

A Future Classroom: Not Epitomizing Only Four Walls

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the future classroom in the global perspective. Classroom here cannot be considered as only the sitting arrangement for the students or the physical structure of a room meant for accommodating a group of students. Observing the previous concept and present scenario of the classroom, the journey seems to be very long. From a teacher centered movement, it has been transformed into teacher-taught relationship. Teaching-learning process has been divided into class-learning and out of class learning. This is clearly directing the field of education that in future time the classroom will have a gigantic shape. It will be conceptualized as a total teaching-learning situation including, classroom procedures, classroom layout, sitting arrangement, teaching methods, classroom instruction and interactions, out of class learning situations, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, learning through excursions and field visits, group and cooperative learning, classroom environment, learning environment, physical learning environment, community environment, etc. Classroom procedures as a whole help both the teacher and students to make the learning environment more efficient, productive, and positive. Peer learning, dialogue, collaborative learning, group work, etc. would have been the major classroom features in future classrooms. While working in collaborative groups, students will learn to respect each other and each other's property, ideas and thoughts, equally contribute to discussion and the given assignment, share ideas with the group and think critically. The design of the classroom cannot be fixed in any respect. It will go on changing as per the requirement of the situation, content or the need of the students. For students who will have behavioural problems, one would have to seat them in rows facing the teacher. It would be necessary in such situations to ensure that both the teacher and the student would have been able to see each other at all times throughout a lesson. The face to face interaction between student and teacher would remain the most important factor for making the class lively and controlling the behaviour of the class.

KEYWORDS: Future Classroom, Classroom Layout, Classroom Environment, Learning Environment, Community Environment, Computers, Technology, Multi-media, Excursions, Activities, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom procedures are very important because it helps both the teacher and students to make the learning environment more efficient, productive, and positive. Good behavior and learning go hand in hand, therefore, teaching the rules and expectations are essential in any classroom. For this reason, in the future classroom, teachers must plan on sharing their expectations with the students and building the rules together with them. Rules and expectations must be displayed in posters and written down in both languages around the classroom so that a student may have a visual as support to learn the rules. The different languages should be color coded with red representing the global (English) language and green representing national language. Displaying the procedures in both global and national languages permits the learners to read them in the language they understand. It also allows learners the opportunity to develop their English vocabulary by reading English words that may be new to them.

While the classroom is clearly the dominant setting for learning, the flexibility of classroom instruction is often called into question. Instead of isolating learners in a classroom, many teachers are experimenting with integrating learning into a student's daily life. New learning technologies and mobile devices make it possible for learning to take place at any time, at any place, and (perhaps most importantly) at any pace that the learner desires.



CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Students should be constantly encouraged to participate in classroom discussions, and should be positively reinforced when they participate. Also, they should be advised to allot sufficient time to their classmates to respond and participate in the classroom discussion. Students would be required to raise their hand when they have a question. When students will be working in collaborative groups, they will certainly learn to:

- 1) Respect each other and each other's property
- 2) Respect each other's ideas and thoughts
- 3) Equally contribute to discussion and the given assignment
- 4) Share ideas with the group
- 5) Think Critically!

It is strictly recommended that students should be allowed to come to teacher's desk one by one and not in large groups. If the student has a question or concern, they must be advised to first ask a classmate for help before asking the teacher. If the assistance from the peers would not help, then they can direct question/concern to the teacher for help. If more than two students have similar questions or problems, then teacher should address the issue to the whole class.

Each group of students should have a captain, responsible for gathering and passing out all necessary materials for the activity. The captains only should have access to the storage room. Every week, a rotation process should be there among the students so that every student may have a chance to act as a captain. The teacher will explain and remind the students that they must protect and be precautious when handling classroom materials. Also, the students must share and cooperate with one another.

LAYOUT OF THE CLASSROOM

It is important to consider the way the teacher designs a classroom. Your learning environment must match your teaching style otherwise the appropriate learning outcomes will not be achieved. Classrooms are a formal place of study. Therefore the design and layout of the classroom is an important factor to consider. It reflects the teaching style and curriculum of a particular period of time. If, students typically sit in rows facing the teacher, the learning specifically occurs from teacher to student and the classroom layout reflects this. Teachers expect students to listen and respond only to them. Student to student learning may not occur in such a situation.

Rows are the typical environment for a teacher-centered classroom. Students are aligned in such a way as they all face the front of the class. The teacher conducts the instruction from this front position. This type of physical set up can be an effective method of behaviour management. Groups are typical of student-centered learning. They provide an effective environment for collaborative, cooperative, individualistic and competitive learning. The classroom dynamics are considerably more complex in this environment as the teacher uses facilitating techniques to ensure that students are engaged with the learning process. Students in groups remain situated in close proximity to the other members of the group so they can share knowledge, eye-contact and materials without having to disrupt the other groups in the class. With this in mind, the most appropriate setting for a group is in circles. This negotiates the problem of clumping rectangular desks together where the space may be too great to share these factors (Johnson & Johnson 1991). Grouping to maximize learning requires the consideration of many factors which include appropriate integration of advanced and disruptive students, ensuring racial and cultural diversity, gender balancing and social skill development. The most important thing here is that, groups provide a medium in which diversity within the classroom can enrich individuals, and support the growth of others (Dumas, 2002).

Seating layout can be based on a number of factors including space availability, student learning, behaviour management, teaching style, student personalities and particular year level. However, in all classroom layouts it is important that children can read the board, are free to access equipment and the teacher, and that the teacher can attend to all students. By changing seating arrangements the brain of the students will be subconsciously challenged by forcing them to see the room, their peers and their learning from different perspectives. If students do not extend and challenge their brains during lessons, their brains will start to shut down and cease working to their maximum potential (Tracy, 2000). Novelty and innovation stimulates the brain and changing students seating arrangements every two to three weeks can add to this. Change can also encourage all children to work and cooperate with every other child.



EXCURSIONS AS A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Using excursions as a learning environment encourages students to relate their abstract and conceptual knowledge to specific "places" which makes recall and understanding of this knowledge more meaningful. Excursions are field trips taken by a class to enhance their learning of a topic. By venturing outside school grounds, students are able to take advantage of unique learning environments not normally encountered within the school classroom. They have the opportunity to extend and transfer their knowledge beyond the classroom and learn in a fun, engaging and more stimulating context. This type of learning environments makes use of alternative learning strategies and is beneficial for student learning. It also helps children get first hand real experience with subject matter, which assists them in connecting their new knowledge with what is taught in the class. As such they gain deep understanding to enable them to transfer their theoretical knowledge to situations in the world outside the classroom (Umphrey, 2002). Distinctive excursions may include; museums, zoos, fire and police stations (i.e. work places), marine aquariums, eco-tourist trails, botanical gardens, science centres or planetariums, senior citizen homes, libraries, etc.

All excursions should be designed to fit into curriculum areas and cover key learning areas and skills. Excursions can excite, arouse, interest and inform students. They can open up new worlds, give them insights and new perspectives into subjects and in some cases they just may be the best way to learn. Use of excursions as a pedagogical practice can improve students' attitudes and motivation towards the subject area (Michie, 1998). It is hoped that this enthusiasm will be transferred to the classroom in other subject areas but also be built on, by encouraging students to undertake further research. Excursions are novel and different and are the perfect vehicles for children to apply their classroom knowledge in a "real environment". This will help them become responsible for their own learning, become empowered learners and help them foster a love for learning.

Excursions provide not only alternative learning strategies for students but also provide teachers with alternative teaching methods. Research states that excursions are effective and novel pedagogy and teachers report wanting to use them more frequently. However, for optimal learning benefit the outcomes of the excursion need to be integrated into the set teaching program. Excursions require teachers to use teaching methods that are not the "norm" or regularly practiced. It is an opportunity for teachers to go out of their comfort zone, learn and become confident in new and different teaching strategies (Michie, 1998). It may then encourage them to use alternative novel approaches for other subject areas in the future. This in turn can only improve classroom lessons and make learning more interesting and engaging for their students. Therefore, excursions add variety that is beneficial to both student and teachers.

SOCIALIZATION THROUGH INTERACTION

If a child does not interact well with other students they tend to become isolated both in the social setting and within the classroom. This leads to limited sharing of ideas or cooperation amongst peers. Although these children may learn well individually, even then, this lack of group work and inability to mix with others prevents them from developing both social and academic skills important for a balanced individuality. Excursions enable students to work in small groups, which help them learn and develop skills such as effective oral communication between peers (Michie, 1998), co-operation, working together, taking responsibility and reporting skills. Small group work can also encourage student-driven learning rather than teacher-centered learning.

It is seen as problematic to seat children in the cluster arrangement or in groups in the small classes, because they quickly learn that these arrangements give them plenty of time to fool around. Quite often the teacher and student do not have face to face interaction and the student will take advantage of this because they know that the teacher cannot see what they are doing most of the time. The major behaviour management layout tips may be; move the tables further apart, use tape lines to designate activity specific areas, use visual barriers where they are needed (suggested items: file cabinets, rolling chalkboards and book shelves), put unnecessary items out of sight and out of reach, organize materials for easy use, adjust temperature, adjust height of visual aids, adjust furniture to appropriate height levels, etc.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

It has been observed that children learn in a variety of ways. For example, memorization, hands on, peer or individual learning, problem, inquiry or worksheet based, child or teacher-centered. We suggest that the different ways in which a child learns is partially related to the type of learning environment available. These learning environments may also affect the child's ability and motivation to learn. A number of learning environments, which contribute to the learning of children, are school classrooms, community environment and physical learning environment.

Schools all over the world have implemented computers and computer learning in the daily teaching curriculum, even as early as kindergartens. It has benefitted the teacher as internet allows the teacher to exchange lesson plans and ideas. Computers for the classroom is more efficient and less time is spend in the library searching for books. The internet allows the teacher to find



information for a variety of stimulus. Secondly, students when exposed to computers become more confident in the area of information technology (IT). They develop skills to access information quickly and more efficiently and become seekers of information and evaluators. Fifty years ago students were taught to recite information, and today, they are taught to find information and analyze it. Along with advantages one cannot overlook some of the disadvantages of Computers in Schools. A wide consensus among parents and educators believe that students need to be competent computer users so that they can be prepared for life and the workforce, questions have been raised about the expanding role of computers in schooling and students lives. Excessive use of computer by students lacks the verbal and non verbal cues necessary for the development of social and emotional skills.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

John Dewey (1944) has remarkably quoted about the classroom environment. The only way in which, adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get, is by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence think and feel. Teachers never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. And any environment is a chance environment so far as its educative influence is concerned unless it has been deliberately regulated with reference to its educative effect. School Classrooms are not the only settings for effective learning. More and more educators are using "Out of Classroom" settings as learning environments, where children become educated through experience rather theory. Experiential education is about placing the learner and their learning in a real environment that is relevant to their prior knowledge and the knowledge they will acquire. In the following lines, let's explore a few "Out of Classroom" learning environments and reflect on how these contribute to a child's learning and development.

THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Using the surrounding community as an "out of school" learning environment is a wonderful form of experiential learning. This type of student learning has been referred to as Service Learning (UCLA, 2000). Students actively participate in and serve the needs of the community whilst learning and developing lifelong values and skills, e.g. citizenship, cooperation, responsibility, concern for the community members and the associated social issues. By participating in specific community projects (curriculum related), children develop an understanding of the benefits for both the learner and the community members. By integrating this type of learning into the academic curriculum, traditional classroom learning can be emphasized and extended upon. However, to get the most out using the community as a teaching and learning vehicle, students must have predetermined learning goals and actively participate in their chosen role while critically reflecting on their service learning.

Every individual does not learn in the same way, nor do they have the same learning ability. Some students thrive in school environments whereas others do not. So what happens to those that struggle in the classroom environment? Is there sufficient and appropriate help available to cater to those with special learning needs? Perhaps their learning needs do not fit into the normal classroom structure and environment. Use of natural learning environments (NLE) is a form of alternative education. NLE are considered to be places of education that tap into the natural learning abilities of a student (Webb, 2000). This type of education allows students to harness their natural strengths and learn about what interests them, but at the same time extend their knowledge through curiosity, research and solving problems using trial and error. Equally it helps them to become motivated and inspired learners to strive for and achieve their goals. Perhaps true education is based on inspiration and motivation not memorization. In this environment, educators need to facilitate the learners and encourage them to take ownership of their own learning and their learning environment.

PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Nearly all schools have at least 1 computer in the classroom. In most of the countries all schools have a computer room. The rooms are set up either in a horse shoe style with the desks flush against the walls or in rows. There are Information Technology posters and resources displayed around the room so that students are surrounded by stimulus that relates to the context of the learning. It is hard to suggest how far technology in classrooms will advance in the near future. Maybe classrooms will have web cams in them allowing parents to actually watch their child/children in the classroom from either the home or workforce.

Students will learn to use computers to solve problems, communicate, creative expression locate, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, interpret and evaluate information. If a classroom is designed attractively, effectively and for maximum logistical use, the classroom itself can become an effective teaching and learning tool. The right classroom will encourage particular teaching theories, promote a variety of learning styles and help to manage behavioural problems. Moreover, a mentally stimulating and challenging room can motivate a child's learning, encourage achievement and effort and provide an inviting



environment where they can foster a love for learning. There are a number of important factors to consider when setting up and maintaining a classroom.

Behaviour management issues are always a concern for teachers, especially new teachers or student teachers. While there are many things for a teacher to do in the classroom to reduce the amount of behavioural problems, the physical environment can also be a major behavioural management tool. By going through the above pages one might gain some insight as to what teachers can or should do to encourage good behaviour in the classroom. Classroom design must be considered if you are having behaviour management problems in your classroom.

The arrangement of furniture in the classroom can both benefit and inhibit a student's learning. Before deciding to arrange the furniture in the classroom, teachers need to think about what outcomes they want their students to have. Children feel frustrated when their learning environment does not match their learning style. If this happens then children will become disruptive and inattentive because they may be confused about what they are supposed to be doing. The arrangement of classroom furniture affects the intellectual, social and emotional learning of a student. This is why classroom design is a fundamental aspect of education. The teacher is often the one who arranges the furniture therefore the teacher is influencing the learning environment before they even start teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that for future times the design of the classroom can not be fixed in any respect as the case was in the previous times as well as in the present scenario. It will go on changing as per the requirement of the situation, content or the need of the students. For students who will have behavioural problems, one would have to seat them in rows facing the teacher. It would be necessary in such situations to ensure that both the teacher and the student would have been able to see each other at all times throughout a lesson. The face to face interaction between student and teacher would remain the most important factor for making the class lively and controlling the behaviour of the class. Actually, the future classroom will not epitomize the learning of students within the four walls, rather it will consist of a total teaching-learning situation including, classroom procedures, classroom layout, sitting arrangement, teaching methods, classroom instruction and interactions, out of class learning situations, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, learning through excursions and field visits, group and cooperative learning, classroom environment, learning environment, physical learning environment, community environment, etc. Classroom procedures as a whole help both the teacher and students to make the learning environment more efficient, productive, and positive. While working in collaborative groups, students will learn to respect each other and each other's property, ideas and thoughts, equally contribute to discussion and the given assignment, share ideas with the group and think critically.

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