

Learning a Mental Paradigm

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INTRODUCTION : The most important pursuit of teaching is causing to learn. You can be an outstanding teacher but would all come to nothing if your pupil does not learn. The old pedagogic belief that teacher - taught - curriculum alone formed the triumverate of education has to be modified as teaching - taught - learning. The important question is – How to ensure learning of what one teaches in the classroom.

MIND AND LEARNING : Causing to learn is the biggest challenge for a teacher. How can one ensure learning when one is simultaneously engaged in teaching a variety of minds each with its own singular quality, ability and predisposition ? When one is teaching, the whole effort is to be directed towards the minds of the pupil. Learning is nothing but a change in the conscious/unconscious structures of the mind which in turn stores what is learnt. Just as the hard disk of a computer stores information via the altered magnetic states the human mind stores information (and something more than that) through the altered states of structures within the mind. At a higher level all teaching is an attempt to raise the level of mind to a higher state of consciousness where by learning is made a joy. Teaching is not only an attempt to modify manifested behaviour, it is an attempt to constantly rejuvenate the inner being and the mind to a higher level.

EVALUATING LEARNING : The traditional tools i.e., tests and examinations are not capable of measuring the understanding level acquired by the mind, since the mind functions in its own special way and is beyond any kind of quantifications. For the teacher therefore it is a challenge to assess whether the mind is indeed developing along correct path.

For achieving the required impetus the following measures will help :-

- (a) Teacher should encourage creative questioning by the children.
- (b) In examinations ask questions which require application rather than promote rote memorisation.
- (c) Wherever possible use problem – solving approach.
- (d) Involve parents and other teachers in the overall growth of child.
- (e) Use methods like creative writing, creative skill development to promote divergent thinking.

WHY SHOULD I LEARN : This is one question that a child keeps asking himself. It is an important duty of the teacher to explain to the child the advantages of learning. Learning is acquisition of wisdom. We learn because we exist and our mind has been endowed with an unlimited capacity to absorb learning. Human life is a great gift of the creator and at every instant we must grow final destination being self realization. To achieve one must continually learn from nature and from all possible agencies. Unless the mind gradually climbs the higher panes of consciousness, learning will remain incomplete. Thus, to reach the Summum – bonum of life we must always learn knowledge is unlimited. It is in the books, in all kinds of media and in our environment. However, all this knowledge has no measuring unless our mind is prepared to absorb it. Moreover, it is in the mind which stains out wisdom from knowledge. Thus without a receptive mind all knowledge is a waste. Children therefore need to be told that unless

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they learn they will not develop a mind essential to understand the secrets of nature and about themselves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIND :

(a) In its functioning the mind is a masterpiece of creation. It **ABSORBS** all that is offered to it and what it absorbs automatically finds way into one of the unlimited mental structures. Thus more and more information is absorbed never mental structures are opened which continually learn from nature and from all possible agencies.

(b) Mind functions best when it is **QUIET**. This is logical since the relevant structure is then least disturbed. In exploring the unconscious therefore we should at a given moment, open only one structure so that the vast energy of the unconscious is available for the desired action. The action that springs from a quiet mind causes no confusion. It does not mean that rest of the structures lie dormant, on the contrary they all support the required action. For this mind has to be trained.

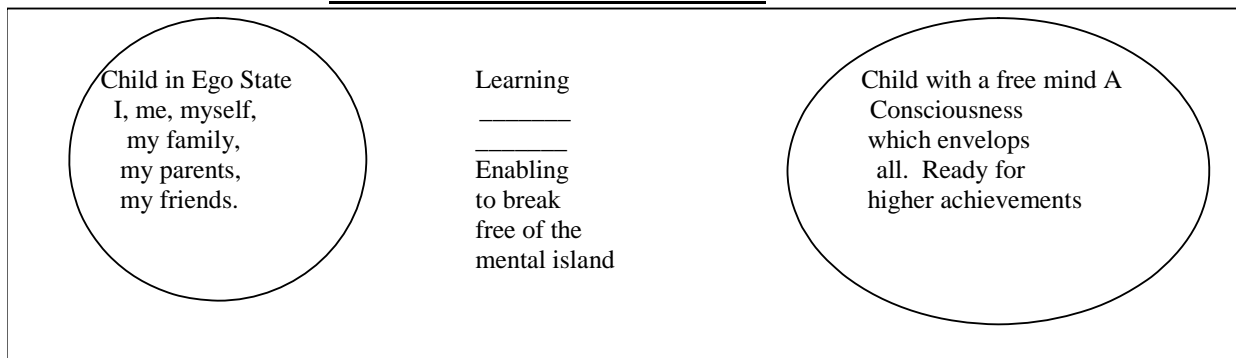
(c) Mind **COMMUNICATE** best when least disturbed. It we are in a state of non – equilibrium due to negative environmental forces

(d) Mind is like a deep ocean in which billions of aspects that make up our qualities are floating. The aim is to strike the right combination to generate energy in a given direction. Thus our teaching should aim to focus on right combinations to wake up the inner being of child.

(e) Mind is more than just the **ACTIVE** aspect of the brain. Whereas brain is pure logic, mind is pure consciousness. It is through the use of mind that we react to the higher purposes of existence. Whereas the logical brain may ask the child to copy in the exam the pure consciousness of mind will reveal the higher truths and tell the child that it is more honourable to fail than to copy.

(f) Mind which are ruled by the **EGO** surround themselves with an impenetrable ring which creates what is called a **MENTAL ISLAND**. For most of us it is very difficult to move out of this mental island/block Our teaching will have to enable the child to break free of this island and join the vast and free expanses of the oceanic mind which will lead to exhibition of rare and exceptional qualities.

IMPENETRABLE MENTAL ISLAND



(anxiety, frictions, tensions etc) then communication between minds becomes difficult. Also minds with only a few open structures will find it difficult to communicate with higher minds which have a large number of open structures. This has important implication for training. Children must understand our communications clearly. Language we speak is also related to mental structures.

Role Of Teacher : Thus role of a preceptor is to open the relevant structure of the child’s mind so that the enormous mental energy is released and learning becomes permanent. To achieve this the teacher will have to create the right kind of environment for the child to emulate. The following steps will help :_

(a) **Integrate yourself** : We all have disintegrated selves. As a teacher all our self should merge with the self as a teacher. This

is the highest level a teacher can reach. Once that happens children find it easy to follow the teacher. Most of our ancient Gurus were examples of pure self merging with self as a teacher.

(b) **Set high standards** : Never underestimate children. Set high standards for yourself and also for students. Higher standards challenge the mind to achieve better. Whenever you set out to do a task do it well. Any compromise with excellence will lower standards and adversely affect the mind of the children.

(c) **Personal Conduct** : Poor standards of personal conduct by teachers and parents creates aberrations in the minds of the children who then floats around rudderless. Teachers must follow what they preach, else the chaos created in the minds may open up wrong structures and lead to divisive persona.

(d) **Environment** : The school and society must join hands to promote a learning environment. At present the lament of **IVAN ILLICH** that for most of us learning is curtailed by our obligation to attend the school is quite justified. It is indeed quite satisfying thought that we can all put in our bit to develop the minds of our children.

(e) **Language and communication** : Most of us do not realize that quality of language we speak impact on the mind of the children. Also if you refine your language and communication it helps to dissolve the Ego which further leads to strengthening of the

mind. Anyone with a bloated sense of Ego can never be an effective teacher. He can never train a mind.

(f) **Be creative** : Right from the moment you enter the class and till you leave, be different and unpredictable. Most of the teachers fail to excite the mind because they follow the beaten track. There is nothing original about them. As stated earlier mind will open up (its structures) only when it is faced with something unstructured / unpredictable. While teaching it is often seen how a new technique or lesson or experiment excites the child. That is when the mind is most active.

The Challenge Of Learning : The challenge of learning has to be faced by every child and it is the duty of every teacher to help the child in this vital enterprise. Challenge of learning, once the mind is prepared will include learning about one's enrolment, thereafter the secrets of nature and finally about the self, the Summum - Bonum of all learning. The earlier the child learns to face this challenge the better.

Conclusion : Teaching is meaningless if it does not cause learning and for learning to be effective it should leave a new structure opened in the mind so that whenever required, recall is possible. Learning is the biggest challenge for a child and for teachers engaged in the noble task of preparing the future mind of the nation. Causing to learn, is even a bigger challenge. Swami Vivekananda has captured it best when he said that the "Aim of education is to make what is internal, external".



Main emphasis of education should be on the assimilation of values and ideas rather than on gathering of information. Teach people of the strength that is already within them

Swami Vivekananda
