

DIALOGUE FOR TRANSFORMING CLASSROOMS
INTO LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Learning community consists of group of people those who collaboratively explore the world around themselves and keep on exploring the knowledge from different points of view which will finally lead to better practices in the society for sustainable future. The concept of learning community is not new rather it exists right from age of early man. The nomads, the group of people, even a tribe is a kind of learning community. The present paper has come up with an idea that how a classroom with mere some of the practices can be transformed as community of learning. The concept of the paper came to the researcher mind looking to the changed scenario of education during the past years as well as the pandemic. The practices followed in the traditional classroom needs to be updated with the time and the needs of the changing time. The paper highlights the points that why there is need for the learning communities. It briefly discuss about the difference between traditional and dialogic interactions. Followed by this it highlights about what actually learning communities mean, essential practices and challenges along with conclusions.

Keywords: *Community, Learning Community, Dialogue*

In recent years, classroom researches have been focussing on good practices, approaches, methods and techniques of teaching- learning and its implementation in the classroom for improved outcomes. Ample factors have been explored directly and indirectly which can boost the learning abilities and capabilities of pupils. In turn pedagogic patterns of teachers over a period of time also needs to be adapted looking to the changing needs of scenario. Learning is intricately depended upon many factors, and it happens by providing proper environment. There are some common observation about learning which indicates about how a teacher needs to structure the life in our classrooms and schools. Learning happens when the brain forms connections among experiences that engage students.

When the brain sees connections, it spontaneously creates meaning (Caine & Caine, 1994), and this activity keeps the brain active and focused (Jackson, 2001). The conscious information obtained via instruction, even if not through an official instructor or regular classroom settings, is one of the definitions of learning. Meta-knowledge regarding the subject topic is also a part of the learning process (Gee, 1991). It is the learners' responsibility to create new knowledge by building on what they already know and developing attitudes and values that are formed by their own life experiences and the broader social and cultural context. In order to exert more influence over their surroundings,

students must constantly construct new patterns, schema, tactics, and rules. It is by trying, looking at many models and commenting on the results that students come up with and develop guidelines that meet their own unique demands. When it comes to education, it's all about community (Vygotsky).

Culture, language, and cognition all work together to shape how people learn new things. Classroom teaching-learning, pedagogies, strategies, and methods which are generally followed in the classroom are based upon the communication pattern in which teacher is sole authority of the knowledge and try to disseminate content related to different subjects to the students via lecture method. Even assessment and evaluations strategies of examinations are conducted to test the knowledge/information gained by the student which is disseminated by the teacher. The traditional practices rarely place any importance in the classroom to student's voice and his/her individual experiences. Though a lot has been researched and recommended for improvement in classroom teaching-learning practices. If we have look at the seating arrangements in the traditional classroom, there is one teacher commanding the whole class. He/she takes the front place as well as the sole authority of taking important decisions related to teaching-learning process in the classroom. Whereas the communities established for the purpose of learning never support such autocratic practices. Rather learning communities possesses democratic atmosphere and shared learning goals and decisions.

Need for Learning Communities:

The information age and the pandemic have changed the teaching-learning scenarios to a great extent. Previously without ICT, the practices followed by the teachers for the teaching-learning were different because teacher's responsibility was related to supply of information, data, as well as knowledge. But the changed scenarios place teachers and the teaching community with different set goals. It occurred because these days it is the information, content, reading material etc. are available easily. The students have easy access to all of the sources. But the real challenge now exists with this changed scenario that how the teacher delivers the content. Now the teaching relies more on developing skills of 21st century. It stress on the teaching-learning process which inculcates the thinking power, critical thinking and creative thinking skills among the learners. The advancement in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology has changed the roles and responsibilities of a teacher in the classroom. I

Difference between Traditional Teacher/ Pupil Interaction and Dialogic Interaction

Table 1 : Traditional versus Dialogic Interaction

Traditional Teacher/ Pupil Interaction	Dialogic Teaching
Teacher raise and frame questions	Student have their own questions
Teacher's agenda, sole responsibility lies with the teacher	Shared agenda, teacher and students together decides the agenda
Informative, information and data are given by	Imaginative, students and teachers co-construct

the authority/teacher, students as passive listener	the knowledge and possess shared understanding
Limited focus, try to achieve the set objectives	Exploratory, along with the set objectives, if possible they are able to explore other areas too
One directing view, as pre-decided by the management or teachers	Variation of viewpoints, exploratory in nature so their exists viewpoints which are diverse in nature
Calculative	Reflective
'I/it' relationship	'I/you' relationships
Authoritative	Persuasive
Right answers wrong answers concept exists	Possible answers
Competitive answer-giving, ranking, toppers	Co-operative enquiry, collaborative, co-construction of knowledge
Set objectives and Content- focused learning	Personalized Learning, shared learning, shared visions and goals, collaborative enquiry
Related to functional outcomes, gaining data and information	Related to inner purposes, leading to understanding, thinking skills as well as creative and critical thinking

What Learning Communities mean?

The word community mean that a group of people living together can have a common purpose to accomplish or a task to complete. All the members shared in a community stick to some common philosophy and norms which has to be followed by all the members of that community. These are some common norms shared by all the member of the society. Out of the various norms and practices, eleven social practices/strategies that helped bond a strong community are discussed. These included some basic characteristics of the community.

Each colleague as a valuable supporter as well as contributor: In the classroom each and every child/ student is believed to be a valuable contributor. It is not only teacher who keep on supplying information and knowledge to the student. Instead it is about co-construction of knowledge as a community.

Honouring teacher knowledge; The mentors, scaffolding exists in the learning communities. The knowledge and experiences of the senior are always shared and accepted and used as a resource for further knowledge building.

Creating public forums for sharing; Learning community believes in the dissemination of the information and knowledge for which they had practice to establish forums that helps them to share their knowledge with the other members of the community easily

Engaging in dialogue and critique; Dialogue and critique are the essential elements of the learning community because this is the building block and soul of on which the other pillars of the learning and understanding resides upon. The power of thinking as well as thinking out of the box comes through dialogue and assessing the topics under the study critically

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Learners take up the ownership in the community concept of learning; Usually the ownership resides with the teacher of the classroom, but here in learning community the ownership will be with the learners themselves.

Situating learning as practice and relationships between all the other members; Human learning is a natural process, and occurs not only in formal school college settings but also in day to day routine work. The idea behind community learning is not limited within the classroom walls but actually beyond the walls as well.

Manifold entry points are provided in the learning community; Learning through all the possible sources, persons, place and situations is the key in the concept of community learning.

Reflection on teaching and learning via reflection on learning as well as teaching; Learning community will obviously provide reflection of teacher with students, students with students as well as students with teacher.

Sharing leadership; In the concept of learning community the leadership resides with all. Each and every member is the leader of the group. This shows that it provides democratic atmosphere for learning to take place with ease.

Promoting an inquiry stance; and Enquire is core in the concept of learning community

Reconceptualization of professional identity and relating it to professional community as well.

It is a unique feature of learning community. It not only explores about the professional identity but along with it also stress upon the linkage with other professional community to cover the broader scope.

Essential Practices: Learning community develops and has its own pattern of functioning. It is complicated as well as impossible to take apart a set of basic practices followed in a community. Here are list of customs and conducts that have been seen effectively followed in the communities of learning. These can also be successfully followed by the teachers in the classroom.

The members of the community assemble often and build collegial associations are built based upon reliance and openness of thoughts, views and ideas; Members work hard to build up clear purpose and collective meeting point on problems of practice that can benefit the society especially for its sustainable development; Routines are shaped and rituals that sustain honest talk and discovery based on dialogue; Members engage in inspection, problem solving, communal support, advice giving, and peer teaching and learning processes; Community with determination organize and focus on activities that will enhance learning for both the adults and students in the school; Members of the community use collaborative inquiry to stimulate evidence-informed conversations; And work to develop a theory of action; They extend a set of strategies for linking their learning/understanding to student- learning.

Conclusion

The concept of learning community can be developed if dialogues as a means of communication as well as practice get implemented in the classrooms. The traditional interaction and practices are not sufficient to meet the present need of the society. They are good but not sufficient to meet the challenges. The challenges of AI era and technology demands for some different practices such practices needs to be researched more upon and findings to be implemented in the day to day classroom practices to get some more empirical findings. This paper also doesn't guarantee a road to success but the hopes and some of the findings assure that fruitful results will be seen if the classroom has been working on the concept of learning community.

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