Qualitative Analysis of the Process of Training Module "Learning Psychology" HEC Faculty Development Program, Pakistan

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Abstract-**A training was conducted at The Islamia University Bahawalpur for college and university teachers through the module of learning psychology. This module was including different aspects of the psychology of learners. Objectives of this report were to critically evaluate the relevancy of contents and training process conducted for college and university teachers, need assessment of the teachers regarding understanding psychology of the learners and to suggest measures to improve this training in future. Participants of this training workshop were 35 teachers teaching at college and university level in Bahawalpur. Teachers were given pre-test to check their prior knowledge and a post-test was delivered after the completion of training. Researcher observed the whole training and also interviewed the participants. Many interesting findings were drawn like; schedule of training sessions was not provided, many concepts were not relevant to different participants, competency of the facilitator was also questionable and many other findings. On the basis of these findings, some recommendations were made to improve this training in future.**

Key Words-Module, Training, Learning Psychology, Facilitator

I. BACKGROUND

Learning is a process that depends on experience and leads to longterm changes in behavior (Reynolds, William, Gloria &Miller 2003). A desired level of change in behavior always differs to the existing one that a child carries with. According to Freedheim (2003) and Darling-Hammond, & Sykes, (1999). The main assumption behind all learning psychology is that the effects of the environment, conditioning, reinforcement, etc. provide psychologists and teachers with the best information from which to understand human behavior and provides basic frame work for creating teaching and learning practices. The purpose of this module is to help the teachers to think about how students learn, by providing them with outlines to explain how students learn and how they learn best. To make the teaching process more affective a teacher should be aware of all the advances in educational psychology, identify and meet the educational needs of the students. Salvin (2000) described that the teacher should know the learner's personality, abilities, attitude, interests and temperaments to solve their problems and involve these variables in their performance. Pakistan is spending a lot sources in educational system, aiming to provide quality education. This is possible when teachers will have a thorough knowledge of learning psychology. The application of psychology in education gives us a way to create more efficient learning environment for learner (James, Anne, Dawn and Amanda 2007). Institutional environment is being changed day by day due to the rapid changes in cultural, social, economical and political scenario. It is also the need of the day to focus more on students learning rather than teachers' teaching. Higher Education Commission has taken many initiatives to bring change in educational institutions by providing the opportunities to the teachers. This training is also an effort to make the teachers understand about their learners and introduce innovative strategies through the module of learning psychology.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

1) Critically evaluate the relevancy of contents and training process conducted for college and university teachers.

2) Need assessment of the teachers regarding understanding psychology of the learners and to cope with the diversity in classrooms.

3) To suggest measures to improve this training in future

III. EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants of this training workshop were the teachers teaching at college and university level. They were there with some particular mind set and perceptions of the concepts. The module 'Learning Psychology' was quite different and interesting for the participants in the sense that they hardly pay attention to students' learning psychology in their classrooms. Now they were at the forum to discuss different dimensions of students' learning. When they were asked: what do they expect from this training?

They shared their views: More than half of the teachers, especially university teachers, joined this training session to learn some new strategies to understand students' behavior

in classroom and to get insight into their learning techniques. It also seems that behavior management in classroom is a problem at higher level. Most of the teachers were there with the expectation to learn new skills of teaching in classroom and make themselves aware of the strategies of classroom management. Teachers were also in need to learn the skills to understand different aspects of learners' personality. Further more what will make them able to get comprehensive knowledge of the learners' personality. Some teachers were there to gain in depth knowledge of their specific subject. They were also expecting to get knowledge about how students learn?

IV. ANALYSIS OF PRE AND POST TRAINING CONCEPTS

Teachers were given pre-test to check their prior knowledge about psychology of learners and after completion of the required sessions; a post-test was delivered to check what they learned from the following training concepts:

a) *Techniques of students' motivation*
b) *Skill to learn students' psychology*
c) *Identification of stress*
d) *Stress management strategies*
e) *Importance of social & moral values*
f) *Teacher's role to develop personality*
g) *Management of individual differences*
h) *Characteristics of introvert & extrovert students*
i) *Learning application*

A. Techniques of students' motivation

Before studying this module 'Learning Psychology' teachers were having a very common idea to motivate students in classroom. More than half of the teachers motivate their students by giving rewards and appreciations in classroom and create friendly environment in classroom. Others practice individual tasks and describing the purposes and importance of the subject to the students. Group discussions, group activities and competition among students were also known to be used by the teachers to motivate their students in classroom. After completion of the module, a major change was revealed in their perception regarding students' motivation. Data depict that participants learnt some other techniques of motivation. They described introvert and extrovert motivation techniques to be used for students' motivation. Others indicate that they try to arouse students' interest in the subject by relating it with daily life. They learnt to reinforce students by using different techniques. Others were of the view that they now have an idea to motivate students by assigning them various activities according to their level.

B. Skill to learn students' psychology

Before staring this module teachers described how do they understand learning psychology of the students. They understanding their overt behavior in classroom and observing their activities inside and outside the class to learn about their psychology. Students' attitude in classroom is also a source to learn about students according to the views of most of the teachers. Some teachers try to get knowledge about students' psychology by discussing with the students and their parents as well. Some teachers have very superficial knowledge about understanding learning psychology of students. They are in favor of applying tests in class but they all seem interested to learn the skills to understand students' psychology. After studying the module, big changes were found in their behavior regarding learning psychology of students. They added their views that students' psychology can be understood by interacting with the students. Students' counseling on their behavior, attitude, and interest towards studies can also be a great source to learn students and guide them. They modified their understanding of group activities among students for the sake of understanding their attitude towards learning and their behaviour with other fellows. It can be concluded that the training changed the concepts and their practices towards understanding students' psychology.

C. Identification of stress

Before the initiation of the module, most of the trainees have a stereotype response to identify the students under stress. They consider the stressed students whose performance is poor in class and not participating in classroom activities. Some of them were of the view that they observe students and try to identify their problems. Further more they describe that if the student is gradually losing his/ her grade and showing disturbed behavior in classroom, their face expressions are also an indication of stress according to the few participants. Some students may also be under stress due to their mental or physical disorders. After completion of this module, participants were in confused condition because less emphasis was given by the facilitator on identification of the students' condition under stress. The participants' concept about stressed student was that Most of the students seem disturbed in class rooms and do not take part in learning activities. Participants were expecting to be aware of the skills to identify the problems of those students before initiating this topic in particular session but there is still a thirst for those strategies.

D. Stress management strategies

Stress is the condition where students feel uneasy to accomplish their tasks. They need some guidance and proper attention to release their stress but the question is; how to reduce stress in students? Before starting the module, more than half of the participants were of the view that if the teachers create a friendly environment in classroom and students are appreciated on their tasks. They feel satisfied with those teachers and discuss their problems with them to get proper solution. Few of the participants have the notion that stress can be managed to make the students aware of their potentials and realizing their importance in classroom. Some participants describe in a very diplomatic way that they decide at the spot what to do with the students. During this session, Stress management strategies were not the focus of debate. Most of the participants showed non serious attitude towards the discussion. After completion of the

module, some change was found in their responses, but not satisfactory.

E. Importance of social & moral values

Before starting the module, participants described the importance of social and moral values for the students; as the values make them good citizens and develop their personality. They further described that a person must be able to differentiate between right and wrong for his/her success in life. Some were of the view that a person should be able to behave humanly with others, in that perspective, social and moral values should be considered important by the teachers. It seems an important concept to be discussed during the session but it was not focused by the facilitator. He presented some chunks of values and left over it to the participants. Some unethical comments came into listening by the observers during the training session. Participants were assigned an activity to evaluate the sessions of this training workshop. They deliberately described their opinions. They seem quite unsatisfactory during these sessions of the module 'learning psychology'. Trainees' dissatisfaction during informal meeting was also an indication towards the weakness of this session. After studying the module, almost all the participants felt the same as the: teacher is a role model for the students. He/she can play major role to modify students' behavior by using good teaching methods. Some were of the opinion that teacher can inculcate values by understanding weaknesses of the students.

F. Teacher's role to develop personality

Teacher plays a major role to develop and destroy personalities. Teachers' attitude and interest in their profession keep the students active and engaged in productive activities inside and outside the classrooms Hagen (2000). In the beginning of the module, almost all the teachers were having the same concept about the role of teacher for developing students' personalities, they feel teacher as a role model for the students. Students always follow what the teachers say and what they do. During the training session, participants were involved in a group activity to write down their responsibilities as teachers to develop students' personality. Participants worked in groups and prepared a list comprised of their responsibilities. They shared their ideas with each other and at the end facilitator concluded with some important roles of a teacher to develop learner' personality. After the completion of the module, many new concepts were felt emerging to their previous understanding. Most of the participants added that special attention by the teacher to the students is a major cause to change their behavior and activities during teaching develop a good relationship between teacher and student and among students as well..

G. Management of individual differences

Before initiation of this module, most of the teachers are of the view that they discuss with individual students about their problems. They usually assign individual tasks/activities to manage diversity in classroom. Some argued that they pay equal attention to all the students. Further more, they design groups of equal level of students and assign them task according to their I.Q level. Some of the participants describe that it's not possible for the teacher to manage individual differences due to shortage of class time and workload of the teachers. Some other participants have ambiguous reply that they don't know about managing individual differences. During discussion in the session, participants raised many questions about individual differences but facilitator could not manage to satisfy the trainees. Participants were expecting that facilitator would exemplify strategies according to their varied disciplines. That is actually the challenge for all the facilitators to introduce balanced input. By the conclusion of this module, somehow change was found in their understanding. Most of the participants replied same as earlier. Some mentioned change in their knowledge as students should be equally treated and use of participatory approach was also an enhancement in their knowledge. The participants who were not well aware of different techniques of managing individual difference, still they felt deficiency of these techniques.

H. Characteristics of introvert & extrovert students

Before starting the module, trainees were some how aware of both types of the students, introvert and extrovert, most of them very deliberately describe their view that the students who are bold, confident, active and social in all activities assigned in classroom and out side, are extrovert students and vice versa. They try to evaluate students by assigning them different tasks. During the session, no more focus was given to this topic. Some irrelevant discussion was going on that diverted participants' attention from the actual contents. It is also observed during the session that teachers' classroom management skills are of diverse need especially when they are in a position to face the participants from varied disciplines. Participants are also of the view that facilitator must have command on contents though some new concepts were introduced by the facilitators. After the completion of this module, few of the respondents changed their understanding adding the new knowledge. As teacher can involve students in different activities in classroom to check the extent of their involvement and identify introvert and extrovert students.

I. Learning application

Trainings have major effects on trainees if applied properly, the learned skills in actual classroom settings. When the trainees of this training workshop are asked about the application of learned strategies and skills in their institutions, they seem very eager to apply those skills during teaching in classroom. Data also shows that they were motivated to change their behaviour towards students' learning. Before this training session they just feel that they have to put their knowledge in students' minds without having consideration of their learning difficulties, their individual differences, their stresses and their motivation level. Now they are interested to consider students' importance not teaching. They are in a position of promising

that after this training, they will be able to understand students and modify their teaching skills according to students' psychology. They were of the view that they will try to provide friendly learning environment to the students. On the other hand, Participants were not hopeful regarding some important contents which were not discussed properly during the training sessions. Data depicts that they will be unable to apply that incomplete knowledge of many concepts in their fields.

It can be concluded that these training sessions have made the teachers aware of their teaching styles according to the learner psychology. This is also a success of this training workshop that they seem committed to apply the knowledge and skills in their actual classroom settings.

V. CHALLENGES

The trainees of this workshop discussed some challenges they are facing during this training opportunity. They described that most of the contents were university teachers focused not actually for college teachers. They felt that most of them would be unable to apply, what is learned, in their institutions. They shared their views that some strategies and skills can particularly be applied in universities where teachers are not facing the problems of huge class size. They described that some generally important topics were not discussed during training sessions of the module 'Learning Psychology'. Participants frankly discussed that most of the facilitators belong to the faculty of education, it seem that they are teaching education and its particular subjects. Facilitator was not found to introduce a balances strategy for the diversity of the disciplines in training during the module' Learning Psychology'.

During their discussion, it was found that time management was a major problem for all the participants and the facilitator as well. Majority of the participants were not interested in learning especially in this module. They came with enthusiasm every day but left the session after tea breaks. That was the major challenge for the facilitator to find out the reason. Why it happened? Further more they discussed that in this module 'Learning Psychology' contents were presented in that easy way more than required which diverted participants' concentration from the particular topic and they tried to divert facilitator's attention as well. Contents list was too lengthy to be discussed and covered by the facilitator.

Pure psychology was the focus of the discussion, nobody tried to concentrate on educational psychology. These sessions were useful but particularly for the trainees belonging to the department of psychology. Data also indicated that the trainees waited daily for the handout/ material for further study but still facilitators could not manage to provide them the relevant material for their further enrichment. An accumulative training schedule was needed before the training.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that this training workshop has many positive effects on the participants making them aware of the knowledge of students' learning psychology. Some problems were also faced by the participants that need special attention by the authorities in future. As it was discussed by the participant that they are very enthusiastic to apply new knowledge but feel difficulty to apply it in their institutions due to some environment problem.

It was also observed that HEC made struggle to make teachers aware of new concept, techniques or strategies in a very short passage of time with a large contents list. In depth and selective study of the concepts and skills were required to apply them in actual classrooms.

Contents of the modules indicate that institutions were provided with very limited time to finalize and review the contents before training workshop starts. Contents needed to be finalized before training and provided to the participants as well for their further enrichment in knowledge.

It was felt by the observer during training that some contents do not touch the problems of college education. Contents need to be reviewed with the help of college professionals keeping in view the requirements of college education system or some separate training opportunity should be provided to them.

Training was managed very efficiently but complete training schedule was also a dire need of the trainees and coordinating persons that must be prepared before hand with complete details of day to day activities, resource persons and topics to be discussed.

It was observed during the module 'Learning Psychology' that facilitator is the key factor of training. Coordinator needs to be more careful while selecting the facilitators of the particular area to make the training more successful.

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