean, primarily those who have joined not long ago and are new, are familiar how this whole process of teaching and learning is practiced? Therefore, some training would have to be given in this area. That is a part of making the person professional. Another part of being a professional is to know what are the value systems of that profession. And I am not referring to usual moral high ground-one must be honest; one must be punctual; those are obvious and apply to every individual, irrespective of what profession one is in – but I am referring to the concerns, the priorities, the value systems of an educational organisation. When one becomes a teacher, in order to be a professional, he needs to know the value system of that profession – that is considered important, that is considered to be of higher priority than anything else. For example, is the concern limited to communicating a certain amount of facts to the students? Is that an important concern? Is that a paramount concern? Or the concern is to create an individual who is capable of thinking on his or her own, and is able to tackle unforeseen situations.

In fact, situations that neither the teacher nor the student would have seen ever or experiences before. So in what terms is the priority? Is the priority in terms of conducting an examination and then evaluating it at the end? Or is it really to use that process to understand what are the real competencies that we have developed in the person and with a feedback, as a formative process for further improvement of the education-learning-experience that a student is subjected to? These are the kinds of values which would have to be discussed. And once an organisation develops certain sets of values, then the entrant in that organisation would have to imbibe those values, and then that person is a professional. It should be the primary concern of ours – the Head of the Institution to understand and imbibe it and percolate it down to all the faculty because he is the fulcrum about which many things are suspended. Here could be various methodologies for the purpose but periodic brain storming sessions and interactions with the faculty freely and frankly may be useful. Whenever we happen to meet a faculty member or a student, we get the golden chance to interact in the backdrop of the value system in the back ground, if we

have any. But mostly these chances are frittered as we ourselves have not given enough thought to imbibe the value system nor we are aware of this requirement.

## **TEACHING AS A PROFESSION**

A professional is one who is also efficient-efficient in the sense that one does not have unlimited resources, either time resources or infrastructural resources and with these limited resources he has to get the maximum possible output.

A professional also has to be most effective. Effective means that all those stated goals which a teacher is supposed to pursue, are being pursued to the desired degree. Are they being achieved to the desired degree? Are the measuring methodologies for this in place? Mostly no. If all of those things are being achieved to the desired degree then the person is effective and not otherwise. All these aspects are required to be attended to, before a person can be called a professional. It is said 10 years of experience is 1-year experience multiplied by ten. Should it remain so?

I say that the need of the hour today is that our teachers have to be professional. I am simply reflecting on the fact that, many of us, and perhaps, people before us, were not presented with this kind of challenge and, therefore, we could survive even without being professional. Some may have become professional in the course of acquiring expertise on the job. But the whole thing has become so complex today that without formal interventions or training it is not possible to create the kind of professionals we require.

Let me also emphasize one more aspect and that is, teachers are not just instructors. And I say this word with a great deal of caution. Instruction is considered to be a normal job of a teacher. One has a class of students and then he delivers instructions to them, gives them certain facts, certain concepts, certain processes, certain abilities and he assumes that instruction is all that is needed. What we need to create is autonomous learners. And the teacher has to become part of the learning support system. It is a very difficult role to say 'I am supporting my students in the process of learning' instead of just routine instructions. And the two things are very different, because if one is creating an autonomous learner he is creating a student for the real life that he would have to face afterwards.

A person would have to be able to decide what his or her learning needs are because in the real situation as we go around with our job, we come across new situations we have never tackled before. And we need to know how to tackle those situations. It might mean acquiring new information; it might mean acquiring new skills. But the first task in all of this is the ability to identify our own learning needs. And once we know what our learning tasks are, then we have to be able to plan that learning activities. Hence, the emphasis on the learning process of the faculty. Again the Head of the institution has to work as a facilitator. Flapping some dead rules on the face of the faculty is the surest way to kill initiative. Ramanujam was not very finished and accomplished but Hardy was a great teacher to discover him.

There are many strategies for acquisition of learning. Which strategies are going to be employed, how one is going to break his total task into a number of small tasks, the micro level tasks, what would be the sequencing of those tasks, how would that task be accomplished, when would he assume that he has learnt enough about that task, so that one can move on to the next one; hence, the ability of self-assessment. And in the profession of learning one comes across new situations/ questions and then to be able to put them back on the learning objective and then to say, 'Well', "I have to change my learning plan, the learning activities, the learning objectives and so on and so forth". And when a faculty says so it must be nurtured by the Head of the institution in the right earnest even by pushing routine works on the back burner or delegating them to somebody else. Most of the routine jobs can be handled by some middle level personnel. He has to be a FOUNTAIN-HEAD. The stream flowing from the fountain quenches the thirst of those who fall in the direct path but even others around get drizzle of refreshing and invigorating droplets. One becomes moist with wisdom that the droplets contain.

The situation mentioned above will have to be faced by all of us and we will have to undergo that change. And this is what we have to prepare our students for. And, therefore, if a teacher becomes an instructor by just delivering a certain amount of information, then we have at the other end the passive person who has not learnt

how to understand learning needs or how to go about meeting those learning needs. This is the real reason for students not interested in the classroom lectures. Lectures have to be qualitatively different; a change of paradigm; a difficult but nevertheless accomplishable task. Hence, the need for group discussion and group coordination committees etc. to evolve the strategies which will have to be dynamic and not mechanical or static. These committees are not the dead ends. They should be seen as fertile grounds for blossoming of learning paradigm. Hounding up and hoarding teachers into sheds is not the remedy. Remedy lies in kindling the urge for learning and professionalizing and not in pressure, threat, insecurity and indignity meted out so often at so many places. Can a frightened teacher inject the values of integrity, honesty, truthfulness, courage, dedication and kindle the urge for learning? Never. Are we sure, these attributes are part of our value system? If yes, start with the teachers "What a teacher is, is more important than what he teaches". It has been said "No society can be bigger than its teacher". There is a significant difference between the civil administration and educational administration. These fine nuances need to be fully recognized. The civil administration primarily focuses on development and involves planning, and execution of developmental policy, financial controls and maintaining law and order etc. in the society. Educational administration is about nurturing students and more like gardening which requires development of fertile grounds, putting appropriate manures, irrigation and weeding out weeds. It is more a caring and nurturing system rather than a system of control. So, the requirements of these two systems are different. These nuances are essential.

Viewed thus, creating learners is our major challenge. And that means, that we have to create not only teaching material, not only instructional material but learning-resource material, including use of media to support the learning of persons. A teacher ought to know how to organize. A certain objective has to be set beforehand that one has to be achieved. Now in order to meet that objective, one must have a structured approach and curriculum for that kind of structure. How many of us including the Heads of institutions really know how to develop an effective curriculum? In fact, if a survey is conducted, to ascertain from the teachers to distinguish between curriculum and the syllabus, one would mostly draw a blank. The subtle difference is something that exists between fabric and cloth. We do not really know how to convert that educational objective into a curriculum. That could be an important part of the skill. Then the kinds of teaching, training, learning strategies and, there are a whole variety of them, available today, all these would have to be learnt, acquired and used.

These training skills are extremely important. And these have to be acquired because what we have been entrusted with, is a much more important task of developing the human potential. And, if one does not know, how to go about with one's task, then one will make a mess, as many of us have done in the past and continue doing.

Let me give a quotation. And this comes from a teacher, one of the best known teacher of the century, Prof. Richard Feynman, who is a Nobel Prize winner in Physics. But his greatest qualification is that he is an unsurpassed teacher, I think, the like of him one does not come across easily.

He says:

*"I think, however, that there is not any solution to this problem for education other than to realize that the best teaching can be done only when there is a direct individual relationship between a student and a good teacher, a situation in which student discusses the ideas, thinks about the things and talks about the things. It is impossible to learn very much by simply sitting in any lecture or even by simply doing problems that are assigned".*

What he is saying is the approach to learning and I hope, this is what one will have to practice.

Learning is more about kindling the urge and instruction is more about passing information. Whereas learning occupies the highest place, good instruction may serve as stairs. The latter has a utility but limited. Nevertheless, a teacher having inadequate information will never be able to kindle the urge for learning.

## TEACHING QUOTES

Some quotes are given below:

*“I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework”.*

*“A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron”.* ~ Horace Mann

*“Good teachers are costly, but bad teachers cost more”.* ~Bob Talbert

*“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires”.* ~ William Arthur Ward

*“Who dares to teach must never cease to learn”.* ~ John Cotton Danna

*“To teach is to learn twice”.* ~ Joseph Joubert

*“What a teacher is, is more important than what he teaches”.*

*“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery”.* ~ Mark Van Doren

*“A good teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others”.*

*“The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind”.* ~ Kahlil Gibran

*“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called ‘truth’”.* ~ Dan Rather

*“You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself”.* ~ Galileo Galilei

*“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young”.* ~ Henry Ford

*“We think too much about effective methods of teaching and not enough about effective methods of learning”.* ~ John Carolus S.J.

*“No matter how good teaching may be; each student must take the responsibility for his own education”.* ~ John Carolus S.J.

*“Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers”.* ~ Josef Albers.

*“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited”.* ~ Plutarch

*“God understood our thirst for knowledge, and our need to be led by someone wiser;*

*He needed a heart of compassion, of encouragement, and patience;*

*Someone who would accept the challenge, regardless of the opposition;*

*Someone who could see potential and believe in the best in others....*

*So He made Teachers”.* ~ Author Unknown

*“By learning you will teach; by teaching you will understand”.* ~ Latin Proverb

*“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge”.* ~ Albert Einstein

*“Nine-tenths of education is encouragement”.* ~ Anatole France

*“The true aim of every one who aspires to be a teacher should be, not to impart his own opinions, but to kindle minds”.* ~ F.W. Robertson

*“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand”*. ~ Chinese Proverb

*“Teachers who inspire know that teaching is like cultivating a garden, and those who would have nothing to do with thorns must never attempt to gather flowers”*. ~ Author Unknown

*“The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate ‘apparently ordinary’ people to unusual efforts. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people”*. ~ K. Patricia Cross

*“No Society can be bigger than its teachers”*. ~ Radha Krishnan

*“I do not teach; I inspire”*. ~ Albert Einstein

*“If you plan for a year, plan paddy; if you plan for ten years, plant trees; and if you plan for hundreds of years, plant men”*. ~ Chinese Proverb

*“Teaching should be full of ideas instead of stuffed with facts”*. ~ Author Unknown

*“The average teacher explains complexity; the gifted teacher reveals complexity”*. ~ Robert Brault

*“The best teachers teach from the heart, not from the book”*. ~ Author Unknown

*“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler”*. ~ Albert Einstein

*“To arrive at the simple is difficult”*. ~ Rashid Elisha

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