

The Blackboard as the First Teaching Aid

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With the changing world and changing mindsets, school teaching and learning has changed to a great extent. It is so encouraging and exciting to see that with increasing technological support and availability of information to all of us, present day classrooms and teachers have become much better equipped and there is a whole lot of zestful involvement of learners in gathering knowledge, learning skills, becoming more creative and learning at varied pace.

With most of the schools, public schools in particular, ensuring that there is a *Digi-board*, accessibility of internet, more access and availability of computers to students, the role of a teacher has changed to a certain extent. The teachers are no longer the only source of information and knowledge other than text books. Many a time, teaching becomes a challenge, because most of what the teacher is supposed to tell or explain or introduce to the learners, according to the guided curriculum meant for a certain age group, is no longer new to them because of the easy availability of information and better exposure of the learners.

It is great to see that schools and teaching is gradually becoming more student-centric and the use of technology, inclusion of videos, movies, hands on activities and internet for better understanding is becoming a norm. But it is unfortunate that with this advancement and upgradation somewhere, the blackboard is being neglected and ignored as one of the very effective and important aids for teaching. We must understand that what the teacher writes on the board helps children build an emotional connect with the teacher. It is a kind of personalised or customised information. The work on the blackboard compared to a PPT can be seen as a handwritten card or letter compared to an e-greeting or a text message.

How well planned the board work is has a great impact on learning. Many a time, we forget that the content flashed on the smart board is something virtual for the children, but what the teacher writes and how she/he writes it helps students develop a

link between the explanation and written content and kind of gives a 3-D effect to the concept.

I still remember how much I loved my grade 8 maths teacher for her neat and well organised board work. We never had to struggle to find details or to understand concepts because of the clear sequencing of the steps. Her beautiful handwriting inspired all of us to work neatly and that stayed with most of us. Whether geometry or trigonometry, as a class we learnt to work in steps and learnt to keep our note books perfectly neat.

Generally speaking, I have observed that even a very interesting activity (may be in a chemistry or physics class in middle school) or a beautifully done PPT (for Biology) does not end up as an effective learning experience (particularly on a long term basis), if it is not supported by proper blackboard work. It's always good if the teacher can add her / his personal touch to any class with an intelligent, smart and appropriate use of the black-board.

With minimum cost and effort, the blackboard can be beautifully utilised for multiple purposes of content delivery, recap (of the previous or present class) and important points like formulas, spellings, important/key words, etc. simultaneously. This is the reason why even the most high-tech classrooms are not without a board.

In addition to this, the blackboard is a dynamic tool which indirectly prepares children for being more organised and neat in their work and encourages them to put a better presentation of their daily work or their work during written assessments.

A teacher who uses the board in a correct manner stands as a role model and leads by example for her/his learners in terms of maintaining good handwriting (motor skill) and proper use of space and resources. This holds correct not only for young children in primary school but also for students at University level. I would again like to mention that those of my Professors who maintained/ utilised the board properly used to be our favourite teachers.

One more important aspect of using the blackboard

is that it reduces dependence on electricity or power sources and reduces the screen time for the learners, which is again a concern due to increased use of mobile phones and computer, particularly with the younger generation.

A teacher's blackboard work engraves a personal mark on every learner's psyche and gives a very

personal touch to whatever she/he would have taught. So while we embrace all the new and wonderful techniques to make learning a happier process, let us not give up on our older practices without weighing them up properly.

It is something like: when you make new friends you do not break your bonds with your older pals.

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