PEDAGOGIC STRATEGIES AS APPLIED TO ECONOMICS CLASSROOMS AT SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Economics is a dynamic subject which touches our lives daily. Irrespective of the profession that an individual pursues, she is exposed to Economics at every step. Ranging from taking decisions on whether to buy a pair of shoes to whether to take a loan to purchase a house, all such decisions are driven by Economic principles. If Economics is so important, then why do most students find the subject at the Senior Secondary Level boring and dry which needs to be rote learnt and believe that it is without any insights into the real world? We as educators of Economics do realize that this perception of our students is misplaced. Yet, can we blame them to think this way, especially if the pedagogy we use to transact Economics is archaic?

The traditional school setting is based on axioms that are outdated and mismatched to current research undertaken in the field of education that supports and provides evidences how a child improves learning. So many of us educators go into our classrooms having answered the question, “what am I going to teach today?” Do we ever seek to answer, “what will my students learn today?” By changing the focus of the classroom from the teacher to the learner has far reaching implications on how we teach Economics to make it a more interesting subject where concepts are understood deeply so that they can be applied.

In this paper, the author highlights a few of the strategies that have been practiced during her journey as a teacher of Economics at the Secondary School level. The first step included making lectures more interactive through brainstorming, asking for examples and sharing of students’ personal experiences relevant to a topic. Strategies beyond lectures included small group collaborative learning methods that range from using the print and electronic media to undertake group discussions, problem solving based learning, case studies, project work and games. She has found peer teaching a particularly relevant strategy that engages students and helps children learn in a non-threatening environment.

As the author of this paper undertook steps to help engage her students in the subject, she realized the benefits that these strategies had on student learning – both in content and life skills and attitudes. These advantages included students being more engaged in learning, wherein they found it meaningful to explore and discover knowledge. As learning became more fun and interesting intrinsic motivation levels became high which positively re-enforced learning. Improved attention and retention are also important offshoots of alternative learning strategies that are practiced in the classroom. Students also lean to be effective communicators, project managers, team players, reflective and critical thinkers along with showcasing their creative abilities. Classrooms become more co-operative as there is respect for others whilst learning. The paper also provides us with strong justification for many of the classroom strategies from various educational theories and documents she came into contact. This paper also motivates economics teachers by pointing out that a little planning and organization and implementing one strategy at a time along with refining old strategies can enrich our curriculum and the experience learners get from an Economics class.
Introduction

Economics is a dynamic subject which touches our lives daily. Irrespective of the profession that an individual pursues, she is exposed to Economics at every step. Ranging from taking decisions on whether to buy a pair of shoes to whether to take a loan to purchase a house, all such decisions are driven by Economic principles. The sub-prime crisis in the United States of America led to economic repercussions in the everyday lives of not only Americans but also Indians. If Economics is so important, then why do most students find the subject at the Senior Secondary Level boring and dry which needs to be rote learnt and believe that it is without any insights into the real world? We as educators of Economics do realize that this perception of our students is misplaced. Yet, can we blame them to think this way, especially if the pedagogy we use to transact Economics is archaic?

The traditional school setting is based on axioms that are outdated and mismatched to current research undertaken in the field of education that supports and provides evidences how a child improves learning. So many of us educators go into our classrooms having answered the question, “what am I going to teach today?” Do we ever seek to answer, “what will my students learn today?” By changing the focus of the classroom from the teacher to the learner has far reaching implications on how we teach Economics to make it a more interesting subject where concepts are understood deeply so that they can be applied.

In this paper, I attempt to highlight a few of the strategies that have been practiced during my journey as a teacher of Economics at the Secondary School level. As I undertook steps to help engage my students in the subject, I realized the benefits that these strategies had on student learning – both in content and life skills and attitudes. These advantages are discussed in section 2 of the paper. In the third section of the paper there is a brief discussion of some of the research in education that provides justification for many of the classroom strategies that I have practiced over the years. The paper concludes by requesting teachers of Economics to break away from the shackles of traditional teaching methods and take bold steps towards making the teaching of Economics more interesting and alive for our children.
Section 1: My journey as a teacher

I joined the teaching profession ten years ago as a break from Investment Banking with no formal degree in education but with a passion to make a difference in the classroom. When I entered the classroom it was very much like any traditional teacher – a person who carried a set of notes, a text book, some chalk and used the blackboard to teach. My students listened to me, took notes with an occasional interruption in the form of a question. Within a few days I realized that my students would not remember many a things that had been spoken about in earlier classes or they would be disinterested, doodling or looking out of the window during class. This made me question how much Economics was being learnt and whether the teaching style was appropriate. I then decided to take the first step towards improving my lectures and embarked on experimenting with Interactive Lectures.

Interactive Lectures: Whilst literature may ask teachers to move away from the traditional chalk and talk method of teaching, many of us do realize the importance of lectures in our classrooms. Yet it is in a traditional lecture that we find most students bored, disengaged and distracted. If this method of teaching is the most significant way of imparting the curriculum in any classroom, then why can’t we modify it to make it more enriching for the students? Why can’t we make lectures more interactive wherein students feel involved and a part of the learning process?

My trial began with lectures being interspersed with small written and oral activities which broke the monotony of listening to the teacher. For instance, after completing the concept of the relationship between elasticity of demand and expenditure, students were given 2-3 application questions that needed to be discussed in small groups and the findings had to be reported out. For example they needed to discuss the impact of a rise in the price of school uniform prices on their parent’s expenditure just before the academic term started. Or how would the revenue of a 5 star hotel change if it offered a discount during off peak season. Questions such as these helped students better understand concepts and their applicability in the real world scenario.

Another activity which is very useful in interactive lectures is brainstorming. This short exercise, in small groups or pairs gives an idea as to how much students are aware of a topic before it is introduced in the classroom. For example, before starting the New Economic Policy
in Class XI, students were asked to discuss their ideas of why the New Economic Policy had to be implemented in India in 1991 along with some of the key policy changes. This helped ascertain the level of understanding from Class X. Brainstorming could be used at anytime during the lecture as it helps engage students in a topic.

Another exercise that enhances learning is when students are asked to provide examples on a concept. For example, once they have understood the difference between final and intermediate goods, students were asked to suggest situations when a good of their choice is intermediate and when it is final. Through this exercise I found that conceptual understanding became better as students applied learnt concepts immediately and did not have to wait till the entire chapter was over. Also, this process allowed them to clarify doubts as concepts are learnt.

Lectures can also be made interactive by asking learners to narrate their personal experiences that are related to a topic. For instance, our Class XI students went on a week-long rural sensitization programme. Their experiences became a wealth of information when rural development was learnt in the classroom. Students shared episodes, anecdotes and other observations that were relevant to what is being discussed in the classroom. Further, peers supported a child’s narration where additional inputs were required. All this brought in camaraderie and created a non-threatening and conducive environment for learning.

**Print Media:** I believe that Economics Teachers are well versed with using print media to showcase the practicality of the subject in their classrooms. When doing data presentation in statistics, students are asked to collect different types of graphs. When the government budget is announced, we all keep newspaper cuttings to discuss these when we do budgets later in the year with our Class 12. Similarly many of us ask our students to keep a record of foreign exchange rates for a week so that this data can be used whilst explaining flexible exchange rates. Along with these basic uses, print media can be used to take discussions beyond the academic curriculum on a particular topic. For example, the Economist has developed a Big Mac Index to compare exchange rates across countries. This little magazine clipping is given to the students to discuss how purchasing power parity is used to determine exchange rates.

Students are also encouraged to read newspapers and magazines. Many a days the last 10 minutes of class are spent in discussing any terminology, ideas or views that students may not
have understood. Further, newspapers offer opinions on curriculum related topics which can be used as a basis or tool to facilitate discussions on a given topic. Newspaper and magazine articles make very good case studies (discussed later) when they are without any opinions and views.

**Electronic Media:** When I started teaching students disliked Indian economics as they found it boring and believed it had to be rote learnt. Over the years, as a department we have constantly endeavoured to make Indian economics more interesting for our students. One such initiative has been to show movies – such as an edited version of Do Bhiga Zameen as a precursor to discussions on India at the eve of independence. After watching the movie students were broken into groups to discuss the issues relating to Indian agriculture. Each group then presented their findings to the class. Our experience showed that the movie had a deep visual impact on the students, which helped them to better understand and be sensitive to the conditions of Indian agriculture. Feature films and documentaries can also be shown for a variety of topics related to environment, sustainable development, co-operatives etc.

**Teacher driven Power-point Presentations:** Way back in 2002, when I was teaching domestic product and national product, a student could not understand the difference between the two ideas. I thought about how the concepts could be simplified and attempted making a power-point presentation on it. The visual presentation helped the student understand the concept with greater ease. Subsequently, it was the students who suggested that topics that include graphs and concepts be taught through power point presentations. I experimented by converting one lesson into power point. The result on learning outcomes was encouraging. The power point presentation was able to make a static equilibrium diagram more dynamic – students saw how movements and shifts in demand and supply curves take place. Colour coding helped to make diagrams clearer and improved attention spans. Presentations then moved towards showing non diagrammatic concepts such as output multiplier through pictures and animations. The visual impact assisted students to better grasp abstract concepts.

Indian economics offers a wide scope for using power point presentations to engage students in discussions to better understand and articulate ideas. In fact several of our Indian Economics chapters have only pictures depicting the central ideas of the chapter. The

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presentation is shown and students deliberate on what the pictures show, its causes and potential solutions. For example, when globalization is being discussed, there is a picture of a rural lady carrying a gigantic McDonald burger on her head (instead of a cane basket) and a coke can (instead of a plastic water can) in her hand. When students were shown this picture, it brought a highly energized, animated and passionate discussion on the impact of globalization – students were able to discern on the positive and negative aspects of globalization. Discussion also veered towards how BT cotton had adversely impacted our farmers. Thus, discussion went beyond the academic curriculum and all that a teacher had to do was to moderate, facilitate and guide the discussion towards achieving the goals that I had set out for that class.

**Problem solving based learning:** Many a times problem solving is an effective strategy to help students construct their concepts. For example, one of the first concepts of microeconomic theory is that of scarcity and choice leading to opportunity cost. In order to teach this topic, a problem is posed on planning a school leaving party. Information is given regarding the money they can spend on things like food, music, decorations, venue etc. Each group of students needs to decide on which option it will choose giving the rationale behind the choice. Through this exercise students themselves come up with the economic problem of wants being unlimited and resources being scarce due to which choice needs to be made. Also they are able to comprehend that there is an opportunity cost attached to every choice or decision that is made. I find that the problem solving method forms a wonderful way of helping students construct their own knowledge based on their findings on a given problem. Clearly, the teacher’s role in this method of teaching is that of a facilitator and guide, wherein she can probe and ask questions as to why students have made certain suggestions.

**Case Studies:** Many a times whilst teaching I felt that students would parrot my views in answering questions. They took whatever the teacher said as the only way to analyse an issue and believed that there was no other opinion. Realizing this lacuna prompted me to explore the possibility of learning through the case study method. For example, in teaching Unemployment in Class XI, the class was divided into small groups. Data on unemployment in India over the years was given to each group so that they could discuss the given data, identify the problem, the potential causes of unemployment and its possible solutions. Each group then made a presentation on the given problem. This allowed students to perceive the problem in their own
way, analyse it and suggest solutions. It gave them a platform to have different views on unemployment and they realized that as long as they could logically justify their solutions there was no right or wrong answer - hence the teacher’s views are not the only views on a topic.

Under the case study method, information or a story is provided. However, there is no analysis regarding outcomes or solutions. Students need to provide possible options to the given situation which are backed by conceptual justifications. The teacher uses the case study method to extend a student’s understanding of real life issues and in turn enhances his/her existing conceptual knowledge.

**Games and simulations:** Use of games is a very interesting tool that helps students retain their learning. In national income accounting, converting national income into related aggregates by using depreciation, net factor income from abroad and net indirect taxes can be quite challenging for students. Despite several numerical examples and practice questions students invariably make errors. I envisaged that playing a game may be able to create a spirit of competition and challenge through which learning may be enhanced. A game was constructed wherein students were divided into groups. They were given flashcards of different NIA aggregates such as NDP at factor cost, NNP at market price. They were also given the three elements of depreciation, net factor income from abroad and net indirect taxes that cause changes in NIA aggregates along with some plus and minus signs. On the blackboard a conversion was written that the children needed to make – for instance converting NDP at factor cost to GNP at market price. In their groups students had to work out how they would arrive at GNP at market price with the given flashcards. The game brought in fun, laughter and a competitive spirit to score more than their peers to win the hallowed prize of chocolates. My experience shows that it also helps solve retention problems.

Following the success of this game, the department has subsequently surfed the internet and found several games that are suitable for teaching economic theory in class 12. These include games on law of diminishing marginal utility, law of variable proportions, barter and functions of money etc. Students look forward to ‘game-oriented’ classes and a key outcome of such classes is that learning happens in an unpressured and enjoyable environment.
Peer- Teaching and Learning: Students teaching each other in a variety of ways is another strategy to enhance learning. Some of the ways through which students learn from each other are discussed below:

(a) Power point presentations: This strategy has been used successfully in teaching economic and social infrastructure. Students were broken into groups and each group had to research and develop a power point presentation on one economic or social infrastructure. Students made the effort to research beyond the text book and gather very interesting information on their respective topic. A spirit of enquiry was instilled through this exercise. Students learnt the effectiveness of teams - they were also able to discover each other’s talents and used them advantageously – someone researched, someone wrote the text, another found relevant pictures and developed the presentation, whilst yet some others presented it to the class. Beyond getting new insights into a topic, presentations honed communication skills and enhanced student confidence. Further, students tended to be more attentive to what their peers had to say as they could question them freely during the presentation. In fact in the past we have successfully used Class XI students to present their Human Development Index presentations to Class X!

(b) Jigsaw reading: This is a strategy that I stumbled upon in one of the workshops and find it very useful for topics that require a large number of points to be covered – such as factors affecting elasticity of demand. The class is divided into groups and each group reads only one factor – and ensures that every group member understands it. The teacher then asks any one group member to articulate the understanding of the group. Students pose their questions to the presenting group and the teacher once again becomes a facilitator of learning.

(c) Pair Learning: This strategy is particularly effective when revision needs to be undertaken before an examination. For instance, in order to revise the different equilibria studied in microeconomics – consumer, producer and market, students were paired in a manner where one student has understanding of these concepts whilst the other student has doubts and issues. The student who had difficulties first listened to the explanations

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and then articulated it to his/her partner. Here the teacher needs to move around the classroom listening to the explanations and making corrections where required.

**Performance related tasks:** This strategy is closest to my heart as it uses several of the above detailed strategies to teach one concept. For instance in order to teach functions of money, the class was divided into groups. Each group was given an end product through which they had to present the problems of a barter system and therefore the functions of money. These included:

(a) *Dramatization:* Dramatization of ideas is a powerful medium through which children can learn. In the process of enactment, they internalize the overarching ideas on a topic and are able to recall them at a later date. In addition to reading and learning the content, theatre gives tremendous scope for students to imbibe life skills such as communication, team work, time management etc and also showcase their creativity.

(b) *Song or Lyrics:* Another strategy that allows students to showcase talent and simultaneously learn content is through preparing songs and lyrics. I distinctly remember one group who presented the entire drawbacks of the barter and functions of money as a radio channel – which included a news item, song, chat show and radio advertisement. After viewing this presentation, I realized the immense creativity our students have but we seldom give them a chance to integrate it into mainstream subjects.

(c) *Wall magazine:* Another way of asking children to read and present content is through a wall magazine. Again this task allows students to display their creative skills in displaying the content. It builds team spirit and makes learning enjoyable.

(d) *Power point presentation:* This task has already been discussed earlier.

**Project based learning:** I believe that we are all well versed with project work in Economics and its advantages in delivering content. Under the project based learning approach, students are given a real world situation which they analyse and present using their academic knowledge and creativity. Project work takes the central ideas of a topic beyond the academic curriculum.

Whilst many teachers view projects as an individual activity with the findings being presented in a project file, my experience shows projects are an effective way of ensuring collaborative small group learning. It is a powerful method of developing research skills, data collection and communication skills along with critical and creative thinking and self reflective skills.
addition it also teaches students project management skills such as time management, presentation and team work. We have used group projects to discuss topics such as Comparative Development Experiences of India and its Neighbours.

What I’d like to stress upon here is my learning of project work. Initially when my students submitted their projects they were not up to the mark. I always felt that they were lacking either in presentation or content or the approach they had taken to do the project. Self-reflection and discussions with department members on the lack of success of this method in the classroom led us to realize that the fault lay with the instructions that were given to students. Lack of clarity on expected outcomes led to varied interpretations of the project which translated into inappropriate projects being developed. It was then decided to give students clear cut assessment criteria along with a rating scale. This helped streamline and improve the quality of student output. For example if they do a consumer survey project in statistics then students clearly know that they shall be graded on the hypothesis being tested, questionnaire developed, appropriate data presentation, data analysis including approach taken, conclusions drawn towards accepting or rejecting the hypothesis along with neatness and submitting work on time.

I strongly believe that it is important for any teacher to give the assessment criteria to her students prior to undertaking any activity. This helps students understand what is expected from them and allows them to focus on wanted deliverables rather than unwanted ones.

Section 2: Advantages of undertaking alternative teaching strategies

The previous section discusses many of the strategies I have practiced in the classroom along with their advantages. In this section I attempt to consolidate the outcomes that stem from undertaking these strategies:

i. Learning is more engaging: The most visible outcome for a number of the strategies is that it makes learners engaged in the process of learning. As per Wiggins and McTighe (2005) engaging means a classroom wherein diverse learners find learning “thought provoking, fascinating, energizing. It pulls them all deeper into the subject and they have to engage by the nature of the demands, mystery or challenges into which they are thrown.” Students move from being passive learners to being active
learners. Classrooms become participatory and interactive which in turn make learning more effective.

ii. Learning is more effective: Innovative strategies in the classroom add value to the learning of content as students achieve identified goals. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005) effective learning “helps learners become more competent and productive at worthy work. They develop greater skill and understanding, greater intellectual power and self reflection.”

iii. Learning is fun: In strategies such as case studies, games, dramatization and songs learning becomes fun and enjoyable. There is a joy of learning through discovery. This relaxes the classroom environment and helps students clarify doubts without being threatened. Carlson and Schodt (1995) present a study where students are convinced that use of case studies adds interest and economic classes become more real.

iv. Higher motivation level: I have found that when learning becomes fun and children become engaged by working in small groups, automatically there is a higher level of motivation to read the subject. This encourages students to work and think better as they share ideas and issues. They help and support each other and thus, there is a feeling of being accepted. In the process they begin to understand theory, which otherwise could become dry and boring. Motivation levels are kept high as there is a sense of expectation, a sense of wonder as to what new methodology shall be used to teach Economics!

v. Improved attention spans: As learners find classroom transactions interesting, we find that they are more attentive, less fidgety and distracted. Disruptive behavior also reduces as classroom activities are more engaging.

vi. Longer retention of content: Students are able to relate content to a particular activity that may have been used in the classroom and are therefore, able to recall concepts at a later date with relative ease.

vii. Development of higher order thinking and reflective skills: Learner centric strategies help develop critical and creative thinking skills of students, as they apply their knowledge towards finding justifiable solutions to problems. Through methods such as problem solving and case study pupils refine their existing knowledge based on their
experiences. Such exercises also improve learners’ understanding and applicability of economic concepts in the real world. Further, the process of developing a project helps students self-reflect on their learning, which improves conceptual understanding.

viii. *Better communication skills*: Moving away from traditional chalk and talk methodologies allows students to enhance their communication skills—be it reading, writing, listening or speaking. Activities also allow them to improve non-verbal skills, such as body language which affect their overall communication.

ix. *Co-operative classrooms and respect for others views*: Debriefing sessions that follow activities are particularly important as there is a sharing of views, ideas and experiences. Through guidance students learn to understand the perspectives of others, without always believing that there is only one view. Students question the own actions in the activity which helps them understand principles and reach conclusions. Classroom environment becomes co-operative and collaborative rather than individualistic and competitive. (Mukunda, 2009).

x. *Team work*: A very critical outcome of undertaking group activities in the classroom is the development of the spirit of working in a team as a team member. Group activities allow learners to demonstrate leadership skills and qualities. They also realize that in some activity they need to be followers. They begin to realize that a team is as strong as its weakest link and so they must carry the weakest child forward to succeed.

**Section 3: Survey of Literature**

From the above discussion we see that for students to have a deep understanding of concepts they must be engaged in the subject and see its relevance to practical life. One of the critical factors that allow students to be engaged in a subject is by practicing strategies that permit thinking, creativity, exploration and discovery. We have also seen that there are a variety of strategies that allow a teacher to make her classrooms more interactive, interesting and innovative such that students can become lifelong learners. Innovative methods of teaching have strong underpinnings in research that have findings related to how the brain learns, an individual’s thinking preferences and intelligence and memory. Some of the research that supports innovative teaching methods is discussed in this section of the paper:
**National Curriculum Framework 2005:** The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 suggests that there is a need to move away from the traditional chalk and talk to more child-centred pedagogy, which means “giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy requires us to plan learning in keeping with children’s psychological development and interests.” Further, as teachers of a vibrant, dynamic and ever-evolving subject such as Economics we must see our role as being wider than just information and knowledge providers. As the NCF, 2005 says “children acquire varied skills naturally while growing up in their environment.” Development of skills and dispositions that allow for deep understanding of concepts should also be central objectives that we wish to achieve along with content delivery.

The NCF 2005 clearly highlights a marked shift in the role of a teacher from a knowledge provider to a facilitator, mentor and guide who helps her learners achieve their potential. This changed role is not restricted to class teachers or home room teachers of a child, but encompasses each and every subject teacher. This poses a challenge for Economics teachers. This challenging shift in a teacher’s role in the classroom is made even more difficult by the fact that teachers need to work within the constraints of a given syllabus from their respective central or state boards. However, I firmly believe that the challenge can be addressed through the use of innovative teaching techniques.

**Constructivism theory:** ‘Constructivism’ is the buzz word in the field of education. It highlights the fact that people interpret knowledge based on their experiences, and since experiences are interpreted differently by each individual, knowledge is constructed differently by each person. As per Muijs and Reynolds (2005) “all our thinking is based upon our own experiences, and is therefore subjective”. Further, people constantly assimilate and accommodate new experiences to improve learning. (Mukunda, 2009). This means that under the constructivist approach students are lifelong learners as they endeavour to use new experiences towards refining existing knowledge. Under constructivism learning is an active process, wherein the learner is engaged through enquiry, exploration, questioning, debates, application and reflection (NCF, 2005). This will lead to authentic learning and deeper understanding. (Muijs and Reynolds, 2005 reference of Von Glasersfeld, 1989)
The implications of this theory for an Economics class are far reaching. To begin with, it tells a teacher that learning does not happen in abstraction. Learners need to be able to find connections with what is being taught to their personal experiences. Teachers who deliver chunks of information that are disconnected will see their students resorting to rote learning, since learning is always contextualized. (Muijs and Reynolds, 2005). Further teachers must empower their learners, allowing them to discover and reflect upon their actions, beliefs and experiences. Strategies such as projects, role play, games, case studies all allows for students to construct their own knowledge given their experiences, contexts, surroundings and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

**V-A-K learning styles:** The V-A-K learning styles model highlights that students in a classroom could have different learning styles – visual, auditory and kinesthetic. A visual learner learns best by viewing information in the form of charts, diagrams, presentations etc. An auditory learner prefers to listen to the content in order to better understand it since they have strong language skills. Kinesthetic or tactile learners learn by touching or moving. They are ‘doers’ or ‘hands on learners’. According to the VAK model, most people possess a dominant or preferred learning style. However, some people have a mixed and evenly balanced blend of the three styles. The fact that learners may have a preferred style of learning imposes challenges on teachers to plan and structure their instruction so as to reach out to every child in the classroom. It is possible that a student whose preferred learning style is kinesthetic is bored in a classroom where teaching caters to only auditory learners.

Once again the insights of this research give valuable implications on how lessons need to ensure differentiated learning styles are accommodated. For instance by using a power point presentation we satisfy a visual learner and by playing a game we reach out to a kinesthetic learner. When students are encouraged to discover and use their predominant learning styles in their work, the incidents of poor work and low self-esteem actually decrease. We as teachers tend to teach in our preferred learning style which may not match that of our students. The result is: behavioural and academic issues in the classroom. Therefore, my contention is that why won’t a student who is taught in a way that appeals to him not learn?

**Multiple Intelligences Theory:** This theory as propounded by the leading educationist Howard Gardner highlights the fact that each individual can demonstrate intellectual ability in 8 different
ways (a person is endowed with 8 intelligences) – verbal linguistic, mathematical or logical, visual spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. If each one of us is endowed with each of these intelligences, then how can a teacher deliver her content on the assumption that students have only linguistic skills, spatial skills or mathematical skills?

Gardner suggests that most people can develop each of the intelligence to a reasonable level of competency if there is appropriate encouragement and enrichment in the curriculum (Armstrong, 2000). It is the duty of every teacher to structure her lessons in such a way so that each of these intelligences gets honed over time. For instance, a verbal linguistic learner demonstrates her learning by making a word puzzle, writing a slogan or writing the text for a power point presentation. A logical mathematical learner solves numericals, applies concepts to new situations or compares and contrasts concepts to demonstrate her learning. A visual spatial learner, on the other hand, is comfortable analyzing graphs, creating flow charts or developing powerpoint presentations. For a bodily kinesthetic learner, learning would become alive when games, simulations and role plays are used to teach content. Creating songs and lyrics or developing musical games would appeal to a musical learner to showcase her learning. An interpersonal learner learns through debates, brainstorming sessions or group discussions. An intrapersonal learner, on the other hand, prefers to make a journal entry, prepare a piece for a bulletin board or would like to share a personal anecdote for better learning. A naturalist would like to see how a concept can be related to the environment in which she lives.

Whilst the above may give a feeling that strategies are water tight and specific to a particular intelligence, we must understand that many of the intelligences are used simultaneously whilst doing a task. (Armstrong, 2000) For example, when role playing, a student’s interpersonal, linguistic, kinesthetic, spatial intelligences are tapped into. MI classrooms support the development of the whole person and the environment and its activities are intended to enable students to become more well-rounded individuals and successful learners.

The implications of the MI theory in teaching Economics are immense. It suggests that even in a teacher-centric traditional classroom, a teacher can structure her lesson through activities and materials to reach out to different intelligences in children. Examples of such activities would include graph or table interpretation in small groups along with reporting out of
findings. In a learner centric classroom students create their own material to demonstrate their understanding of concepts. Examples of such activities include role plays, creating bulletin boards or games by students.

**Thinking Preferences Research:** Kobus Neethling, an eminent psychologist in South Africa has done research on the whole brain approach, wherein he has found certain characteristics of how people think and behave based on whether they are left brain dominated or right brain. For instance, a dominant left brain child would be meticulous in his/her work, resists change, likes processes and would seldom break rules. A right brain child, on the other hand, would daydream, adapt easily to change, constantly ask ‘why’ and ‘what if’. The whole brain profile is a descriptive, non-judgemental analysis of an individual’s thought preferences. These have implications of how students prefer to learn and their behavior in different situations. Should a teacher not understand which is the preferred thinking of a student she could misunderstand the child and label him/her as being disobedient, disinterested and disturbing the class.

There is a vast literature available that supports innovative teaching methodologies. It is not essential for practicing school teachers to know the findings of psychological research on brain and learning. However, it is critical for them to understand the implications of these findings as they provide an in-depth rationale for certain teaching strategies that improve the overall learning of students. (Mukunda, 2009)

**Bloom’s Taxonomy:** An underlying theory that supports all my endeavours in the classroom is Bloom’s taxonomy, which we are all very familiar with. The first step is towards building the foundations of students. This is done by improving their knowledge and understanding of concepts. At the second level, students are made to apply their knowledge by analyzing new situations. Finally through synthesis and evaluation children create knowledge (Heacox, 2002).

**Section 4: Conclusion**

My journey as a teacher continues and I constantly strive to better my classroom methodologies. I am often asked, “aren’t you bored of teaching the same content for 10 year” and my answer to that is that even though content has changed marginally, I grow as a teacher every year. At the beginning of every academic session I set targets for myself as to what new method, activity or idea I am going to implement with my students. This keeps me challenged as my biggest critics
are my students. Regular feedback from students – what strategy they have liked and believe that has worked for them along with what changes they would suggest helps me year-on-year to fine tune, rectify and amend strategies. I know that if I do not challenge myself, boredom will set in and should that happen, only my students shall suffer. I believe that if I am excited about attending school every day, so shall my students as I shall be able to energize them with my enthusiasm.

You may be wondering whether the use of innovative teaching strategies would add to your existing workload. I can assure you that with a little planning and organization and implementing one strategy at a time along with refining old strategies can enrich your curriculum and the experience learners get from an Economics class. Think about the power we have as teachers – we develop the human mind and can therefore make a positive impact on young adults who will step out into the world as global citizens. Don’t we want our children to be holistically developed – where emphasis moves away from intellectual development to social, emotional, physical development along with attitudes, values and skills that make them better human beings? As teachers of Economics we have the ways and means to achieve all that we aspire for our children. It’s time we take the first step forward towards achieving this objective with a positive attitude.

I would like to conclude with a quotation from Tom Bodett: “The difference between school and life? In school, you’re taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you’re given a test that teaches you a lesson.” With this I shall leave you to ponder as to how many of us teach for life?

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