Teaching Aids and Modes in Academic Philosophy

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Philosophy is the study of the most general and fundamental problems of human life. The main areas of study in philosophy includes metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics etc. there are other several branches of philosophy which characterize different branches of knowledge. Philosophy being a very abstract branch of study, has not much scope of using equipment on a large scale to supplement the normal lecture schedules. However, in some papers/areas there are comparatively better scope to make the lectures more concrete and interesting through proper use of various teaching aids and modes. We include logic, philosophy of science, applied philosophy, applied ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of mind, philosophy of cognitive science and history of philosophy etc., we can use various modern aids. In this article my attempt is to draw outlines of aids and modes for effective philosophy teaching.

Teaching Aids

A teaching aid is a tool used by teacher or tutor to help learners to improve their reading, writing skills. In philosophy text books, journals, magazine, computers, audio-visual can be used with a great extent. One thing is also important to consider that curriculum can never be static and must always change as the frontiers of knowledge expand with time and in the same manner teaching aids update and restructuring must continue to enhance the quality and standards of education. The following teaching aids are very useful in philosophy teaching:

i. **Print Material**: Print material includes text-books, novels, magazine, periodicals, newsletters etc. A healthy reading habit can help a student of philosophy to acquaint with the main concepts of philosophy, life of thinkers, problems of the subject and help him to learn effectively.

ii. **Audio-Visual Aids**: Audio-Visual aids include computers, sound system, projectors etc. By the help of films, power-points, documentaries we can realize the student application of philosophical aspects in society. Films covering history of philosophy, philosophy of India should be indigenously produced with the help of NCERT and similar other bodies.[1] Films can assist a student to reflect on problems and content of philosophy. The use of slides for supplement comes leave much scope for such improvisations. It made teaching more effective and interesting. Different kinds of slides can be made according to the syllabus and also slides are available related to course on different websites related to students, academic institutions and online courses etc.

iii. **Blogs and Social Networking**: Teachers can pick up on the creative use of this internet technology and put the blog to work in the classroom. The education blog can be a powerful and effective technology tool for students and teacher alike. A blog is a web publishing tool that allows authors to quickly and easily self-publish text. Teacher can also write blogs according to their syllabus, it can also useful for other students too. Best of all, students will find them convenient and accessible via home or library computers. It can pride excellent opportunities for students. Social networking sites are also a source of inspiration. Here we can have a good discussion and understanding of various topics related to philosophy from available experts and discussion groups.

iv. **Students Activities**: Students activities can help a student to learn more about their subject and interact with other students. Here are some activities which can be used by student's societies:

    a. Competitions like essay-writing, quiz-contest, poster-making.

    b. Interactive meetings like weekly assembly, debate etc.

    c. Educational Tours.

    d. Student magazines, wall-magazines etc.

v. **Academic Collaboration**: With the collaboration of academic councils, programme like seminars, workshops, symposia, lectures should be a part of departmental activities. They can help student to understand the subject through interaction with the experts. Indian Council of Philosophical Research,

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University Grants Commission and other agencies provides financial assistance in this purpose.

Some Resolutions

For effective teaching there should be some resolutions. You can also call them pre-requisites for better implementation of philosophy course. These are of three levels:

a. Institutional Level

b. Faculty Level

c. Student Level

Institutional Level: Curriculum Development Centre in Philosophy (1990) made the following specific recommendations for national level[2]:

- Committees being set up to identify and developing appropriate teaching-aids especially suited to the needs of philosophy -teaching in India.

- Organization like NCERT, IGNOU may be given the responsibility of developing teaching aids for the various areas of philosophy in collaborating with subject experts.

- U.G.C. should take appropriate steps to set up such a cell to close collaboration with the CDC in Philosophy. The committee should be mainly concerned with academic aspects of the teaching aids while the committee working with NCERT, IGNOU shall be mainly concerned with actual development of the teaching aids.

Philosophy as a subject should be included in school and college curriculum and UGC and other bodies should take initiatives to introduce it as an academic subject. Philosophy also is an important part of UNESCO vision and workings.

Another important thing there should be provision for a departmental library in every college. Modern facilities like computer, projector and audio-visual facilities must be a part of library with the traditional sources of knowledge.

Faculty Level: For meaningful implementation of syllabus training programs should be available for faculty of the colleges so that teacher can improve the level and breadth of acquaintance in respect of different areas of the subject. Short-term courses must be available in pre-service and in-service basis. This will help the teachers of philosophy to acquire first hand acquaintance ne with different schools and branches of philosophy. The following will help a teacher in his profession to work better:

> Implementation of a uniform pattern and syllabus of philosophy in India.

- Provision for teachers' study leave to be made and they should encourage for continues learning.

- Course content for each course to be worked out in detail.

- Financial assistance for secretarial services and other infrastructural services and other infrastructure facilities is made available.

Teachers should be treated as a researcher and knowledge seeker and they cannot treat like a machine to produce results and paper work. Research interests and innovations practices of teachers should be encouraged and should give them an opportunity to reflect their own ideas.

Student Level: A student of philosophy needs more attention than other because he/she is dealing with an abstract subject where he/she needs to evaluate analysis and reflect on the various concepts. While teaching philosophy they needs clear statements and well written text-books and study material so that they can easily follow the text book. Some effective control over prescription of texts is a necessary condition for building a uniformity of standards in teaching in the institutional level as well as it helps students to acquaint the course easily. The measures that are likely to be effective in this regard are the following:

- Text-books and study material should ensure high quality and fruitful for students. They should be written by top-most scholars in the subject of philosophy so that it can be prescribed for students.

  Such text-books and study –material should be updated every three to five years to incorporate new ideas and new way of thinking.

- Authors should strive to be innovative, critical and reflective in writing their texts and should provide accompanying workbooks.

- The main objective of the students of any level would be to pass the examination with good grades, rationalization in overhauling

of the present examination system by emphasizing original thinkers, writing team-papers incorporating students own ideas etc., will prove effective in stemming the flood of sub-standard texts.

And last, as a safeguard against individual teachers prescribing non-recommended texts for personal considerations and encouraging students to go for such texts by setting questions on the basis of it, the idea of setting up question-banks with questions set up from the prescribed texts may be given serious consideration.

Conclusion

In the end we can say that a clear vision of teaching philosophy provides suitability, certainty and long term guidance and a well defined curriculum can help us to remain focus on our teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and profession rewards of teachings. In my teaching I generally use the tools I discussed above. Students also use our blogs and e-content available on departmental website. After reference I also suggested some websites for teachers of philosophy so that they can also understand the present concerns of philosophy and be a part of global initiatives .If we consider the above mentioned techniques and suggestions come to reality, we can have a good teachers and students of philosophy.

References

1. *Report of the Curriculum Development Centre in Philosophy (1990)*, University Grants Commission, New Delhi, pp.381-383.

2. *Ibid*, see Annexure V (B) Teaching Aids.

3. A detail discussion you can find in the *Report of the Curriculum Development Centre in Philosophy (1990)*, Annexure V(C) of this document with the title "Ways and Means for Preparing Text-Books", pp.384-388.

Suggested Websites

The following websites are very useful for a philosophy student as well as a philosophy teacher:

A Class-Room Introduction to Logic: http://niyamaklogic.wordpress.com

CPPIS Website: http://positivephilosophy.webs.com

Internet Encyclopaedia of *Philosophy*: http://www.iep.utm.edu

PhilPapers: Online Research in Philosophy: http://philpapers.org/

Philosophy Now: a magazine of ideas : http://philosophynow.org

Philosophy News in India: http://newsphilosophy.webs.com

TPM Online: The *Philosophers'* Magazine: http://www.philosophersnet.com ❑