

**Building Teacher Capability**

**The Need for Teacher Assessment and  
Development**

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The Potter's Earth

# **Building Teacher Capability: The Need for Teacher Assessment and Development**

*“Today you lead the school. Tomorrow your students will lead the world”*

- Unknown

Competent teachers create confident adults. In fact, research shows that a teacher who is inspiring and well-informed is the most important factor influencing student achievement. Thus, it is crucial that both new and experienced teachers receive the right kind of support and training, so that they may contribute effectively to student development.

The Potter's Earth organized a Teacher's Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2016 with the objective of bringing teachers, principals and educators together to discuss this pertinent topic. The panel discussion was on the topic *“Building Teacher Capability: The need for Teacher Assessment and Development”*. The four panellists were Ms. Malati Kalmadi, Secretary, Kaveri Group of Institutes; Brigadier Rajiv Divekar, Director of Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies; Mr. Sunil Mangwani, Consultant and Trader in the Forex market; and Ms. Anamika Dasgupta Sharma, Founder and CEO of The Potter's Earth. The panel was moderated by Mrs. Mita Banerjee, seasoned journalist, educator and Founder of Team Miracle, a support group for paraplegic soldiers, cancer patient orphans and destitute women. The invigorating discussion threw up many important issues and challenges faced by schools and teachers as well as some practical solutions for teacher assessment and growth.

## **Necessity for teacher training and assessment**

In the Indian education sector, there is no hierarchy of positions. The progress of a teacher is measured simply by the number of years that he/she has been teaching. There has been no formal structured assessment or appraisal system for the teaching world.

Mrs. Malati Kalmadi having worked in the field of education for the past 30 years, right from Kindergarten to Post-graduation has found, during her journey, a lack of teacher development and this has been one major hurdle in establishing quality in education. According to her, her focus in her institutes has been on teacher development. She believes that the concept of teacher development is very new to India because here we do not have quality standards in education. In order to have a standard education we need to understand where the teacher is today. Most teachers come from a B. Ed. or M.Ed college, and may be trained in any subject, even if it is at the KG level or any other level, the teachers are trained and they have a preservice of education. When the teacher joins a

school or college, he/she is on his/her own and doesn't know where he/she stands since there is no performance analysis in the field of education. In the corporate world there is performance analysis, there is a criterion and there are appraisals that employees have to go through. However, in the field of education there are no such appraisals happening regularly. Mrs. Kalmadi states that in her institutes they have devised a 360 degree evaluation of their own for the past few years. Her concern is that after having gained that understanding about the teachers ability and competency, how can one address that and, how can that gap be filled. She believes that is for this that trainers are needed. Unfortunately there is no record of trainers like these in India and institutes are left to their own in this area.

The student is expected to be a life- long learner, but unless the teacher is also a learner for life, it will not be possible to address the changing needs of society and education. Thus for the progress of the field of education in India, the teacher must wear the cap of a life-long learner. It is for this purpose that appraisals are required to identify the gap in competency levels of teachers. This area of teacher development which has so far not been tapped in India requires a lot of focus in this day and age. Information is available at the click of a button but a teacher needs much more than that. Teachers are so busy with the day to day affairs of the students and other school work that they do not get the time to train themselves. When teachers join a school or college, they have mentors assigned to them to help them get adjusted, but after that there is no regular in-service training that is given to them.

According to Anamika Dasgupta Sharma, Founder and CEO of The Potter's Earth, through her years of corporate experience has found there to be a huge focus on continuous professional development of employees. When, as The Potter's Earth, she was able to get an inside look at the education world, she found that there is a lot happening and schools are trying their best to do something, but lacking a professionally guided process.

There is teacher development in schools but this is limited to the teacher's role in the classroom in teaching the subject. Dr. Mujumdar has also famously said that just because a teacher knows the subject, it does not mean that he/she can teach it.

MBA courses and other post-graduate institutes are doing a huge service to ready young people for the corporate world. They are taught their job, but their job is not something that is difficult to teach them. However, the value system is something that you cannot teach because young people already come with certain early experiences from their childhood. These early inputs from parents are not structured. It is not possible to structure one's home environment but the inputs that teachers can give can be structured. Teaching a teacher to impart value systems is a very important part of providing education to students.

Brig. Rajiv Divekar, Director of Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, states that since his institute is a management institute, it is different from the school. They have the

flexibility to in terms of curriculum, that is, the subjects and courses that they run. He believes that since the business world is dynamic, Symbiosis is always coming up with new programs and is forever evolving. New courses and programs requires faculty that needs to be able to teach these programs. Now there are two things that are required at the faculty level. One is the knowledge of the subject which needs to be updated time and time again and one is the knowledge of the recipient that is the student who is also constantly changing in today's world. The needs and interests of the students in today's day and age are very different. Teachers need to be in sync with them otherwise the students are going to lose interest and not attend classes.

Brig. Divekar recounts a cartoon he saw in which a Kindergarten student is being dragged by the parents. The child is saying "what are they going to teach that I can't learn on Google". While this cartoon may be at a KG level, it holds true for any level or class. Everything is available online but teachers must be able to go beyond that. Teachers must keep up with technology to get through to the students. for instance, there is MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) or flip classroom which faculty can use. Using modern methods of technology will help students learn better.

Another problem is that often teachers teach in a manner that they think is right, assuming that all the students will understand. So if a teacher is good at something he/she will teach in that manner without caring about whether the recipients are actually being able to understand the subject. Research has shown that there are four types of recipients. The first type of recipient is that who needs to be explained everything in great detail. The second type is that who, when told something, can immediately understand it, without much explanation. Next, are those who, when told, are able to apply it at once. And the fourth lot, when told is able to not only apply to the same field but can extrapolate and apply it in another field as well. There is always a mix of these types in the classroom and it is up to the faculty to find out what kind of students there are in the class because each one of these types needs to be addressed differently. If a teacher addresses the students, assuming that they are at a particular level, then the others will get disinterested because they will not connect with the teacher. The faculty needs to be able to identify the class and teach accordingly. Only then will the students respect the teacher and understand and love the subject.

It is for this, that teachers need training. Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies has recently started a unique course on andragogy for teaching post graduate students. This is for teaching grown- ups because that calls for a different kind of teaching than for the undergraduate students.

(Question : what can you teach students at that age and what is your role as a teacher. How could you become a teacher without the training in any institute? And what value systems can you impart at that stage of life?)

Mr. Sunil Mangwani, parent of 3 children and Consultant and Trader in the Forex market has found that, when he talks to his children about their school experiences, they are not happy when the teacher only teaches the subject and does not go beyond that. Additionally, Mr. Mangwani is also associated with a corporate that is into financial education for adults. His students range anywhere between 40 to 80 years of age and are people who, after retirement, want to make a living out of trading. Mr. Mangwani along with the other instructors has been given very specialized training and has to ensure that the students are happy. If they are not happy, the corporate will lose face. Mr. Mangwani states that he got into this field because of his technical experts. He feels that he was not good at teaching, to begin with. He soon realized that he needs to go beyond just providing technical information. He learnt that he needs to put himself in the shoes of the student's shoes and understand what they want. Only then will they be happy and satisfied. This is where teacher training comes in.

Question: our teachers may be coming in with a phd or masters. Would they like to go through an assessment? What sort of assessment can we do and how do we make them amenable to go through an assessment?

### **Structured Assessments for Teacher Development**

Mrs. Kalmadi states that during their B.Ed/M.Ed. training, all teachers are taught about the developmental milestones of children in the pre- primary, primary and secondary sections. They are trained to be understanding of the developmental needs of students at each of these levels. However, somehow when it comes to the classroom, teachers tend to focus more on teaching the subject, whether it is English, Maths or Science and forget the age of the students they are teaching. Mrs. Kalmadi believes that this is a very sensitive area that needs to be dealt with effectively.

While transacting the curriculum, it is important for teachers to understand that there is another side to the learner. Teachers should think about the child in the learner. They are usually so concerned with the learning capacity of the student that they forget about the child inside the learner - the child who is going to become an adult tomorrow and join the workforce. The employability of the child all depends upon the child growing up into a responsible and capable adult. This is what educational institutes need to remember - that we have to take care of the child within the learner to be able to create an adult who is very sound for employability. This is one area in teacher development that we need to keep stressing upon.

(Question: can we have structured assessment for them? They may think I am competent, they may think they are qualified. How can we make a structured assessment/ how can we carry it forward?)

According to Brig. Divekar, while there is a need for some sort of structure, teacher assessment should not be totally structured. Every subject is taught differently and thus one cannot have the same thing applying across the board. This would kill creativity. Teachers need to be creative and creativity comes from the passion that the teacher has. Only if the teachers are passionate can they be creative. Brig. Divekar believes that the purpose of teachers is to put in the minds of students subject matter and thoughts such that they may remember or retain it, not just learn it by rote.

This will only happen if there is a connect that is established between the student and teacher. And the student, by virtue of that connect, wants to learn. If that passion is brought to the student by the teacher through the teacher's passionate teaching then that connect will take place. No amount of structured training given to the teacher can bring that in. However, because there are certain norms that need to be followed and some results that have come up based on research, there does need to be some amount of structured teaching. After all, we've all studied mathematics in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> class with different teachers but there will be a particular teacher we remember. We remember that particular teacher, not because of what they taught but because of how they taught it. Therefore, according to Brig. Divekar, structured teaching is required once in a while, to inform students about the new rules or new technology or research results but by and large teaching should be left to the faculty. If teachers are given that freedom, they can really come out with being creative.

According to Ms. Dasgupta Sharma there are two aspects that are important in the assessment and development of teachers in their mid-life. She suggests that so far we've always been looking at our teachers only through one lens, which is how is she or he performs in class and how she or he is teaching a particular subject. This, again is evaluated through the narrow lens of the marks the child is securing. She believes that first and foremost, it is important to have a holistic view of a teacher's personality - subject matter expertise is just one aspect. According to Ms. Dasgupta Sharma there are 4 other aspects to teaching, it is only about 20% that is subject- matter expertise. The remaining 80% is about other things such as collaboration with parents. It is about the teacher and parent forming a supportive ecosystem for the child to nurture and grow. Another aspect is whether the teacher is being a role model for the school that is, is an external person looking at the teacher and saying "I want to send my child to this school where this teacher teaches". Apart from being a good teacher, is she/he being a responsible member of that school community? Is she/he being a good colleague? Is she/he sharing knowledge? Is she/he being a good employee? Thus there are a whole lot of other things that form the teacher's personality. Another important thing is that the only way to address this fear of being judged is to make the process extremely non-threatening and have a partnering process with the teacher. One can only show the teacher a mirror but looking at the mirror and deciding to change the way you look and the way you behave has to be the decision of the

teacher. Finally, if one keeps taking a 'tell' approach to a teacher or to any adult learner, adult learning will never happen.

According to Mrs. Kalmadi, the leadership of the institute plays a very important role in teacher development. Teacher development is a process and this process has to be the vision of the institute. This vision has to be shared with the staff from day 1. The orientation of the institute itself has to be one of learning and change. Once that is established then there is a give and take between the staff because everyone understands the vision. If the vision is learner centric, and oriented towards creating a safe environment for the school, then whatever is done by the staff, they will keep this principle in mind. It is important to come down to the core principle of the institute first and make the school aware of it. This can only be done by the leader of the institute. Mrs. Kalmadi's request to principals today is to sit down with the staff and share the vision. If they keep the vision to themselves without sharing it with others, then teacher development becomes a threatening situation for the teachers because they are unaware of what they need to do.