

A Study on the role of Education and Learning Methodologies from a Linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT: Education is the basic need of all individuals, irrespective of class, religion and nativity. Education ushers in humbleness and provides a platform for communication. Communication is a key to share ones views or ideas. In India, we have school education, higher education, professional education, management education, technical education, medical education and legal education. In all types of education, the output is the marks provided to the students. How the students utilise their education is not a paramount consideration. Thus in all types of education, there are a specified number of subjects for the students and they need to clear the examinations in those subjects. It is not just learning the subject, but the ability to communicate. Reading(R), Listening (L), Writing (W) and Speaking(S) forms the desideratum for all types of education. A student can be a wizard in solving technical issues or in software development. But it is of no use, if he/she is unable to communicate and understand the views of others. Education should mould the students to improve their linguistic ability and critical thinking. It is a misnomer that linguistic ability is confined to the domain of Arts and Languages alone. The application of linguistics is manifold and linguistic ability forms the basis of individual's RLWS. In our country, education is imparted thorough direct and distance mode. In both these modes of education, students should develop their linguistic ability in order to move ahead in their career. Our existing curriculum does not provide impetus to linguistic ability and hence, students find themselves neglected without job opportunities. The authors have studied the role of education and learning methodologies from a linguistic viewpoint in order to pave way for futuristic approach towards education. The authors have adopted a combination of descriptive and exploratory research methodology for their work.

Keywords: Communicate, Education and Learning, Critical thinking, Linguistic ability

INTRODUCTION

In India, there are multiple levels of education, which can be classified as Montessori, Lower School, Middle School, High School and Higher Secondary. Apart from this, there are multiple boards for education, which are State Board, Central Board, Matriculation and Indian School Certificate. Each

board follows a separate curriculum. Education should be a knowledge enabler and gaining knowledge will enable an individual to progress personally and professionally. Even in the University level, there are different modes of education – Direct/Online/Distance. Though the syllabus across all the three modes are identical, the value of the degree varies. Direct degree has more value as compared to online/distance mode. The apex-controlling agency for controlling the validity of the degrees is the University Grants Commission (UGC). Though the UGC regulates the degrees, the common pitfall in recruitment and promotions is that online/distance degrees are not recognised. We need to reconcile this, since education should not create barriers for an individual. Education can be classified as basic and advanced. Advanced education can be classified as Graduate, Post Graduate and Professional education.

Basic education includes school education comprising of secondary and higher secondary education. There are plethora of agencies to handle both secondary and higher secondary education. State Board, Matriculation, Central Board, Indian School Certificate Exam. Actually, the need for multiple agencies for education neither does not arise nor it is required.

The government policy permits the operation of multiple agencies to offer educational services and they operate. The question to be answered is, why not unify/integrate all the boards together and have a single Higher Secondary/Senior Secondary Board. The objective is to streamline the education sector. If we can have one nation, one tax, the logic can be applied to education as well – One Nation, One Curriculum and One Board.

Similarly, in higher education, graduation courses offered follow a set pattern of courses. There are no value added subjects. The allied subjects (ancillary subjects) are fixed and there is no flexibility to the students to choose the subjects. However, the exception is available for commerce graduates and they do not have ancillary papers. The subjects should pave way for all round development of a student. However, the student clears close to 15 papers in three years of graduation; they are all bookish and cannot be applied in real time situations.

Similarly, there is no focus on subjects to improve linguistic abilities of a student. At the graduation level, language is not given due importance. As a result, students are unable to bring out their talent in them. There is no thrust on grammar, phonetics and vocabulary. Role of education is not only to suffix the degrees but also to progress in the respective profession. Each mode of education has a distinct value and hence cannot be underestimated. Thus, education plays an important role in moulding the language abilities and character of an individual.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though many authors expressed their views on different modes of education, their views are generic in nature. None of the authors has dealt on the role of education from a linguistic perspective. There are many textbooks on communication it is easy to write and clear the exam. The challenge is to interact with one another effectively and articulate the points in a subtle manner. In postgraduate courses, students pass the exam after studying 15 papers and submit a project dissertation. Here, it is not quantity but the quality of the education that is to be looked into. During paper evaluation, not much importance is given to the grammar, spelling and sentence structure and a student is able to score marks. However, the scenario is very different when they take up jobs, wherein they need to prepare a document or a letter. If the quality of writing is not meeting the requirements, it will jeopardise their career growth. In addition, Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking are essential skills

for all courses, irrespective of the mode in which the education is conducted. Hence, the curriculum should be revised once in two years and new courses should be introduced. Linguistics can integrate with many subjects and more impetus should be given to design a curriculum by adopting a linguistic approach in order to provide value based education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The authors used a descriptive approach for the study using a questionnaire. The sample size for the study is 75 respondents comprising of both male and female genders. The questionnaire was analysed on a five-point Likert scale.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Chi-square test is used in this study for analysing the data.

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

S.NO	Demographic factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	18	24
		Female	57	76
2	Age Band	21-25	40	53
		26-30	13	17
		31-35	8	11
		Above 35	14	19
3	Education level	Diploma	3	4
		UG	26	35
		PG	23	31
		Professional	23	31

INTERPRETATION

- From the above table, it can be inferred that 24% of the respondents are male and 76% are female.
- Regarding the age band, 53% of the respondents belong to the age band of 21 to 25 years, followed by 19% in the age above 35 years, 17% in the age band of 26 to 30 years and 11% constitute in the age band of 31 to 35 years.
- As regards their educational level, 35% of the respondents possess undergraduate degree (UG), 31% of them each possess postgraduate degree (PG) and professional qualifications and 4% of them are diploma holders.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The following null hypothesis are formulated during the study.

- Ho: There is no relationship between education and practical usage

The calculated value is 26.92 and the table value is 26.30 at 5% level of significance.

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

- b. Ho: There is no relationship between education acquired and mode of learning
The calculated value is 14.8405 and the table value is 26.30 at 5% level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value, the null hypothesis is accepted.
- c. Ho: There is no relationship between education and language competence
The calculated value is 27.89 and the table value is 26.30 at 5% level of significance. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.
- d. Ho: There is no relationship between education and communication
The calculated value is 27.89 and the table value is 26.30 at 5% level of significance. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

There are different learning methodologies that can be adopted for imparting education. Hard copy books are normally provided to the students. However, the modern trend is to utilize web-based approach for imparting education to the students.

Web enabled education or web-based education is picking up slowly in our country. Web enabled education allows flexibility for the learner and at the same time allows the student to go through the content as many times. Web enabled learning is not a substitute for classroom learning but it is in addition to the normal mode of learning. In fact, many educational institutions prefer web enabled learning since it reduces their cost of operations. Another advantage is that they can circulate the recorded content to multiple study centres across the country without incurring additional cost. The buzzword “web based” learning is followed across the educational spectrum including professional courses like chartered accountancy, management accountancy, law, etc., However, the success of web enabled learning depends on multitude of factors. These are to be reckoned not only from the service provider’s perspective but also from the learner’s point of view. In order to succeed all web-enabled systems depends on the internet bandwidth. Internet is available in major cities but in remote areas, the internet connectivity is always questionable. Though the government agencies and education ministry always promote web enabled education system, they need to set up a robust infrastructure in order to succeed. The following factors needs to be considered for the success of web enabled learning and education.

- a. Availability of internet at cost effective price
- b. Availability of computer infrastructure at cost effective price
- c. Availability of space for students to learn without incurring additional cost.
- d. Quality of teaching in web enabled mode
- e. Problem solving
- f. Duration of the course
- g. Ability of the students to grasp the basics of the subject.
- h. Web enabled self-tests /assessments for the students.
- i. Ability to integrate the subject knowledge in multiple choice questions

There are strengths and weaknesses of the web enabled education. It is not just decision making or complying with the governmental regulations. The educational institutions should form a dedicated think-tank to work out the modalities for making it effective. Preparing the lessons and uploading on the website does not solve the problem. Most educational institutes does not bother about the effectiveness of the web-based course and they upload the curriculum. They do not consider about the students ability to understand and the quality of the subjects that are uploaded. This poses a challenge to both the institutes and the students. Institutes consider web enabled learning as an alternative mode of imparting education and there are no quality assurance norms for compliance. From the students perspective the web-enabled curriculum should be read from the website and they should prepare for the exams. The need of the hour is the mechanism to regulate the web-enabled education. Presently there is no mechanism to regulate or monitor the web based education and learning even at the institute level. Institute means individual colleges or education centres which impart education to the students. The Universities comes at the next level and their burden is much more than the colleges since the number of courses are more and managed by multiple faculty members. If the web based education provided by the institutes are not regulated how well it can be regulated at the university level. It is certainly a tall order indeed.

In India, there are tiers of educational authorities at the centre and state. At the Centre the MHRD and UGC makes rules for web enabled education whereas in state the education department is responsible. However, the role of the state is limited as far as policy or decisions made by MHRD/UGC. The following points needs to be considered;

- Do we have a system to audit the web enabled learning /education?
- Do we have a system for grievance redressal?
- Do we have a system for requesting infrastructure support?
- Do we have a system for review quality of teaching in web-based education?
- Do we have a system to monitor the progress of the student?
- Do we have a system to improve the web based education?
- Do we have a nodal authority in each state/center to handle the issues and make decisions?

If the answers to the above questions are affirmative, the web-based education will succeed and reach greater heights.

There are two aspects of web-based learning that needs to be focused. They are:

- a. Web based teaching wherein a resource person teaches each module for a particular duration for each subject. This can be preloaded and the student can listen to the lecture whenever he is comfortable. Time slot-based web learning has multiple dependencies and implementation needs to be based on the infrastructure availability and convenience of the students
- b. Soft copies of the study material are uploaded in the website.

Many educational institutes assume that availability of study material on the web is also a form of web-based learning. This is totally incorrect. Availability of study material is only for the convenience of the students who have not received the study materials due to unavoidable delays. The current trend is towards cost reduction and educational institutes have stopped providing hard copies of study material. One can argue for and against this approach. In

Tamilnadu, considering the erratic electric power situation, if the power is not available, we cannot access the website. If there is no hard copy, the students will be idle during the time of power outage. Also if hard copy is provided, the students can mark important points and prepare for the examination. Most of the study materials are subjective and the exercise questions also are descriptive. Students tend to prepare based on the exercise questions available at the end of the chapter. However in competitive examinations like NET, objective questions are posed in the paper and the students find it difficult to answer them since in the multiple choice questions, options seem to be identical and student is not mentally prepared to answer such type of questions. Hence web based learning or teaching should focus on the current trend adopted by the UGC.

How to improve web-based learning?

- Web based learning needs to be relooked and a multipronged approach has to be worked out. A dedicated team for web learning should be formed by each university at the state level and also by the UGC.
- The team should work out the infrastructure requirements for making the web-based education effective. Presently the onus is on the students to make arrangements for web based learning. The Universities should form a nodal team in cities, which can provide web based education and the nodal team should be incentivized. All the infrastructure facilities should be provided by the UGC
- The web based learning should have either recorded lectures for a particular duration and or online lecture by a resource person.
- In case of recorded lectures, there should be an option for problem solving and handling multiple choice questionnaire.
- For online lecture mode, there should be an option to send queries to the resource person who can look at them and provide solutions during the next session
- Subscription based web learning should not be enforced because this will place burden on the students to make the payment.
- Web based learning should be in addition to the classroom learning except during emergency situations.
- UGC should invite interested resource persons to participate in the project.
- Budget for web-based learning should be separately allocated.
- An authority for web-based learning (in the rank of Assistant Registrar) should be created to oversee the implementation.
- Feedback mechanism should be introduced so that the web based learning can be improvised to be made on par with classroom teaching

Implementation of Web based learning. It is recommended to use the PDCA cycle for implementation.

P – Plan

D – Do

C – Check

A – Act

During the Plan phase, the entire aspect of web based learning /teaching needs to be reworked by the committee and current practices should be adhered in line with the UGC requirements. The infrastructure requirements, budget allocation, resource allocation, nodal officers, participation by the interested groups should be identified during this phase. The incentive scheme may be a burden on the UGC but in order to improve the web based learning, they should invest and ensure that a large number of stakeholders participate and ensure that this mode of teaching/learning becomes a successful option.

During the Do phase, a pilot project needs to be rolled out by taking a few subjects and curriculum and methodology should be worked out and delivered. The output should be mapped to the current trends set by the UGC and evaluated by the faculty and students. Based on the feedback additional requirements can be worked out. The UGC should also liaise with the internet service providers for rolling out a broadband plan for students and educational institutions. The current broadband plans may not be affordable by the rural students. The pricing should be minimal so that the entire academic community is benefitted. There should be a scheme called “Bharathband” with a capacity of 100 Mbps and provided at a subsidized rate of Rs.50 per month or Rs.500/- per annum.

During the Check phase, the prototype that was conceived should be checked whether the results were achieved based on the plan. Areas of weaknesses should be identified and fixed. The stakeholders should conduct a survey within themselves to satisfy that the objectives and the effectiveness of the web based learning have been achieved. The MHRD should conduct an audit of the prototype implementation and identify the missing gaps. The MHRD should provide a detailed audit report so that the issue can be fixed

During the Act phase, the findings of the MHRD and survey will be considered to ensure that all the issues identified are fixed and the web based learning becomes effective. This is an ongoing process and refinement keeps happening over a period of time.

Role of the UGC/MHRD/AICTE for web based learning / teaching

The authorities should work in tandem with each other and work out the modalities of the scheme. The UGC should nominate a nodal officer for each university and interested persons to chalk out an implementation plan. The MHRD should provide the budget and incentive scheme and coordinate with the internet service providers for providing bharathband network at a subsidized rate. There should be two sets of teams for vetting the curriculum for web-based learning. One for humanities, science, and other for engineering. The AICTE should nominate a steering committee to review the content for engineering courses.

Can classroom teaching be minimized?

If the above plan is implemented successfully, web based learning will be on par with classroom teaching and it can be minimized. This can happen over a period of time once the students give an outstanding feedback on the web based learning and their experiences. Also the students’ performance in the UGC examinations based on multiple choice questions. Presently the trend is to prepare separately for UGC exams since the methodology of

testing for passing the graduation/post-graduation and UGC exams are different. This is the time to bridge the gap and ensure that the students learn exhaustively and apply them during the exams. The impetus for this will be to improve the curriculum and audit them periodically.

Are web enabled tests possible?

Web based tests are possible and they can be fool proof even without camera monitoring. The existing controls of hall tickets and user login can be successfully implemented to ensure that tests can be conducted in a fair manner. The only constraint is that there should be continuity during test and if there is a power outage, the students should be able to continue from where they have left. In addition, there should be controls built in such a way that the exam URL opens up within the campus network so that students cannot go home and modify the answers. The online tests should be a combination of Objective and Subjective so that the students understanding of the concepts can be thoroughly tested. There can be built in online scoring for objective questions. For subjective questions, external evaluation can be done online and marks can be provided online. This will become a boom in the years to come and the UGC and MHRD should work out a package for operating this scheme.

Challenges in web based learning/teaching

There is a plethora of challenges in this front. The students should be given an opportunity to explore this approach. However, the entire success of this scheme vests with the UGC/MHRD. The two agencies, which are involved in handling the educational sector, should provide the necessary stimulus and in the present state of affairs, web based learning, is more of luxury rather than learning or teaching. The two agencies does not provide the infrastructure and no subsidy is offered to the universities. Content creation is a biggest challenge for the success of web based learning/teaching. Content for the subjects cannot be copy/paste of standard books and they should be based on the current trends set by the UGC/MHRD. This means that the entire content needs to be reworked and appropriate questions – objective and subjective should be provided at the end of each chapter. The steering committee should ensure that the objectives are realized based on the prototype roll out and roll the online web enabled learning across the country. The main objective of the two agencies is to derisk the students and faculty and ensure that the web based learning is not just a buzzword but it is implemented in reality. Audit teams should carry periodic audits to ensure that web based learning objectives are met and audit reports should be circulated to the UGC/MHRD. There should be a rating of web-based learning similar to NAAC accreditation provided to the universities.

Authorities for web based learning

This is an important area of focus since the current setup does not provide a dedicated resource for handling web based learning. The role is merged with other roles and the resource is not able to devote time. In addition, in the current scenario, online or web based learning is considered as an add-on and no specific content is added. It is more or recorded lectures

or textbooks are uploaded in the website. This alone is not sufficient for the success of web-based learning.

The following authorities are suggested in order to ensure that the scheme becomes successful.

1. Resource person from MHRD/UGC – Head
2. Resource person from the University in the rank of Assistant Registrar or below
3. Interested persons who are willing to be part of this initiative.
4. Steering committee to work out the syllabus for the courses.
5. IT committee to work out the modalities for IT infrastructure and testing to reach out to students.
6. Audit committee to ensure that standards are adhered, and compliance is assured.
7. Quality assurance to ensure that the standard of curriculum and testing is assured.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the present work, the authors intend to conclude that education needs to include linguistic capabilities of students, irrespective of the branch of study and this includes professional education. Soft skills are required to articulate the issues and aid in discussion. Soft skills should be mandatory, and the curriculum should ensure that language ability is tested before the students graduate. There should not be bias between students opting direct mode and distance/online mode. The results of the hypothesis testing provide insight that there is relationship between education and practical usage, language competence and communication. Our educational system needs to be rebuilt in order to include value-based subjects and to ensure that the students possess high level of proficiency in soft skills. The examination system also needs to be changed to test the practical knowledge of the students.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts to declare.

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