

Significance of Specific Teaching skills in Overall Adult Learning Environment

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Abstract:

Quality education is on everyone's mind today. Be it a student, the parents, a teacher, the institutions providing them, and above all the government. Efforts have been made by all the stakeholders to create an environment conducive for holistic learning. From changing the education policy to setting benchmarks, a lot has been done to create a framework that will achieve multiple objectives of the country like national growth, equality in the society, personal development, and national integration.

With the advent of online learning the tools of teaching as well as the skill sets required for teaching have undergone a paradigm shift. This holds true at all levels of education from childhood to adult learning. A teacher today needs to constantly upgrade his knowledge as well as the skills required to deliver education effectively. Particularly in case of adult learning, communication skills, technological skills, and understanding and implementing adult learning principles have become essential skills that a teacher must develop and upgrade constantly for effective delivery of knowledge. This study is an attempt to understand the significance of

these teaching skill sets in the overall learning environment.

Key words: *Quality education, Learning environment, Adult learning, Adult learning principles, Teaching skills*

Introduction

In the last couple of years and particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and after, focus shifted to providing online education. A teacher sitting at a remote place is able to reach hundreds and thousands of students sitting at far away locations across the globe. A lot of institutions have come up to deliver curriculum and skill based education online. Even the traditional universities have woken up to the new reality of online education. In light of this new and evolving scenario it is utmost important to redefine and realign the pedagogy of teaching and also the skills thereof.

In online education the biggest challenge faced by the teacher is to understand whether the content being delivered are well understood or not. Due to lack of face to face communication it is difficult to understand

responses of the students. Although the queries can be addressed through question answer session. In traditional offline teaching the teacher is able to adjust mode of teaching depending upon the responses he/she receives from the students.

The other challenge in online education is to use effective communication to deliver the contents to the students. Good communication skills are essential to explain and present the concepts to be understood by students.

It is one thing to understand the adult learning principles and another to constructively utilize them for teaching purpose. It is a skill that the teacher has to acquire to fruitfully utilize these principles in teaching.

Another skill that plays an important role is the ability to use the technology efficiently. The technological knowhow and the skills required to handle the technology are a must for a teacher. Choosing the best medium of delivery can go a long way in getting the attention and improving the understanding of the students.

A good teacher is able to evince keen interest in the subject he teaches. For that he should not only possess in depth knowledge about the subject but also have the skills necessary to deliver that knowledge to the students. The challenge is even more in the prevailing scenario of online teaching where gauging the students' attention, level of understanding, and level of interest is in itself a challenge. Having right skills will definitely help teachers to address these problems.

Statement of the problem

Today's adults are ambitious, hardworking, and focused. At the same time there are distractions which mainly emanate from the pressure of performing in workplaces, family pressure as well as from self-expectations. In traditional set up or in distance online learning environment these distractions layout. Teachers on the other hand need to

comprehend these problems are try to work out a solution that will help adults learn better. This requires the teacher to develop specific skills in order to tackle problems related to adult learning. This study is carried out to identify the different problems in adult learning and the skills required by teachers to handle these problems.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the challenges faced by teachers in adult learning environment.
2. To understand the important skills required in adult learning environment.
3. To understand the significance of specific teaching skills in adult learning.

Research questions

The study tries to answer following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in delivering knowledge to adult students?
2. What skills the teacher need to develop to deal with the challenges prevalent in adult learning?
3. What impact these skills have on teacher's efficiency and also on students?

Scope of study

It is important for teachers today to understand the importance of the skills required to deal with the dynamics involved in teaching adults. This study will try to understand specific problems and the skills required to deal those problems. Also the study will try to understand the impact of these skills on the teacher and also the students.

Limitations

For the study is carried out using secondary data drawn from different journals, books, internet, and research papers. In the absence primary data, the conclusions cannot be backed by empirical evidence. Apart from this, there are many skills that a teacher is required to possess which are essential to make teaching effective. But the focus is only on specific skills and their impact on teacher's efficiency. Therefore, the study does not address the problem in its entirety.

Sources of data

For this research qualitative research method has been used. The data is collected from secondary sources. Data is collected mostly from research papers, books, journals, website etc., for this study.

Understanding the concepts

Adult learning and adult learning principles

Adult learning is basically a situation where adults pursue education in a formal setting. As is the case in colleges, universities, professional coaching classes, and also in corporate training. This also includes adults pursuing education to learn a skill.

Adults are self-motivated when it comes to learning. They know precisely what they want to learn and why they have to learn. A teacher normally cannot direct them in the course of their learning. Meaning that they are self-directed in the course of their journey. Another interesting fact is that adults want to learn by doing things which are more or less aligned o their task or work.

The adult education differs from child education in respect of the mode of delivery. In case of child education teaching method works best where as in case of adult learning facilitation approach may prove to be most effective. The reasons for this can be found in the adult leaning principles. Adults possess certain level of knowledge and

experience. Unlike children they cannot be taught what you want to teach them. They learn those things which they think are important to them. It has been observed that many agencies are currently involved in the provision of adult education and yet misapplying the adult education principles.

Challenges in adult learning

Time management: Adult learners are burdened with many responsibilities and commitments. This puts restriction on time. Adults are not able to devote sufficient time for structured learning. Hence they prefer institutions offering flexible learning schedule. Teachers, therefore, need to understand this fact and make sure that student's personal obligations do not become an obstacle.

Motivation: Teachers often struggle with students for whom the motivation for learning is necessity rather than interest. It can also be hard when attention is divided between different responsibilities. It is important to find a course with content that inspires and can be immediately applicable to our professional needs.

Anxiety: Most adults take up advanced studies in order to enhance their career prospects. This creates anxiety with regard to the outcomes as considerable amount of time, money, and more importantly the future is at stake. This creates lot of pressure on learners.

Back to school: going back to learning when we've had a break can be hard. Adult learners often feel outside their comfort zones when a number of years have passed, or if they didn't have the best experience before, but returning to study doesn't have to mean returning to school.

An old dog learning new tricks: Adult learners tend to be more established in their ways and more resistant to change. Maturity and profound life experiences influence learning and can lead to reluctance to accept new ideas, which is the enemy of learning.

The reality is that aging does affect learning – adults tend to learn less rapidly with age. However, depth of learning increases and the ability to navigate knowledge and skills to extraordinary personal levels. Adult learners recognise the direct relevance of learning to their life and are better at learning content that is oriented towards solving problems; practical knowledge that will improve skills, facilitate work and boost confidence. Moreover, learning itself improves the mind, so speed of learning does increase with practice.

Important skills for teachers in adult education

Interpersonal skills: Interpersonal skills are those abilities needed to communicate, interact and work effectively with individuals and groups. Teachers with exceptional interpersonal skills are strong verbal and nonverbal communicators who interact through gestures, eye moments, different postures, and so on. Good communication skills, empathy, positive motivation, effective and positive body language, and humor are essential to develop good interpersonal skills.

Adaptability and willingness to learn: A teacher plays different roles in different situations while discharging his duties as a teacher. Sometime he is a counselor, sometimes he is a friend, sometimes he is a guide, and sometimes he is an invigilator, and so on. This requires that a teacher adjust successfully his thoughts, emotions, and actions as per the situation. This skill of adapting to different situations successfully is called adaptability.

Another quality required in a teacher is the willingness to learn new things. Technology and teaching methods are constantly evolving. Willingness to learn new things helps the teacher stay relevant in the changing scenarios and improve his performance as a teacher.

Respecting differences and diversity: It is important for a teacher to understand the dynamics associated with diverse campuses and how diversity can provide a rich social environment that can promote students' learning and development. How teachers engage with diversity in the classroom can play a critical role in student experiences, satisfaction, and learning outcomes. This skill is essential to reduce distractions which are a hindrance in learning. Respecting differences can help encourage different points of view to come forward and add new perspective to learning.

Results and discussion

Adult education has its own inherent problems. The roots of which can be found in adult learning principles. The complexities of distance learning can add to dilemma of teachers, who adjust and adopt to these complexities. The biggest challenge for the teacher is to motivate students and reduce the distractions in learning. As such there are many skills which are essential for a teacher to develop but the ones under study play a more critical role in effectively discharging teacher's duties.

The importance of interpersonal communication is needed to help teachers to know the students more closely and understand their requirements and needs. Good interpersonal skills also help the teacher in discharging his duties as a counselor as it helps build a good rapport with the students which helps them to freely discuss their issues.

Adaptability skills helps the teacher navigate through diverse range of learners, interact with parents, new colleagues, and integrate with new information and methods of teaching. It helps in improving job satisfaction and lower attrition.

For better learning outcomes it is important to bring about cohesion in the classroom. Since learners come from different

backgrounds, there are bound to be differences in opinion. These difference in opinion can at times lead to clashes within the classroom. This can become a big barrier in learning. It is not possible to iron out the differences, but by developing the environment of friendliness and mutual respect, the teacher can alearning experience for all the students.

Conclusion

In the era of twenty first century, the role of a teacher has become more challenging. Complexities are ever increasing and teachers are required to hone specific skills for becoming an effective teacher. Interpersonal skills, adaptability and willingness to learn, and respecting differences and diversity have a big role to play in today's adult education system. Teacher with these skills is able to effectively and efficiently deliver knowledge to students by creating an atmosphere of participation, friendliness, respect, and fun.

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