

Teaching Techniques At University And College

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THERE may be several reasons for deterioration in the quality of higher education in our country. One of the main reasons is the dearth of qualified and trained teachers, particularly at the colleges. In fact, there is serious imbalance between aspirations of society and the performance by teachers, between the needs to be met and the teaching ability of teachers to carry them out. To meet even a part of the growing responsibilities of the teachers, we must develop their teaching ability.

The question that may be raised here is how to do it? There may be several ways for doing this job of enhancing the capacity of the teachers whose responsibilities are really challenging and demanding as they have to deal with more mature section of the students.

This paper has been confined to one of the ways and means namely "the teaching techniques" for academic staff development at the universities and colleges of Bangladesh.

Teaching Techniques: The techniques of teaching are the methods to be used by the teachers for presenting information to students. Used correctly, they provide a framework within which students may improve their knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviours through their initiative and participation.

Over the years, the universities and colleges have been applying several methods. Observers have criticised their adequacy. It may, however, be conceded that to find out one perfect method is really a problem. The reason is simple. Each method has its merits and demerits. We cannot, therefore, depend entirely upon a single method. We have to try several methods. But whether using one or a combination of several ones, they should be consistent with the objectives of teaching.

Formal Lecture: The conventional method of delivering formal lecture to the students is one of the most common approaches to the problem of teaching. Though traditional, the best possible technique even to day is the 'lecture' through which knowledge can be better imparted to the students of the universities and colleges. This paper, therefore, starts with this common and traditional technique of teaching.

Lecture as a technique of imparting knowledge commands several advantages. It is through this technique the students within a stipulated period can gather knowledge of the different aspects of the subjects taught by the teacher. It also helps the students to pursue their studies further and acquire more knowledge on the basis of the guidelines and references given by the teachers.

It is still true that "knowledge is power" and that power is transmitted to the students so that they may be powerful and productive elements in various walks of their practical life.

But in order to make the knowledge really 'power', the lecture must be powerful, substantial and factual. Above all, the lecture must be innovative and creative. Innovation and creativity should be the hallmarks of the lectures to be delivered by the university and college teachers. "The universities have not merely a routine function but a creative work to perform in the handling of young people", observed Butterfield.

Teachers of the universities and college should not remain satisfied with the maintenance of status quo in the preparation of lecture. They have to be creative for the improvement of their lecture. One quality that significantly differentiates a good and dynamic teacher from a poor one is creativity.

Assuming that creativity is an important aspect of the role and responsibility of the teachers, we may like to know what creativity is. Generally creativity means "a talent for unique ideas" required for making the lecture a powerful one. It may be noted, however, that the unique ideas must not only be novel, these must be useful too. For just because an idea is unusual or different does not indicate that it is creative or superior, since it might indicate abnormality as well. Therefore, unique ideas to be creative must respect reality.

But what is the nature of many of the lectures delivered at our universities and particularly at our colleges. Some lectures are delivered for years, together specially at colleges without taking into consideration that there have been tremendous development in the subjects on which lectures are delivered. Those teachers who revise the same lectures for years cannot claim that they are experienced. But their claim is unsubstantial. If a teacher at the universities or colleges teaches, say, for 5 years and he teaches the same facts and imparts the same knowledge contained in the notes with which he went to the class on the first day of his starting the service career 5 years back and claims that he has 5 years' experience, any person with the discerning eye and careful examination shall have to conclude that he is not at all a teacher of 5 years' experi-

ence. In fact, he is a teacher of one year's experience revised for 5 years.

One may ask what makes the quality of a lecture, the universally accepted method of imparting knowledge to the students poor? The answer, to my mind, is that the two tasks—preparation of knowledgeable lecture and the research are not to be separated; for each makes a call on originality, and it can be said exhilaration in one part of the work makes for liveliness for other part too. In fact, the more, we emphasise the kind of teaching-function which I have been trying to describe, the more important it becomes for us to stress the general connection between teaching and research. "The two may not be always or necessarily related. But serious dangers arise if in general we come to regard them as divorced from one another".

A teacher performs his teaching task in a different way if he has done a substantial piece of research. In this case he knows not merely the curriculum but also the very process by which knowledge is acquired. It is best of all if teaching is combined with live research and with original work. Only those who are continually probing into the body of their knowledge, and trying to unthink last year's thoughts, can convey, along with information, the thrills of the real quest for the truth necessary for the development of the students.

When teaching is divorced from research, it seems that the curriculum quickly becomes 'taped'. It settles into conventional lines, and what ought to be a field for the lively play of thought, simply hardens into a rigid teaching subject. A given curriculum may require the teacher to do no more than skim the surface of his pool of knowledge. Still, the character what he has to offer will depend upon the pool having a considerable depth somewhere. Or, as one writer said, "it is better that both teacher and student should catch their knowledge not from a stagnant pool but from a running stream".

In any case the research is one of the most important functions of a university and college teachers; and but for this he cannot impart real knowledge to his pupils.

But at our universities and particularly at our colleges research is a very minor function of the teachers. At the colleges, it is virtually nil. Hence the lecture as a technique of imparting knowledge and thus power to the students is not so effective as it ought

to be. I feel that a teacher whose lecture is not based on research is, as it were, a toothless tiger.

There are again reasons for not undertaking research activities by our teachers. First, the most important reason, as the teachers assert, is the lack of reading materials such as text-books, journals, manuals, commission's reports, parliamentary debates and others. It is a fact that at our universities and particularly at our colleges, there is great dearth of reading materials. The libraries particularly at the colleges and younger universities, are extremely ill-equipped.

The defective system of promotion does not encourage college teachers to be research-minded. Here the seniority and only years and not deeds are counted knowing it fully well that "men live not in years but in deeds". "Publish or perish", the principle adopted in the advanced countries for promoting a teacher from lower to higher grade is not adopted so rigorously at our universities and at the college no importance is attached to this.

However, the financial aspect of research cannot be overlooked. Finance is the fuel and oil without which the research machine cannot function. Our administration responsible for universities and colleges spend millions of Taka for the salaries, allowances and other matters, but very little is set aside for research expenses. If the vital need for research is agreed upon, expenditure on reading materials should be enhanced. A generous appropriation in the budget of the government is more than a must. "It should be remembered that any penny spent on research is an investment on enriching the knowledge which will be rapidly restored in thousands of Taka to the students in particular and the country at large".

Until we have enough funds for enriching our libraries with proper reading materials, we may adopt alternative methods for at least some improvement with our existing teaching manpower and reading materials of the universities and colleges.

In order to enrich the knowledge of our teachers at the universities and colleges, there should be a plan for sending them to advanced countries e.g., U.K., U.S. for a stipulated period. In fact, this was done in the past and some of our teachers obtained higher knowledge through such plan. But now owing to the shortage of foreign exchange, it is not possible, as stated by the government, to send the teachers abroad for higher knowledge. (To be continued).