

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

The Hidden Mystery behind the Role of Teacher in the Student Learning.

Sulagna Roy

IJSER

Abstract:

Teacher's role in a learner's education is prominent. This study explores the dimensions of obedience of the learner, authority of the teacher and repercussions of a system where obedience is a primary factor in learning. Consider a scenario of the classroom where the students are obedient to their teacher and all rules are being followed. Does that mean the learning in that classroom is optimal? On the contrary, does a classroom which functions without the authority of teacher indicates there is no learning happening? The study establishes benefits of a classroom which is teacher's role is democratic in nature and not governed by authority. In such a scenario learner gets a platform to explore, question and create to make his learning concrete. This study points out that the paradigm of learner's classroom is a realistic approach and not an abstract concept.

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

Introduction

In our education system, obedience is considered to be very important as it the fundamental basis of any classroom. It is often mentioned as an obedient student respects his/ her teachers. The concept of respect and obedience go hand in hand. As quoted in one of the articles online "When we respect and obey teachers, they become motivated to do their duties and help students learn and acquire knowledge." Does that mean a student or learner has to obey to the things which he/she does not be certain of. Isn't that the violation of the objective of learning? Let us explore the word which constantly is in the picture. Obedience. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, Obedience refers to Compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority. To have more understanding on it let's explore Milgram's Experiment.

Stanley Milgram, Yale University psychologist in the 1960s, conducted a series of obedience experiments that led to some astonishing results which offer a compelling and disturbing look at the power of authority and obedience. More recent investigations cast doubt on some of the suggestions of Milgram's findings and even question the results and procedures. Although despite its problems, the study has, significantly break though in psychology.

"The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act." –Stanley Milgram, 1974

Milgram initiated his experiments in 1961, soon after the trial of the World War II criminal Adolph Eichmann had instigated. When Eichmann was charged for the deaths of millions of Jews, Eichmann's defense claimed that he was merely following instructions. This roused Milgram's interest. In his book "Obedience to Authority," (1974), Milgram raised a question, "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?"

"Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority," Milgram explained in "Obedience to Authority."

The Milgram's Experiment

The 40 men were recruited as participants in the most famous variation of the Milgram experiment using newspaper ads. In exchange for their participation, each person was paid \$4.50.

Milgram developed shock generator which delivers shocks ranging from 30 volts all the way up to 450 volts (increasing in 15-volt increments). The switches were labeled as "slight shock,"

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

"moderate shock" and "danger: severe shock." The final two switches were labeled simply with an ominous "XXX."

Each participant took the role of a "teacher" who would then deliver a shock to the "student" whenever an incorrect answer was given. While the participant believed that he was delivering real shocks to the student, the "student" was a confederate in the experiment who was simply pretending to be shocked.

As the experiment progressed, the participant would hear the learner plead to be released or even complain about a heart condition. On reaching 300-volt level, the learner would bang on the wall and demand to be released. Beyond this point, the learner became completely silent and refused to answer any more questions. The experimenter then instructed the participant to treat this silence as an incorrect response and deliver a further shock.

The measure of obedience was the level of shock that the participant was willing to deliver. When Milgram questioned a group of Yale University students, it was anticipated that no more than 3 out of 100 participants would deliver the maximum shock. In reality, 65 percent of the participants in Milgram's study delivered the maximum shocks. Which means of the 40 participants in the study, 26 delivered the maximum shocks while 14 stopped before reaching the highest levels.

Reality Check

The question which arises is that, how does the above experiment relevance to the role of learners and teachers in present set-up. If we refer to the experiment, the person who was conducting the experiment held the role of authority and deliberately made the test subject do unthinkable act to deliver high level shocks to the learners. In the similar way the teachers who is the authority figure in the classroom tends to direct the students will in a certain way which may or may not be compatible to his/her affinity. Making a young learner bend to the authority takes away the opportunity to learn major life skills of decision making, creative thinking and critical thinking. Teachers tend to have obedient learners who are unable to think or decide on their free will. This makes a young learner more vulnerable to peer pressure, social pressure and sometimes drives them into self-harming and drug abuse.

In my experience, I have witnessed countless teachers arguing about the fact that if a student is obedient then that student can learn and be good at academics. Moreover, in some classes even now corporal punishments are being given. We as educators (teachers) sometimes get over board in order to make the learners listen to us. Whereas the key to make any learner listen is to spark the interest. One may argue that sometimes essential knowledge takes a back seat while making a lesson interesting but think in this way that if the learner is made inquisitive then the learner will take the initiative to gather knowledge.

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

The education system has focused itself into delivering holistic education to the students. CBSE has developed Life Skill Curriculum and the Delhi Government has taken steps to induct Guidance Counselors for the schools to ensure development of like skills in students. Yet giving more priority to authority (obedience) over the democratic nature fails the initiatives taken to develop the students. In our society we come from a belief that an obedient student is a good student and this means the student respect the elders. If an individual is compliant it does not mean he/she respects you, it means that he/she admit that the authority is with the other person and resigns into it. Think about the mental state in which a young learner is in. The learner always is under pressure to behave in a certain way, learn in a certain way, and sit/stand in a certain way. He/she is not internalizing the learnings rather he/she is making this a muscle memory. Once during an informal time in school, I asked a student, why he studied and what does he understand by the lessons which are being taught? He looked at me confused and replied that he studied because his parents told him to and what is there to understand in the lessons. The lessons are for listening, reading the book and doing the exercises. It made me realize that the essence of education is getting missed and everyone is focusing on the wrong question. The question has become, "How to learn?" whereas it should be "Why to learn?"

A Practical Approach

Many educators may rise the question that without obedience the classrooms will be in chaos and the learning will take a back seat. Also, setting up democratic classroom can give an impression that student can undermine the role of the teachers. Some may point out the essence of time as time allotted for academics amongst other initiative takes a toll on the scholastic part of education. A classroom is heterogeneous in nature; different learning level students, different types of learners and various backgrounds which also plays a key role. A teacher has on an average 40 minutes to impart the day's lesson. In an authoritative classroom, 05 minutes is consumed in assembling the class and creating order. The next 05 minutes is utilized in getting ready for the lesson. Now, the teacher has 30 minutes in which he/she has to conduct the day's lesson so that the learning outcomes can be attained, sometimes check the task given earlier, answer the doubts of the students and also check the learning of the day's lesson along with maintaining discipline (obedience). Usually, the teacher get agitated with multi-tasking and he tends to diverge from the prime motive which is deliver a lesson which is a good combination of K-S-M (Knowledge-Skill-Mindset) or impart holistic education to the learners.

In a democratic classroom, the teacher arrives in a classroom where students are engaged in their learning. The norms in the classroom makes it effortless for the teacher to focus on the heterogeneity of the class and monitor the development accordingly. Moreover the students are taking the ownership of their education along with the teacher. So the burden on the teacher is comparatively shared.

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

Case Study

Rahul is a Social Science Teacher who teaches class VII. The students of his class are talkative and often make loud noise or bunk classes whenever Rahul tries to teach with them. Rahul believes that these students come from a community which does not give importance to education. He is behind his syllabus and needs to start India's Struggle for Independence in his class. But he is agitated and confused how he will complete his syllabus in time.

Authoritative Classroom

Rahul raises voice at the children and makes them quiet. Asks a child to read through the lesson. Discusses questions given in the book and asks them to write it in their notebooks. Warns them if the work is not complete then he will take the defaulters to Principal/HOS.

Democratic Classroom

Rahul creates a project where a team of students will write articles on various events of the Independence struggle. Initiates a discussion based on it. The team which performs the best will get published in the School magazine. After which he creates an assignment for the students to test their learning.

Conclusion

Constructivism as a paradigm theorizes that learning is an active, constructive process. The learner is an information constructor. People actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to prior knowledge, thus mental representations are subjective. A learner needs the platform where he can test these hypotheses through social negotiation. As educators our role is to provide that platform to the learners so the process of learning can progress and achieve its desired outcome.

The hidden mystery of the role as the teacher is the fact that the teacher has become unidirectional; focusing on how well they can teach but the real change of any initiative towards the learners will be visible when the focus shifts to how well the learners are learning. Teachers need to put effort in creating lessons which cater to the need to diverse learners in the given time. Tools like Bloom's Taxonomy, Differential Learning, Experiential Learning and Integration are widely used in classrooms nowadays across the world. As educators all we need is to change the lens how we see learning. The process of learning needs to be internalized by both teachers and learners to create a larger impact.

The Hidden Mystery: Role of Teachers

Références

1. <https://www.importantindia.com/21076/obedience-to-teachers-why-should-we-obey-our-teachers/>
2. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/obedience>
3. <https://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html>
4. Piaget, J. (2013). The construction of reality in the child (Vol. 82). Routledge.
5. Ertmer, P. A., & Newby, T. J. (1993). Behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism: Comparing critical features from an instructional design perspective. *Performance improvement quarterly*, 6(4), 50-72.
6. Cooper, P. A. (1993). Paradigm Shifts in Designed Instruction: From Behaviorism to Cognitivism to Constructivism. *Educational technology*, 33(5), 12-19.
7. McLeod, S. A. (2007). Obedience to authority. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/obedience.html
8. Haslam S A, Reicher SD. Contesting the "Nature" of Conformity: What Milgram and Zimbardo's Studies Really Show. *PLoS Biology*. 2012. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1001426.
9. Perry G. The Shocking Truth of the Notorious Milgram Obedience Experiments. *Discover Magazine*. 2013.
10. Effective Teaching Strategies That Accommodate Diverse Learners. Kameenui, Edward J.; Carnine, Douglas W.