Critical Pedagogy : Executive Education Challenge

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Abstract

Constructing curriculum and creativity in pedagogy of *theories for practice* is traditionally styled. Bound by standards and standardization, compilation for curriculum and creation of pedagogy on *Theories in practice* is institutionally normative to educators. Creativity and innovation as a prerequisite is heightened while educators have to create pedagogy for *theories by practice.* Devising strategies through Critical Pedagogy alleviate this problem, but has its deleterious challenges.

While there is ubiquitous need to transform teachers to educators, transformation in students as mere objects to active subjects in classroom is severely wanting. Critical Pedagogy emphasizes on learn, unlearn and relearn, a vital approach for executive education. As most students are used to regurgitate information, discomfort is intensified while relevance of experiences is sought or recognized in a program. Ratcheting role reversal in executive education, abdicate and create possibilities towards production or construction of knowledge for enhancement of curriculum is the next challenge to educators. Change in instructional approach intensifies inappropriateness of conventional assessment schemes. Creation of appropriate evaluation standards with active involvement of students in appraisal rubrics leads to transparency of the processes.

Modeling successful initial pointers to overcome transformational challenges through methodical evaluation in critical pedagogy will allow diminish resistance to learning while in executive development programs and shift individual prejudice to organizational privilege for capacity enhancement.

Keywords – teachers and educators, theory and practice, critical pedagogy, transformation challenge, Ontology.

I. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach which attempts to help learner question and challenge mastery, beliefs and practices that prevail in practice. It tries to help learner become critically conscious of the theory and its relevant application in practice. While in practice the learner, after deliberations and using creativity, modifies and adapts the modified theory for effective achievement of the end result.

A learner can be critically conscious by – thinking, reading, writing, and speaking while amending the abstruse of definitions and themes, myths, clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions.

Most importantly learners must understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, and personal consequences of – any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse (Shor 1992).

The objective of critical pedagogy (a method of education) is to empower learner and assist them to help themselves. One of the deep rooted work of Paulo Freire (1968) was teacher – student relation thus, a teacher who learns and a learner who teaches.

Even though Critical Pedagogy, a form of active learning, is not very dominant in executive education, when practiced, have several benefits. Enhancing the learner involvement, continuous learning of the educator, availability of several case studies and relevant and updated curriculum are a few.

The locus of relevance and application of Critical Pedagogy is best determined when the relation between theory and practice is understood completely. The following, concisely, explains the relation typecasts –

- *Theory **for** practice* – As in university curriculum,
- *Theory **in** Practice* – Higher Education, Executive Development, Exchange Programs
- *Theory **by** Practice* – On job, Research

II. THEORY IN PRACTICE

While commencement of an executive education program, levels of knowledge, skills and competencies of the participants are uncertain. Teachers (read educators) & trainers in such executive education programs are in quandary, if the contemporary pedagogy would suffice. Here, didactics need to be prototyped responsively with creative tools and techniques for the program to be effective. Programs in executive education has its challenges, the three challenges evidently encountered in are:

1. Learning using experiences of the participants,

   Rot learning and *theory for practice* is normally challenged, as there is no one solution to a situational problem. Employment of Critical Pedagogy has its significance here.

2. Enhancement of knowledge and updating of curricula

   Agile nature of technological changes and wavering solutions to situational project problems mandate creating and updating the curricula frequently which is exasperation.

3. Creative evaluation and assessment technique / framework – most challenging

   Determination of stages, methods, techniques, and weightages of evaluation supplementing it with analyzing the measured data through evaluation to assess the extent of absorption, retention and application of learning is onerous.

III. A SYSTEM

Intent and success in executive education is heightened when learning is applied to project scenarios by the learners. Hence, measurement of the absorption, retention and application of the learning is arduous. Use of established methods of evaluation come short for assessments. Often combinations of these methods and techniques are imperative to evaluate and latter assess a learner for his enhanced capabilities, an outcome of executive education. Evolving a system framework to have all the types of evaluation methods in focus is a requirement. Such a system enables conversion of divergent mode of evaluation to convergent mode.

IV. ONTOLOGY FOR EVALUATION

For a designing a system of evaluation, we propose an ontological method of 'evaluation system'.

*Ontologies are used to systematize the description of complex systems (*J. J. Cimino 2006) *; they are an "explicit specification of a conceptualization."* (T. R. Gruber 1995). *The following is a brief description of ontological analysis and design:*

"We will define [an ontology] as a logically constructed n-dimensional natural language description of the problem. The dimensions are derived from the problem statement. Each dimension is independent of the other and is taxonomy of discrete categories. Each taxonomy may be flat or hierarchical. Further, the order of categories in a particular dimension at a particular level of the taxonomy may be nominal (no particular order) or ordinal (based on some parameter). The stages of progression along the dimension, the sequence of evolution, the progressive part-whole relationships, the scale, etc. are some bases for ordering the categories. Last, a dimension may have sub-dimensions with their own taxonomies. That is, a dimension itself may be hierarchical."

The ontology is presented as a number of text columns, each column representing a dimension of the problem …. It is in fact an n-dimensional matrix with text entries in each cell. Each column contains categories and subcategories corresponding to the taxonomy of that dimension. A combination of categories or sub categories across all the dimensions, with specified prepositions and conjunctions, is a natural language descriptor of a component of the problem in the form of a sentence, sometimes an awkward sentence. The set of all combinations across all categories – that is all possible sentences – is a closed description of the problem. The full set can have a very large number of descriptors (individual combinations). However, many of the combinations may be irrelevant or meaningless – they may be discarded from further consideration. At the same time some combinations may be novel and creative, providing valuable insights into the problem and its solution.

A parsimonious choice of dimensions, taxonomies of dimensions, and selection of combinations (with appropriate prepositions and conjunctions) is essential for effective formulation and solution. The formulation can be modified or extended by substituting or adding new dimensions, new taxonomies, and new categories and subcategories within taxonomies."(A. Ramaprasad, S. S. Papagari, 2009)

Proposed Ontology for an evaluation system is illustrated in Fig. 1. This system is modular, user driven, case specific, and a planning tool. The system allows the educator to envision different interactions using categories and assist in planning of use of right tools, techniques for a given training type and reason for evaluation. With thousands of possible combinations available to the user, several possibilities are never out of focus.

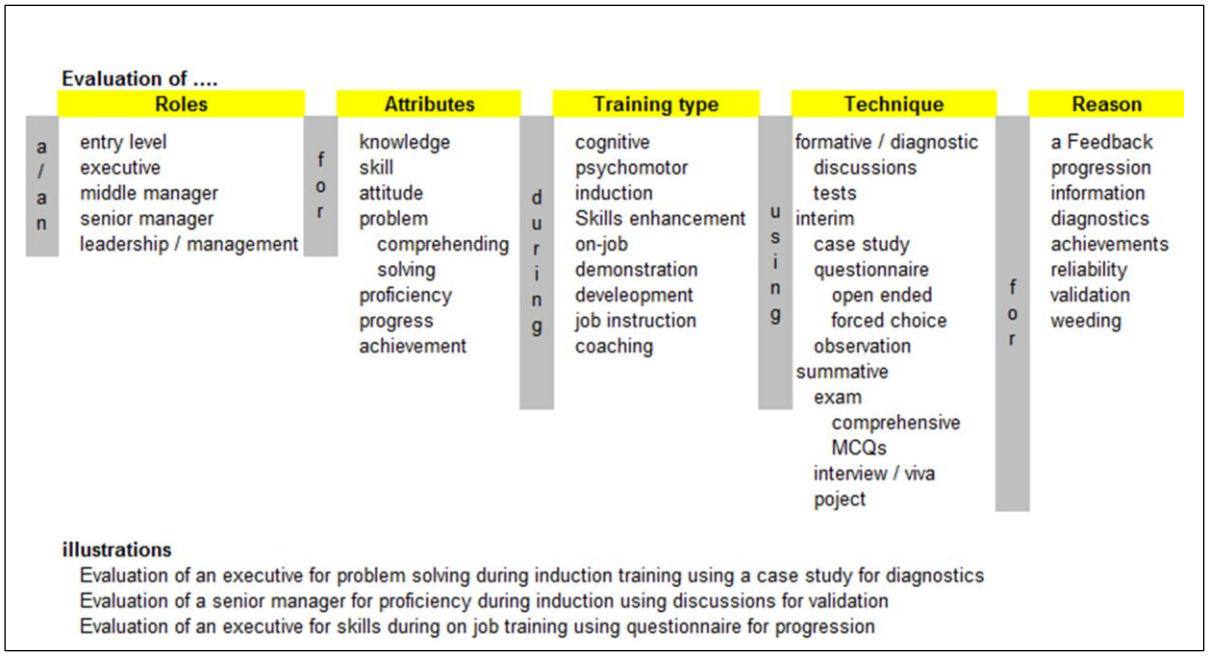

Fig. 1

Though the user is free to determine the columns, categories and its decomposition, the system of evaluation ontology illustrated above is represented by five columns as:

- Decomposing the ***roles*** of learners in organizational hierarchy determine the extent of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude (KSA) they need to possess, which is successively mapped to a predetermined competency framework specific to an organisation or institute. The content and the extent of training, coaching and education that is

determined based on the gap analysis that is ascertained using initial evaluation technique. The creation of this framework allows the educator to plan evaluation methodology iteratively.

- The possession of key ***attributes*** of an individual is necessary for providing the basis to assess the suitability, applicability and adequacy of education content. The key constituents in this category summarize the iterative process of education. Modifications of the content and the extent of comprehensive nature of the pedagogy and curricula are driven by these key components.

- ***Type of training*** drives the forces for designing a curriculum and pedagogy in executive education. The framework of ingredients of content is determined by the intent and outcome training / education. These ingredients introduce a set of evaluation methodology for assessment of learner.

- ***Technique*** used for evaluation is the key driver for determining the success of an education program. Further, a criterion of evaluation determines collection of indicators for assessments. Use of the right tool and technique to gather effective indicators are essential. Deployment of method of evaluation is determined by the requirement of qualitative and quantitative data gathering for assessment.

- ***Reasons*** for assessing learner's achievement is a dilemma by itself, because there are different perspectives toward this aspect and about "what to assess" and "reasons for assessing", evaluation model proposed in this framework considers the key reasons of evaluation. This allows educators to concentrate on them, and evaluate a learner to determine the achievements systemically and systematically.

V. CONCLUSION

Transformation of teachers as educators and learner as an active participant in Critical Pedagogy poses challenges. Educators and learners in an environment of executive education need creativity to transform these challenges into opportunities to create systems, processes and frameworks. One such illustration of proposed ontological framework deconstructs the challenges of evaluation complexities, understand possibilities, envision use of interactions of constructs available, and use them effectively to achieve the intended goal. A framework is concise and is complete representation of ramifications. This understates likely errors and omissions while gathering indicators through evaluation.

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