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A Literary Analysis of Teaching and Learning at Hogwarts

Kausar Saida Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Abstract

The Harry Potter Series has found a place in the hearts of millions of children as well as adults across the globe. Hogwarts is the traditional boarding school which is situated in the faerie green countryside that is well beyond London. Though Hogwarts is a school in the fictional world, there are many people across the globe who have a relationship with it. We have developed a close affinity with Harry Potter, his friends as well as the teachers who are associated with the school. Students at the school learn to perfect the arts of witchcraft through a fixed curriculum. The school setting plays a significant role in the stories. The Harry Potter series persistently revolve around the protagonist's heart rending and shocking adventures and experiences in school. The cornerstone for analysis is J.K Rowling's portrayal of the teachers at Hogwarts. This leads to an emphasis on the teaching methods of the teachers. This paper has explored the pedagogy and different approaches of certain professors at Hogwarts. This study has demonstrated that students at Hogwarts do learn but their learning can be termed as wholesome only when teachers adopt the pedagogical approach that involves the concept of active learning integrated into a pleasant environment that not only boasts of cooperative learning, continuous support, but encourages and awards analytical thinking and risk taking.

Keywords: Harry Potter series, Traditional, Curriculum, Pedagogical theories

*Corresponding author: Kausar Saida; Email: ksaida@hct.ac.ae DOI: https://doi.org/10.37227/IJEKM-2021-11-1147

Introduction

Harry Potter series perpetuate its phenomenal grip across the globe. It has broken all records and has been heralded as the stimulant for transforming the younger generation from being 'couch potatoes' to nurturing their latent and dormant love for reading and becoming avid readers. The fictional world created by J.K. Rowling has found a unique place in the hearts of the young and the old alike. Each one of us is able to connect to the characters at some level in the stories. Students are intrigued to learn that the magical school of Hogwarts resonates with their own schools and the characters personify their own lives, be it at the personal level or at the academic level. Teachers are fascinated with the teaching methodology and attitudes of their counterparts, school and classroom environment, etc. In short, Harry Potter series has woven its magic and the young as well as the old alike are enchanted by it.

According to Swedish curriculum, upper secondary schools' responsibility "is to impart knowledge and create conditions so that students can acquire and develop their

knowledge. Education should transform students into responsible people who indulge in actively participating in and contributing to professional life and societal life, thus contributing to the all-round development of the students" (National Agency for Education, 2013). The responsibility is transferred to teachers who have to be skilled at their profession and ensure that students develop certain skills. There is not one perfect teaching method. Acquisition of knowledge is different for students across the globe. As such, it can be rightly inferred that it would be more appropriate to understand the theories and methods applicable to various students. There have been instances where certain students flourish with some teachers and fail with others.

Teachers need to be cognizant of the varied practices and be aware of how these practices influence students' learning. In addition, teachers have the responsibility to enhance their teaching in pursuance of an outstanding learning environment. Students all over the globe are all different and have different ways of acquiring knowledge. Trying to comprehend and construct the most dynamic and effective methods for various pupils is a fascinating and stimulating task. Quality education leads to the accomplishment of educational goals, objectives, and conventions. The parameters of education depend on pedagogy. Thus, the primary duty of a teacher is to apply significant pedagogy in their teaching which will enhance their knowledge, thus ascertaining the sharpening of the students' skills and abilities (Rutto, 2017). As teachers gain experience in teaching and work towards achieving the required goals and objectives, simultaneously, they are obliged to inculcate a deep understanding of the theories of pedagogy which will have a significant impact on their teaching styles.

John Friedrich Herbert (2008), a German philosopher and psychologist is considered to be the founder of pedagogy as an academic discipline. It is very aptly said, "When people talk about the pedagogy of teaching, they will be referring to the way teachers deliver the content of the curriculum to a class. When a teacher plans a lesson they will consider different ways to deliver the content. That decision will be made based on their own teaching preferences, their experience and the context that they teach in" (Tes Editorial, 2018). However, different teachers have different pedagogical approaches for their learners. As Keven Bartle states, "The first rule of teaching is good pedagogy. The second rule of good teaching is good pedagogy. Repeat ad infinitum.....The third rule of teaching is good pedagogy" (Bartle, Bring on the Trojan Mice, 2013). The components of teaching and learning process comprise of aims and objectives, content, methodology teaching tools, learning forms and results which are included in our lesson plan. This theory has its connection with L. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of educational activity. The major pedagogical approaches are behaviourism, constructivism, cognitivism (Rutto, 2017). Hence, this study has been conducted to investigate the pedagogy of teachers at Hogwarts and its impact on students.

Pedagogical Approaches

Behaviourism

Psychologist John B. Watson founded the behaviourism theory in the early 1900s. Watson (1913) argued that the child's environment shaped their behaviour. Behaviourists believe that human behavioural responses can be integrated into the learning processes. This concept of conditioning was the result of research that looked into animal behaviours. Classical Conditioning (Pavlov, 1928) and Operant Conditioning (Thorndike, 1898; Skinner, 1938) exerted great influence on the advancement of Behaviourism.

Classical Conditioning

Classical Conditioning connects two stimuli to produce a behaviour. Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov conducted a series of experiments in which he taught a dog to link food with a sound. The result was that the dog salivates whenever it heard a sound as it associated the sound with food.

Operant Conditioning

On the contrary, operant conditioning applies rewards and punishments for behaviours in order to augment and condition learning through consequences. The learner's behaviour depends on the environment wherein the learner receives a reward for a certain behaviour. Eventually, a bond is established between the operation and the stimulus.

Behaviourists think of the learner's mind as a 'tabula rasa'- a blank slate and opined that existence of knowledge is independent. Behaviourism views human behaviour to be predictable and measurable. Besides, Mc Leod (2020) argued that all complex behaviour is learned from the environment, except for a few inherent reflexes and all behaviour, irrespective of its complexity, can be categorized into the elementary task of conditioning.

Behaviorism is teacher- centred. Teacher is responsible for the knowledge and the skills to be taught, thus creating an environment for achieving learning outcomes. Various activities allow students to drill, practice repetitively and to test. Progression takes place in small steps, moving towards complexity and mastery. Students progress to the next step only if they have tasted success in the current step. Positive and negative reinforcement techniques shape performances.

Constructivism

Constructivism, an approach to teaching and learning, considers learning to be a mental activity (Ertmer & Newby, 1993; Schunk, 2015). Driscoll (2000) states that as per constructivism, knowledge can only exist within the human mind with no connection to reality. Jonassen (1994) argues that there is a misconception that constructivism urges students to "reinvent the wheel". Students take no part in reinventing the wheel; rather they are more interested in understanding how it turns and functions. According to Philips (1995), students use pre-existing knowledge to construct new knowledge. Constructivism is student-centred where students play a key role in constructing knowledge.

The four basic features of constructivist learning environments as advocated by Tam (2000) are as follows:

Teachers and students share knowledge.

Authority will be shared by teacher and students.

The teacher takes up the role of a facilitator.

Small number of diverse students will form learning groups.

Constructivism defines the role of a teacher as a facilitator whose main task is to assist students in becoming active participants in their learning and creating significant associations between pre-existing knowledge, new knowledge and the techniques involved in learning. According to Brooks and Brooks (1993), a constructivist teacher is one who uses a wide variety of materials, encourages students to interact with the teacher and one

another, inspire students to question one another and discuss the responses and determines students understanding through comprehension and completion of various tasks. As such, we can infer that a teacher using the constructivist approach is responsible for creating and maintaining a synergetic analytical environment where students construct their own knowledge with the teacher acting as a facilitator and guide.

Cognitivism

Certain social behaviours were beyond the comprehension of behaviourists. They were unable to explain why children did not emulate all reinforced behaviour. Besides, the children could replicate new behaviour after a certain period following their observation, without being fortified for that behaviour. These observations led Bandura and Walter (1963) to state that an individual could imitate behaviour by observing the behaviour of another person which led to Bandaru's Social Cognitive Theory (Dembo, 1994).

"Cognitivism theorists recognize that much learning involves associations established through contiguity and repetition. They also acknowledge the importance of reinforcement, although they stress its role in providing feedback about the correctness of responses over its role as a motivator. However, even while accepting such behaviouristic concepts, cognitive theorists view learning as involving the acquisition or reorganization of the cognitive structures through which human process and store information" (Good and Brophy, 1990, pp.187).

Cognitivism is about the learning process which is about what goes on in the mind and not conspicuous obvious behaviours (Ertmer & Newby, 1993). According to Shuell (1986), cognitivists interests lie in trying to fathom the way in which learners can gain knowledge with the help of cognitive tasks and activities like understanding, thinking representation of knowledge and memory. To cognitivists, learning is active and aspirational. Though cognitivists accept the fact that knowledge prevails outside of people, they do not view the mind as an empty box. On the other hand, mind can be termed as an information filtering system that is used to gain knowledge. Schunk (2015) states that memory plays a vital role in acquiring, conserving, reclaiming and meaningfully organizing knowledge during learning. Schemas are internal knowledge structures that support the recovery of information appropriate to a given context. The storage of knowledge, retrieval and transfer is widely impacted by the manner in which knowledge is demonstrated and organized for the learner. The most popular theory of Cognitivism in education is Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of educational objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).



Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is used to design and develop learning that align with the correct level of cognitive performance. The higher the levels of cognitive processing, the easier it is to explain complex categories of learning including problem-solving, analysing, and theoretical thinking. One of the most important aspect of cognitivist learning is the transmission and utilization of knowledge to new contexts.

Though cognitivism is teacher centred, learners participate actively in the learning process wherein learning is very much related to prior knowledge and complex problems and tasks are divided into parts. More attention is paid to metacognitive activities like the potential to plan, organize, self-manage and self-monitor learning. Some of the advantages of cognivistic approach is that it develops learning, increases confidence, improves comprehension, enhances problem solving skills, in addition to helping in learning things very fast. It also allows students to be able to form concepts.

Pedagogy at Hogwarts

Harry Potter books are very British in nature. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is a boarding school situated in a scenic place well beyond London. It is a school that teaches magic to students. Though it is a school that teaches magic, students do not use magic to learn magic. They have to attend classes, go through their books, take examinations and get evaluated on a competitive scale. As Dickinson (2006) states that learning is the sole responsibility of the students. The learning culture that Rowling has strongly created inculcates a sense of responsibility in the students, making it possible for them to take measure of their teachers' performance, complement it with their own research and practice and develop into becoming their own teachers.

Rowling's idea of teaching has very little to do with the instructors. We can rightly argue that many of the classroom pedagogies at Hogwarts are not without their drawbacks, but the students still become proficient in gaining the knowledge and skills required to be transformed into witches and wizards. Most of the students are able to imbibe enough knowledge to be successful in their OWL (Ordinary Wizarding Levels) and NEWT (Newly Exhausting Wizarding Tests) exams.

The learning environment at Hogwarts is miles away from traditional teaching environment and coincides with the one introduced by Jane Tompkins (1994) who argues that teachers are no longer someone who can instil terror into the hearts of the students with a serious face, and a prim, authoritarian voice. They are facilitators who guide the students in their learning. Hogwarts learning culture prefers practical life experiences. The pedagogy used by the teachers at Hogwarts compel the students to teach themselves. Morton (2015, 128) sums up the theory of variation as "A necessary condition for finding and experiencing a certain aspect of the object of learning is that the learner has the opportunity to encounter differences in the relevant dimension of variation." Vygotsky (1978) with a focus on the learners and an opinion that teachers must allow students the freedom to learn in connection with others, aims to create an environment which allows students to develop. Dewey has used the concept of "learning by doing" in his Democracy and Education (2004, 325). The teachers at Hogwarts have their own style of teaching and this article will look into the teaching style and attitude of two of the most complex teachers at Hogwarts and relate them to Bloom's taxonomy.

Professor Snape is the Potions master and one of Harry's greatest nemesis. He is a very complex character and has a hearty dislike of Harry Potter. Snape is a control freak who intimidates the students with his magical instructions and urge them to make the potions under his intuitive and irrational scowl. Snape is more interested in exercising his powers as a teacher than in creating a fraternity of learners. One of the techniques used by Snape is the "ice-pick method". William (2016) states that this method permits the teacher to select students randomly to answer questions. To some, this might appear fair but sometimes someone who is not comfortable talking in front of the class might be called upon to answer, this is neither fair nor sustainable as seconded by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), who opine that "There is no point in sustaining learning that is trivial or that disappears once it has been tested." On the other hand, sustainable learning should be: "Like an excellent meal, deep like sustainable learning should be line an excellent meal, deep sustaining learning requires wholesome ingredients, a rich and varied menu, caring preparation, and pleasing presentation" (27). Students have the tendency of recollecting information and then forgetting once the lesson is finished. To avoid this, teachers should provide a variety of prospects to learn, since learning happens in a number of ways. Snape asks questions to those students who are unable to answer. Even if they can get the right answer, it is insignificant owing to the fact that just puzzling out the answer to the question drawn upon a short passage in a textbook does not indicate any deep form of knowledge.

Snape likes to test prior knowledge of the students in the class and once the preliminary quiz is finished, he instructs them to prepare a potion following the instructions given in the textbook. (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, 188). Students' expertise in reading, understanding, and following instructions is the deciding factor for success in Snape's class. Having a brainstorming session prior to the start of a lesson prepares the students for the lesson and awakens in them an interest to learn. But, Snape devalues the meaning of brainstorming when he asks questions before starting the class only with the intention of humiliating the weak ones. There are two such instances.

In the first instance, Snape's treatment of Harry in his first Potions class forced Harry to revise his opinion of Snape disliking him. He was convinced that Snape hated him. These kinds of feelings are not at all pleasant from the point of view of a teacher. Neville Longbottom was another student who had to endure humiliation at the hands of Snape. Neville is a timid and fearful student. He is very easily cowed and unnerved by

Snape's menacing and aggressive attitude. Self-esteem plays a very important role in shaping a person's life and Ingesson (2006, pg.26) has written that the way self-esteem of a student is dealt with in the classroom environment will pave the way for complications:

Empirical studies performed by Harter (1993) support the formulation by James. She showed that the magnitude of self-esteem was dependent on perceived competence on the one hand and the evaluation of such competence on the other. i.e. if a person experienced low competence in scholastic achievement and at the same time judged this domain to be very important, the discrepancy created a low academic, or scholastic, self-esteem.

Being of a timid and soft nature, Neville's lack of academic intellect lowers his self- esteem. Though this could be his persona, it is brought to the fore in Snape's class when he is termed a failure and ridiculed in front of the class. A teacher needs to be aware of his students' nature and use a softer approach with students like Neville and make them feel comfortable. A teacher should make them understand that it is alright to fail and that failure precedes success as Dweck (2007, 102) affirms: "Don't judge. Teach. It's a learning process." In accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy, Snape urges students to advance directly to application without providing the required information, examples, and confidence indispensable for getting there.

The most sought after teacher in Hogwarts is Professor Lupin. He is also the favourite teacher of Harry. J.K Rowling's depiction of Lupin is that of a person with a calm and kind nature which is clearly evidenced in his treatment of his students with respect. Lupin is the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher. His academic responsibility is to teach students magic so that they can protect themselves against the evil forces in the world. This can range from wiping out dangerous magical beings to keeping oneself safe from the spells from other wizards. Rowling's portrayal of Lupin's teaching technique comprises of him handing out general information to the students about the task at hand. (Harry and the prisoner of Azkaban, 139-141). These instructions include about the being they are going to face and what is required of them to face it. Lupin can be considered to be a gentle and trusting teacher, the complete opposite of Snape.

In Defence against the Dark Arts class, students have the freedom to test themselves and meet success after a couple of failures. Lupin asks the students to repeat the spells after him to familiarize themselves with the name of the spell and its correct pronunciation. (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, 141). The students gain first-hand experience in practising the spells without any sign of fear even though there is the possibility of problems arising due to failures. Lupin's trust in the students instil in them the courage to practice Defence against the Dark Arts spells without any inhibitions. Besides, students seem to enjoy the class as they are able to work on real magic against real creatures. The method Lupin uses is in sync with Dewey's (2004, pg. 343) thoughts: "The learning in school should be continuous with that out of school. There should be free interplay between the two." This compels the reader to conclude that the students will have gained some real-life skills that they practice. Lupin utilizes the concept of learning by doing since the students are learning the spells by practicing them.

In contrast to Snape's demeaning attitude towards his students, Lupin is the antithesis with his ever-encouraging nature. In Lupin's first class, Snape degrades Neville Longbottom, saying:

Possibly no one's warned you, Lupin but this class contains Neville Longbottom. I would advise you not to trust him with anything difficult. Not unless Miss Granger is hissing instructions in his ear.......

Professor Lupin had raised his eyebrows. "I was hoping that Neville would assist me with the first stage of the operation,' he said, "and I am sure he will perform it admirably." (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, 138-139)

This support of Lupin to Neville is a testimony of the teacher's faith in him which acts as the catalyst for motivation and this leads to his victory over the boggart in his first class. Lupin's calm and trusting nature is in a way responsible for the students' success since they feel safe and confident. When it is Harry's turn and he is on the brink of failing, Lupin steps in and assists him in a way that does not undermine his confidence. Only Harry has the feeling that it was actually Lupin who helped him get through the task without the others in the class being aware of it. (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azakaban, 146). The teacher has a great responsibility to watch out for students when doing activities since it might upset the one who is unable to do the activity, leading to a disturbing experience. Ingesson (2007, 25) states:

Shame and esteem are linked together. We feel shame when the failure to meet an important competence is seen as a reflection of some defect in the self—such as an inferior ability in a highly valued domain. Shame is a social affect, in the sense that we feel shame in relation to others, but most of the time it is the internal expectation of shame that makes

us behave in a shame avoiding manner.

A student's self-esteem takes a great fall when failing due to the embarrassment that he /she might feel later. This would in turn pave the way for a dislike for the subject failed in because of feeling ashamed. This gives a clear indication that a teacher should have strong knowledge of one's students so that anything that can culminate into failure and public shame can be avoided. Lupin's words of praise to students who succeed in his class make them feel good. His calm and trusting nature leverages students' self-confidence and this could very well be the reason for their success. In guiding Harry through the Patronus charm to drive the Dementors away, and allowing the students to control the Boggart, Lupin employs all the steps in Bloom's Taxonomy. Dickinson (2006) opines that "learning processes flow not simply linearly from one step to the next, but move around from one stage of learning to another and back again".

Conclusion

This article aims at analysing the teaching pedagogy of two of the most complex teachers of Hogwarts. The teaching methods of Professor Snape and Professor Lupin, their attitude towards students and its impact have been analysed. Students' response is different to a variety of methods but the same method can have different results based on how it is applied. Learning by doing is a method that is used by both Lupin and Snape but the results are different. Students demonstrate success in Lupin's class learning defensive spells using them. The secret behind this success could be that Lupin is always there for the students, is a torch bearer to them, instilling in them the self-confidence required since they confidently practise by themselves alone. Lupin's accomplishment is visible in the students applying his teaching in their fifth year to train and master the defence against the dark arts in the rebel gang Dumbledore's Army.

Professor Snape, the Potions master loves to intimidate students. He has never illustrated any part of potion making. On the other hand, his directives appear magically on

the chalk board and the students struggle to follow the instructions given and prepare the potions under Snape's personalized and disapproving look. Neville is petrified by Snape's harsh and rigid taskmaster attitude and this leads to his failure in the course almost every lesson and if Snape's approach had been a gentler one, the ramifications most likely would have been different.

It would be appealing to focus on fictional teachers and how they are depicted. In the world of J. K. Rowling, there are teachers who could be analysed from a pedagogical point of view and considering the craze of the books, it could steer the way for further discussions about what is the requirement for creating a learning environment that is as exceptional as possible. Students are entitled to receive a meritorious education because learning itself is a great fountain of magic.

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