



USING MUSIC AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

This study seeks to explore innovative methods and practices to enhance the teaching-learning process in higher education system. This study aims to use music as a pedagogical tool in order to develop the teaching-learning process by making it attractive and effective as well. For a long time, schools have been endured rather than experienced by students as “a series of explorations of self and society.” (Acronowitz,2004). Schools whose curriculum and pedagogy fails to attract and engage students of higher classes as active learners are not doing justice to the nation’s development, especially when knowledge has become power in a globalized world. Innovative methods and practices should therefore, be continuously introduced and implemented from time to time for the enhancement of teaching-learning process. This study emphasizes the need to promote music in higher education in order to curtail boredom, reduce class-bunks among students and engage them as active learners in the class by integrating it with other subjects and thus making the teaching-learning process effective and attractive.

Keywords: Music, Higher Education, Pedagogical tool, Integration, Meaningful learning

Introduction

Education is the backbone of any society. A nation builds and sustains upon the values of education it imparts, to the humane seeds that germinates into mightier perennial plants, to protect the Nation and take it to the highest rung of the global ladder. An important parameter to approximate the positive influence of education on the society is through the assessment of the quality imparted, which necessitates continuous implementation of innovative teaching methods and practices. In present times, with the changing nature of the curriculum, and market demands, additional care is required in the selection of the knowledge-dissemination pedagogy that will encourage complete revamping of the teaching-learning process: from the age-old “instruction-and-rote-learning” delivery system to the more recent “interactive and discussion-based” pedagogy.

As has been evident in Indian culture since ages, the need for value-oriented education has been emphasized repeatedly, which would be effective, only through the orientation and development of the teacher’s own personality in such related values. Quality improvement in the pedagogical process would likely to start with the development of the teacher’s inner self, followed by the implementation of innovative methods and tools in the knowledge delivery process, which would ensure the teaching-learning process be more effective. Educational institutions where curriculum and pedagogy lacks effectiveness to attract and engage students of higher classes towards active learning, act as paralytic agents towards the development of the nation, especially at a time when knowledge is being synonymized with power in the globalization environment.

Based on the extant forms of pedagogical tools prevalent in India, it might be argued that, Music could be also used as an active didactic tool to develop the teaching-learning process in higher education. The present study thus, intends to introduce the importance of music as an alternate pedagogical tool, and also determine its necessity in higher education to better assist in coursework execution through curtailed boredom, less absenteeism, and active bi-directional participation.

Emerging Need

Nobel laureate and literary legend Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, being a staunch naturalist, emphasized the intellectual, physical, moral, economic, and spiritual aspects of a human’s life. Tagore illustrated that character-building education could be better supplemented through the aesthetic development of senses through music, drama, dance, act, and literature. Music as an educational tool, would initiate better character development, through the infusion of components imbibed within a region’s culture, which might further establish and enhance an appreciating bondage between the teacher and the learner.

With the growth in the unemployment rate and the deficiency in quality talent, the demand for better education and meaningful learning have increased. In the twenty-first century, the world of higher education has the requirement for more reforms and encouragement in terms of innovativeness, to assure seamless flow of knowledge and ideas within and among the knowledge-seekers in the form of either individuals or institutions. In this dynamic setting, creativity in the knowledge delivery process with better pedagogical tools would assist in effective development in the education system of the Nation. Education through Music would make the learning process easy, relaxed, effective, dialogue-based, and easily communicable.

Extant research has revealed that, students in higher classes feel un-interested during regular lecture sessions. Music could be used as a beneficial teaching aid to promote student engagement, increased attentiveness, and better course material comprehension.

Music both in its passive and active form has been attributed to be a stimulus for the induction of brain plasticity. Active production and receptiveness of music is involved with the development of higher order motor and cognitive regions; whereas, passive intake is focused more on the auditory cortex (Neurowiki, 2013). Research has shown that training through music helps in the infusion of gamma-band activities in the brain. These bands have been deemed responsible for increased attention, memory, multi-sensory integration, and expectation which lead to better cognitive performance.

Berk (2008) proposed in his study the presence of an individualized jukebox of memories inside human beings. Sensory perceptions through the aid of music have been observed to stimulate and retrieve those memories from within. Music has also been attributed to trigger response in the form of “flashbulb memory” which might aid in salvaging previous discussions during classroom participations at a later time frame.

Music could also generate powerful emotional effects. It might evoke or induce various human emotions such as anger, excitement, activity, motivation, love, laughter, whimsy, tears, dreams, and calmness. With the assistance of related music, classroom instructors could manipulate and decide the effect they would want to produce to suit a given learning situation.

Probable Outcomes of using Music as a Pedagogical Tool in Higher Education

Music possess various facets and could be used in the improvement of various issues related to in-class decorum and delivery. The implementation of music within the education system perimeters might influence the learning process through various possibilities, some of which are mentioned as under:

Grabs student's attention:

Music increases attentiveness and helps to engage students in the class and thus making the class more active. Many times, it has been found that students feel unenthusiastic with the teacher/ instructor who speak in a monotone voice making a 30 min class double in time. Music, however, successfully creates an environment to grab students' attention and achieves to make them participate in the class.

Increases student engagement:

The need to promote physical and emotional engagement of students in the class appears to be a major issue in higher education. Boredom, helplessness, reduced attention leads to de-motivation, inattention towards the content and cognitive deactivation which negatively affect student learning. Music curtails emotional disengagement in students of higher classes and thus reduces class bunks and increases student engagement in the class.

Improves attitude towards content and learning:

Music may be most beneficial for promoting both aspects of active learning approach through encouraging students to discuss and analyze songs and lyrics as they relate to the course content.

Creates bond with other students and teacher:

In the present educational process, the teacher is not the only source of knowledge in the classroom. Teacher acts as a catalyst or helper to students who establish and enforce their own rules. Learning various subjects through music, like analyzing the content and lyrics of a song in various languages in a language class or appreciating poetry of a song in the literature class within a group create a bond with other classmates.

Establishes healthy relation among classmates:

Music can get students to talk to one another and discuss their own music preferences. This will establish a good healthy relation among classmates.

Encourages participation in group activity:

The current curriculum of higher education aims at learning through group activity in the class. There is a need to create an environment where students can actively participate in group activities and music is assumed to be a very effective pedagogical tool that engage participants in their own learning in group activities. It will encourage to build a community of learners. According to Maier, “music can function as a classroom community- building activity as well as an educationally significant experience” in higher education English classes.

Increases memory of content:

It is often found that students fail to memorize content of subjects despite recalling lyrics of a song easily. If subjects are taught using music, it will increase students' memory of content.

Removes mental fatigueness and makes learning fun:

Music as a pedagogical tool may be used to create a comfortable, relaxing, lightened and fun mood in the classroom environment.

Decreases anxiety:

In today's competitive world, stress has increased with growing anxiety to remain in the long race of success. As a result, to cope up with the present scenario, students are spoon feeding and vomiting course contents and thus engaging themselves in rote learning. Music, however, releases this growing stress and decreases anxiety among students.

Saves time:

Using music as a pedagogical tool will help to make the teaching – learning process easy, effective and attractive and will simultaneously save time.

Music as a Pedagogical Tool in Subject-based Delivery

As was proposed in The African Music Educator (1977), "There is no place in the brain marked 'science', 'social studies', 'mathematics' and so on. Since human knowledge and human behavior are not segmented, neither should classroom experiences".

Music could also be used as a differentiating pedagogical tool to integrate the process of learning in varied subjects within the classroom domain, to alleviate the knowledge sharing experience:

(a) **History:** Group activities related to research on prevalent musical culture in ancient civilizations and bygone eras, could assist the students to imbibe knowledge about the emergence of their regional and national culture, and the development of social strata and forms of livelihood.

(b) **Geography:** Folk and country music of various regions could be used to understand, identify, and analyze related demographics, culture-specific importance of occasions, both spiritual and materialistic. The lyrics might also provide insights into the use of various regional dialects, the importance of these local languages in the execution of daily chores, and the development of a socio-economic background for long-term sustenance.

(c) **Analytics and Quantitative subjects:** Music could be used as a stimulant to enhance skills in analytical and quantitative subjects, since extant behavioral research has already probed and established patterns related to mathematics in musical rhythms.

(d) **Linguistics:** In language-training sessions, music could be used as an additional tool to identify and improve on accent and phonetics, along with language-specific pronunciations.

Conclusion

Higher education has undergone disruptive changes over decades, with the identification, development and implementation of innovative pedagogical mechanisms. The introduction of Internet, case-based discussions, learning management systems (LMS), simulated learning environments have proved to be advantageous in the increment of student interest and approval towards knowledge assimilation. Music could also have considerable influence over the learning mindset of the present-day knowledge seekers, if provided through proper training and expertise. The in-class learning process could be elevated to willful participation, holistic discussions and a wider perspective developed for the topics and the subjects in general. Music could even act as pacifiers in situations of anxiety and tensions, and integrate varied backgrounds to enable equitable and balanced knowledge delivery and intake.

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