

Understanding Learning through Reflection

Saniya Sultan Ali Panjwani

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), Pakistan

Abstract

This article attempts to unpack the concept of learning in the light of my life's experiences. The paper reflects on my schema about learning and later discusses two critical incidents of my life which helped me to further unfold the concept of learning. These two experiences taught me that learning is meaningless and inconsequential unless it triggers a change in your attitude towards life. Another experience taught me that learning takes place through inspiration. Moreover, I encountered that active learning takes place when learners are not classically conditioned and they become responsible for their own learning. Lastly, the paper discusses the impact of assessment procedures on learning which I understood during my graduate course work.

1. Introduction

His highness Prince Karim Aga Khan in his speech "Global Education and the developing world" asserts that it is the demand of this accelerating world that a person should possess a skill to keep himself open to new learning [1]. After reading this extract of the speech, I tried to analyze my own understanding about the word learning and compiled it in the form of this paper. The first part of the paper will explore my schema about the word learning, second part will discuss two critical incidents which introduced me to a new philosophy of learning. The last part of the paper will focus on my learning experience at Aga Khan University-Institute for Education Development (AKUIED). Reflecting on my own teaching and learning experience, I encountered that active learning takes place when learners are not classically conditioned and they become responsible for their own learning.

2. My schema about "LEARNING"

People around me from my childhood taught me that effective learning will enable me to get high standard and respectable job. Till my intermediate, I felt that learning is a painful journey but I will reap

its fruit later in the form of money and honor. I believed life is divided into two parts i.e. learning and earning. In the first part, we go to educational institute to seek degree and in the second part we earn and live a luxurious life. After reading Woolfolk, when I reflect on my schema, I feel it is the best example of classical conditioning as given by Pavlov where I am being conditioned like the dog in the Pavlov's experiment [6]. As an Educator, when I analyze this problem today, I feel if all the people begin to think this way then education will become a business. People will invest in Education to earn profit and the essence of learning will die. Thus, when these students will start their professional careers, they will only focus on earning more and more rather than admiring their work. Finally, whole nation will suffer as it will not be able to prosper until and unless its people believe in life-long learning and do their task honestly.

3. Two critical incidents about learning

Kosnik asserts that critical incidents are the experiences which seem to be unusual at first sight and later turn out to be a critical learning experience after systematic reflection [3]. In this paper I would like to share two critical incidents which changed my schema about the word "Learning".

4. Incident 1: Learning As Change In Attitude

My view about learning expanded when I was teaching in Religious Education Center (REC) Talim Curriculum to 5th class students. After the completion of 2nd course book "People helping people", I planned to assess the learning of the students through paper pencil test and viva. This book is entirely based on the stories of helping humankind from Islamic context. After few days, while doing an activity, I found one of the students without paint colours. I requested other students to share paint colours with that child. There I observed an interesting thing that the child who secured the highest marks in paper pencil test was not at all ready

to share his colours with the child without paints colours. That day I felt, that there is something missing in my teaching because I was only able to transfer knowledge to the students but there was no change in the attitude. After studying whole book about helping humankind, students have not developed the attitude of helping each other. In conclusion, I learnt that learning knowledge is of no use if there is no change in the attitude of the students. Further, I reflected that what will happen to our nation if our education system will produce outcome of students who successfully secured degrees but have not brought any change in their attitude. Of course, it will result in the form of higher literacy rate but people will not be developed holistically. They will not be able to accept the diversity around them. Moreover, they will not be able to create new knowledge but just read and reproduce the same knowledge in different ways. Thus, our nation will produce followers rather than producing leaders. But the challenge is that how to bring knowledge into action and bring a change in the attitudes of the learners?

5. Incident 2: Learning As Inspiration

Learning takes place through inspiration. I observed this when I met my cousin after his new stylish haircut. I noticed that he has copied the hair style of Aamir Khan which he introduced in the movie Dil Chata Hai. I inquired the reason for this and he responded that he got inspired from the hair style of Aamir Khan. The response of my cousin gave me the answer of the question which arose in my mind after incident 1 that how to bring change in the attitude of learners. I realized these actors are better teachers who have aptitude to change the habits and lives of people. After critical reflection, I realize that my cousin got inspired from Amir Khan's hair cut because he saw him in the same hair cut throughout the movie. Amir Khan was practicing that attitude himself whereas I was not practicing what I was teaching to the students in REC. How can I inspire students when I was not practicing what I was teaching but only explaining them verbally? This incident informed me that teacher plays an active role in making students learn an attitude. Further, knowledge should be presented in an inspiring way which helps the students to implement that knowledge in their daily lives. On the other hand, learning through inspiration has many challenges as learners can learn bad habits and attitudes from the people whom they inspire. Furthermore, if our society starts learning this way then question arises that are we producing leaders or just followers who get inspire from the charismatic individuals and

follow them sightlessly. Thus, learning through inspiration will give birth to the society of followers as well as it have limitation to adopt undesirable attitudes.

6. Learning at Akuied: Learning As Assessment And Ownership

At AKUIED, I encountered that assessment has a great impact on the learning process because you learn the way you will be assessed. For example, till my graduation, I have always rote memorize the concepts for 3 hours summative evaluation. According to Swain, Pradhan and Khatoi summative evaluation is conducted to determine how far instructional objectives have been achieved and to assign grades to the pupils [5]. However, at AKUIED, formative or ongoing assessment is focused. This change in assessment enhanced my learning as my learning expanded from ten traditional books to all the literature available in the library, online resources on the internet and interaction with diverse people. In one of the Masters in Education Course of Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment (CTLA), I got an opportunity to read and discuss about Blooms Taxonomy. There I discovered that till my graduation I have only answered the questions up to the level of knowledge and comprehension in my summative evaluation where as my M.Ed. is focused on the higher levels of the Blooms' taxonomy where my learning will be assessed on my critical thinking skills, deep reflection and my ability to analyze, synthesize and create something novel. By reflecting on AKUIEDs' structure, I found that limitation of learning through inspiration (that is students can get inspire and learn bad habits) can be overcome if students possess critical thinking skills so that they can independently take decisions by evaluating the knowledge that whether they should put this knowledge in action or not. Further, I found that AKUIED provides an independent learning time to learners in which learners fight for his/her own learning and become owner for his/her own learning. The ownership of learning is with the student. The teacher acts as the facilitator or the resource person [2]. If I analyze the notion of this form of learning in the larger context, I believe the outcome will be intellectually strong and independent learners who are not classically conditioned and do not consider learning as just one phase of life but believe in continuous learning and become responsible for his/her own learning.

7. Conclusion

My learning experience at AKUIED built on my schema. Previously learning was just for earning, and then it turned out to be as learning for shaping attitude. Later, I uncovered that learning takes place through inspiration, but, at AKUIED, I discover that learning takes place best when learners become responsible for their own learning. Thus, learners will not only gain knowledge or apply what inspires them but they also possess the ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate the knowledge gained and create new knowledge. According to the National Education policy, vision of education as defined by Ministry of Education (MOE) is to realize individual potential; and to contribute to the development of society and nation, creating sense of Pakistani nationhood, sense of tolerance, social justice and democracy [4]. Hence, the vision of MOE can only be achieved if learners are not classically conditioned but they become responsible for their own learning.

8. References

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