

EduInspire-An International E-Journal

An International Peer Reviewed and Referred Journal

Council for Teacher Education

(CTE, Gujarat Chapter)

www.ctegujarat.orgEmail: jig_har@yahoo.com**Exploring Classroom X-Factor****Dr Bhavin C. Chauhan**

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email- chauhan.bhavin-edu@msubaroda.ac.in**Abstract**

Reminding our old schools and college days, everyone has experienced there were teachers who really made comfortable with the subject and environment both. Their 'presence' itself changed the whole classroom climate. Though we had many topics to discuss and debate in those days, we inevitably talk about our favourite teachers, their lessons we enjoyed particularly. These teachers had mastered the art of capturing our attention and spark our enthusiasm. We used to look forward to their classes. On the contrary, we also had teachers who lacked these wonderful qualities and looked remote from the students. Let's ask ourselves, why did some teachers have a magical power of connection? An ability to engage and enthuse us! We must wonder what this is magic that the teachers possessed over another. In modern parlance, it is called classroom X-factor. Every teacher has this magic whether positive or negative and manages to radiate so radically that we remember him/her even decades later either fondly or grumpily, with excitement or apathy. The present paper explores the meaning and concept of the classroom x-factor and provides guidelines to develop own X-factor to the teaching fraternity.

Key Words:- Classroom X-factor, Nonverbal Communication, Body Language, Interpersonal Intelligence.

Exploring Classroom X-Factor

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Introduction

The teacher of Education Department, Dr Shah never entered in the classroom. Students never saw the teacher. He entered with poise and purposeful march of a leader. Before he reached to the centre, students started observing him completely. Not only his stance and erect manners, but also his alert looks in the eyes and confident but relaxed face were something magical. His hands on the lower waist and he greeted the class with lively movements and enthusiastic voice and was ready to teach the class. Before actual teaching began, his presence spoke a volume and for a formidable impression on the students.

That teacher's eye contact, manners, facial expression, poise, chirpy voice, active hands and lively movements sparked the interest and enthusiasm in students. If we remember our own days of schools and college/university, we all had spent considerable time in debating and discussing about our favourite teachers, his/her style, gossiping about his/her among our friends over the cups of tea/coffee. They were very much part of our lives in those days and still their memories hang in our courtyard of best kept moments of our lives.

Unfortunately, we all have juxtaposed experiences in this matter. There are no good or bad teachers but in popular parlance, we term as either 'interesting' or 'boring'. Teachers who never seemed to have problems in getting attention or captivating interest; teachers, we looked forward to for his or her class. On other hand, teachers who seemed remote and lack ability to spark interest and enthusiasm. The theory of relativity worked in their classes; minutes look like an hour. In case of favourite teachers, an hour looks like a minute. There was something in them so that even after decade/s we remember fondness or disillusionment, excitement or apathy. Ultimately, these teachers paved the way, where we are now as learners. What characteristics these popular teachers have which gave them significant advantage over the others? What magic that they possess and others don't have? Ability to engage and enthuse is magic which many of us either possess or don't possess. Why some teachers effortlessly connect with us? In modern parlance, it is called X Factor.

Defining X-Factor

According to popular dictionaries, X-Factor means: ‘a quality that you cannot describe that makes someone very special’ [Cambridge Dictionary];

‘It's just that "thing" that makes an individual stand out. Captures your full attention.’ [Urban Dictionary]; ‘an unknown or unexplained element that makes something more interesting or valuable [Collins Dictionary]; ‘a noteworthy special talent or quality’ [Oxford Dictionary] and my perspective, it is the ‘quality which is multitude of attributes comprising of known and unknown verbal + nonverbal elements.’

The term X-Factor is familiarised by the UK based reality singing show which week after week, singers showcase their vocal talents and get chosen or eliminated due to their success or failure of capturing and connecting with the audience and judges. Surprisingly it is not the only singing ability that guarantee success. It is with the manners they connect with judges and audience. When we relate this with teaching profession or recall our favourite teachers, subject knowledge and teaching ability are not the exclusive requirements of successful classrooms. There has to be something more concrete and fundamental. There is something magical human communication which allow one individual to relate and connect more effectively/ personally than the others. Here talent is not enough. There magnetism comes the way teacher ‘carried himself/herself’ in the classroom. In academia, these attributes of X-Factor is collectively called as ‘nonverbal communication’ and in more popular terms ‘body language’ -which is not the exact synonym of nonverbal communication. When we, as teachers, become aware of these nonverbal communication X-Factors and recognize their importance as well as inevitability and work on developing these attributes, we can have our own X-Factor (White & Gardner, 2013).

Basis of X-Factor

Before working on mastering the attributes of X-factor, we need to remember the fundamental principle of it: X-Factor is about the entirety of communication. For instance, when we complement someone with the term ‘healthy’, the meaning will be perceived not from the dictionary but from expressions. The tone, facial expression and gestures make it either complement or mockery. The same thing is true for the term ‘very good’. The manner in which the term is used make it either clear praise ‘wow’ or flippant and passing acknowledgement ‘OK’. Teachers may have the assumption that he/she has used the ‘correct words’ but students will read the ‘real message’ nonverbally and made the ‘correct inferences’ (White & Gardner, 2013).

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Apart from communication, X-Factor is also dependent on interpersonal skills of teacher. No matter what class or subject one teaches, effective teaching and learning remain dependent on a teacher-student relationship grounded in communication (Martin, Myer & Mottet, 1999). Teachers often think that they are immune from our students' behaviour, but they are not (Brophy & Good, 1974). Students react to the teaching in three possible ways and that affect the teacher:

1. Some remain active and interactive.
2. Some remain passive and apathetic. They laugh on us rather than laugh with us.
3. Still others remain entirely lost. Sometimes fragmented connections.

To get the right effect from teacher's teaching, teacher must hone his/her communication skills and master the basics of these skills as basic is magic. There are two separate channels work collectively to serve two different primary functions:

1. The primary function of teachers' verbal communication in the classroom is to give content to improve student's cognitive learning.
2. The primary function of teachers' nonverbal communication in the classroom is to improve affect or liking for the subject matter, teacher and class, and to increase the desire to learn more about the subject-matter.

When the teacher improves affect through effective nonverbal communication, student is likely to listen more, learn more and more positive attitude towards school and subject.

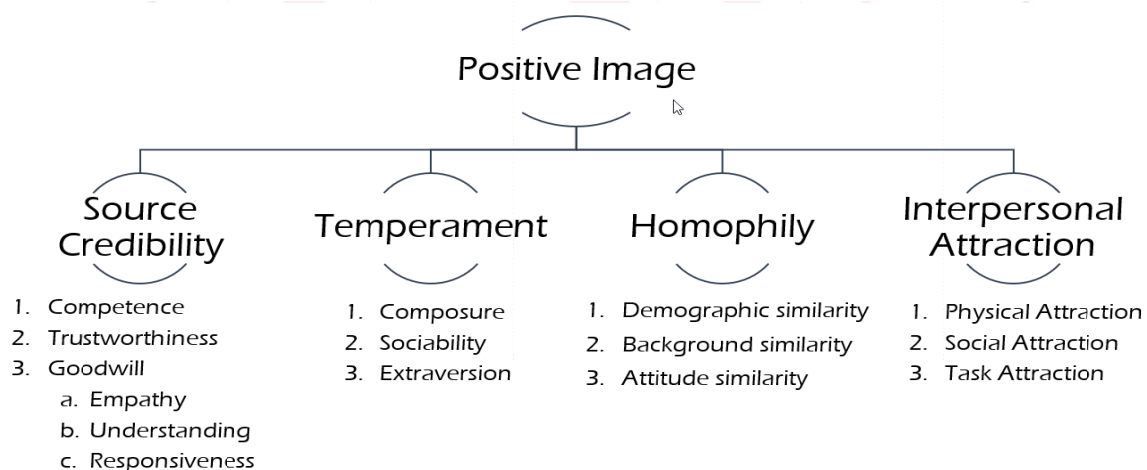
There is a widespread misunderstanding about the understanding of the term communication. It is often conceived as the process of transferring messages from one place to another place like a fax machine, but humans are not messengers like earlier fax machines and nowadays WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter messengers. Especially in the classroom, the prime emphasis is not on moving the message but move the students with the message. Academically and practically, communication means the process of stimulating the meaning by one person to another person through verbal and/or nonverbal communication (McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2005).

Teaching in the classroom is a very precise activity fundamentally; it comprises of two actions verbs: 1) instruct and 2) inform. There are two types of communication competence are required from teachers for effective teaching and intense learning: 1) instructional communication and 2) interpersonal communication. Instructional communication ensures the learning of the subject and interpersonal communication facilitate the learning by adding likings to subject, teacher and school/college (White, 2016).

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As far as the term ‘choice’ is concerned, in case content, most of the teachers don’t have choice as it is predesigned by the subject-experts. This is fixed that what you will teach in this semester. The only choice is that we have is: the choice of communication. How this subject will be taught with what choice of communication? For effectiveness, four components are required to be mastered: 1) sound knowledge of content, 2) deep understanding of best practices of teaching that subject/s, 3) passion to work with learners (attitude and emotional intelligence) and 4) communication effectiveness (both verbal and nonverbal). Nation-wide analysis was done in 2014 for understanding the place of communication – especially nonverbal communication- in teacher education curriculum. The result was not overwhelming but undermining. Mostly a unit and hardly full paper on communication was found in India. Those who accommodate communication, did it on mostly theoretically basis only- not much practical practice (Chauhan, 2017). We here need to understand the common sense of knowing about the communication and actually using it intelligently. As teacher teaches in the classroom, students will synchronize with teacher’s style, movements, expressions, postures and vocalization. One prime fact every teacher should remember: No message is interpreted by a receiver apart from its source(Churches, 2015).

With the mastery over communication elements, teacher must work on positive image to have better X-Factor. Having and retaining positive image among students which coupled with effective communication leads to X-Factor in teachers. Now the questions is how to develop rapport with the students and how to create positive image among students? Well, Science has the answers. To work on teacher image, there is a model of positive image which needs to be followed:



Note:Adopted from *An Introduction to Communication in the Classroom: The Role of Communication in Teaching and Training*, by McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, L. L., 2005, New York, NY: Pearson College Division. Copyright 2006 by Pearson Education, Inc.

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The formation of the image is based on the **source credibility** which rely on the three main components:

1. Competence (Ability to teach effectively and handle the queries smoothly)
2. Trustworthiness (Generating trust among the students so they can rely on teachers for their professional problems.)
3. Goodwill (Feel-good factor among the students for teacher)
 - a. Empathy (Understanding the students from their points of views)
 - b. Understanding (Understanding of educational psychology and students' thought processes)
 - c. Responsiveness (Ready to response promptly)

Temperament is consisted of three components:

1. Composure (degree of emotional control a person is seen to have)
2. Sociability (clear boundary- difference between 'friendly' or 'friend')
3. Extraversion (active, talkative and outgoing)

Homophily (feeling of being similar to him/her – like 'Same-pinch'). People who are more similar are more likely to communicate with one another.

1. Demographic similarity
2. Background similarity
3. Attitude similarity (similar things- in past by teacher and in present by students)

Interpersonal Attraction affects instructional communication:

1. Physical Attraction
2. Social Attraction
3. Task Attraction

Although there are many teachers who are attractive in all the three dimensions, but it is not so inevitability. Negative Image can be formed when teacher tries too hard to look good in one of the dimensions ignoring others. Remember: "Students don't care about how much you know until they know who you are."

X-Factor is the demand of the day as the whole world is on the flux. Things keeps on changing in an instance so as teachers have to change, or they will be changed/replaced by forceful circumstances. Teaching is no longer much information-based profession, it is more of experience-based one and being a true professional, teacher must provide good experience to his/her students in the classroom which can be very well taken with the presence of X-

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Factor because X-Factor affects whether teaching community likes it or not. The present article explores the importance and shows the way to develop X-Factor by mastering communication skills and developing positive image. With this factor, teacher can affect the students' liking for learning the subjects and also touch to the hearts and minds forever.

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Paper Received : 15th May, 2018

Paper Reviewed : 18th May, 2018

Paper Published : 1st June, 2018