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DIGITAL SKILLS AND TEACHING PRACTICES, STRATEGIES IN 21" CENTURY TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

Teaching is not only a job but is a way of life. It is a sublime task one can ever be entrusted with. Teachers educate generations of learners and in their hands lays the faith of any nation. A well developed country is a country whose citizens are well educated and this is done only by effective teaching strategies. Teachers have also their peaks and valleys, happy moments and sad times. A small conjugal problem can severely affect how a teacher perform in the classroom. Teaching is such a sensitive job that embodies the entire societal, intellectual, and cultural values and being an effective teacher is a challenge that every single player in this field recognizes as the most daunting task.

KEYWORDS: entire societal, intellectual, and cultural values.

INTRODUCTION:

Leading a successful teaching job requires a high sense of adaptability, for what used to be a successful teacher in the 20th century is now an outdated teacher in the 21st century. Most of us, who are still practising, have started with a certain teaching strategy only to end up with a complete different one. Teaching is a job that is extremely prone to every bit of change in society and unless we equip ourselves and our students with the right swimming suit we will definitely be swept away by the power of torrents. One of the pivotal facts we should keep in mind is that we teach in a different milieu, a digitally focused environment where technology has the lion's share. This means that we need the relevant digital skills that can help us seamlessly blend in and leverage the power of technology to improve both teaching and learning.

DIGITAL SKILLS & TEACHING PRACTICES:

Digital skills are not the only key elements needed for becoming an effective teachers but there are also certain practices that we should develop to accompany this progress. Some of the most important teaching practices we need to maintain are as appended below.

1.Maintain good communication skills:

A successful teacher is one that is able to build a rapport with his her students, one that can easily connect with his learners and feel their needs as individuals. Open and clear communication is the key to develop a healthy friendly learning atmosphere inside your class.

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2. Getting students engagement : There is nothing as challenging as getting students engagement and holding their attention. Today's students are multitasked and can hardly maintain a long concentration, They can easily get bored and therefore disconnected. There are many ways you can fight off this problem: Use interesting educational games and activities, use technology and multimedia resources and finally make your teaching student-centred and try your maximum to relate what you teach to students immediate environment.

3. Use Humour : Relevant doses of humour to spice up your teaching are highly recommended. Forget about the authoritative and coercive style of teaching, for experience proved that it only disheartens learners and kills their motivation. Use humour at appropriate times, this can lead to students engagement and build up their confidence. You need, however, to maintain the right balance between instruction and joking and don't let your whole class become an hour long comedy routine. Avoid the off-colour jokes and be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of your students .

4. Act don't react : Students are very smart and it is part of their juvenile nature to try to get you. You are for them, like a computer screen, they keep trying out all the keyboard buttons to find your weak point Learn their game and play it with them carefully. Sometimes ignoring a disruptive behaviour is way better than reacting to it and in case it becomes repetitive or serious then make sure to talk it out with the student involved alone and not in front of the whole class.

5. Be clear and precise in your instructions: Remember you are teaching digitally focused students with short attention span. Several of the problems some teachers face are due to ambiguous and unclear instructions. Cut off on the clutter and be to the point. Show them the red lines and explain to them classroom ethics and what you can tolerate.

6. Give room to individualized learning : Not all students are equal in their comprehensive powers, Students leam in different ways, like seeing, hearing, and experiencing things at first hand. Research has even proved that students can perform better on test if they change study habits to fit their own personal learning styles. Therefore, some students are slow learners and others are quick, some kinesthetic (learn by experience or doing) others are auditory or visual. Keep these considerations in your mind and do your best to tend to every kind of learner you might have in your class.

7. Positive feedback : good job, excellent...ect" are simple words that might not mean anything to you but they mean the whole world to students. Think back to the days when you were a student and how a positive feedback from your teacher would make both your and your parents whole day. Publicly praise positive behaviour and show your students that you are celebrating their achievements as well.

8. Involve students in decision making : Students tend to do great when they feel they are trusted and that they are real parts in the leaming, teaching operation. Use voting and polling to invistigate about a certain topic or classroom assignment Try from time to time to give them the wheel and let them lead. This is a great way to inspire students to increase their productivity.

9. Use peer learning : Peer leaming is a form of cooperative learning that enhances the value of studentstudent interaction and results in various advantageous learning outcomes. For peer leaming to be effective, the teacher must ensure that the entire group experiences positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, group processing and individual and group accountability.

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Strategies to facilitate successful peer learning :

Buzz groups : This is a large group of students subdivided into smaller groups of 4-5 students to consider issues surrounding a problem.

Affinity groups : Groups of 4-5 students are each assigned particular tasks to work on outside of formal contact time

Solution and critic groups : One sub-group is assigned a discussion topic for a tutorial and the other groups constitute critics who observe, offer comments and evaluate the sub-group presentation

Teach-Write-Discuss: At the end of a unit of instruction, students have to answer short question and justify their answers. After working on them individually they can then compare their answers with each others.

10. Love your subject/ job : The best way to get students interested in your subject, from sciences to language to arts, is to love it so much that your passion for the field shows in your attitude. Students positively respond to authenticity. And as Abraham Lincoln once said " Love the job you do and you will never have to work a day".

In general the 21st century teacher should be able to :

1. Create and edit digital audio
2. Use Social bookmarking to share resources with and between leamers
3. Use blogs and wikis to create online platforms for students
4. Exploit digital images for classroom use
5. Use video content to engage students
6. Use infographics to visually sumulate students
7. Use Social networking sites to connect with colleagues and grow professionally
8. Create and deliver asynchronous presentations and training sessions
9. Compile a digital e-portfolio for their own development
10. Have a knowledge about online security
11 Be able to detect plagiarized works in students assignments
12. Create screencaplute videos and tutonals
13. Curate web content for classroom learning
14. Use and provide students with task management tools to organize their work and plan their learning 15. Use polling software to create a real-time survey in class
16. Understand issues related to copyright and fair use of online materials
17. Exploit computer games for pedagogical purposes
18. Use digital assessment tools to create quizzes
19. Use of collaborative tools for text construction and editing
20. Find and evaluate authentic web based content 21. Use of mobile devices like tablets
22. Identify online resources that are safe for students browsing
23. Use digital tools for time management purposes
24. Learn about the different ways to use YouTube in your classroom
25. Use note taking tools to share interesting content with your students
 26. Annotate web pages and highlight parts of text to share with your class
27. Use of online graphic organizers and printables
28.Use of online sticky notes to capture interesting ideas
29. Use of screen casting tools to create and share tutorials
30. Exploit group text messaging tools for collaborative project work
31. Conduct an effective search query with the minimum time possible
32. Conduct A Research Paper Using Digital Tools
33. Use file sharing tools to share docs and files with students online.

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CONCLUSION

There is no blinking the fact that the type of students we teach today are completely different from last century's, We, definitely, need to look at some of the skills we, as teachers, need to equip ourselves with to better live up to the challenge. Among all the challenges we would have in education, there is not as daunting a challenge as catching students focus and getting them engaged in the leaming process.

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