

Oh Teacher, First Build Relation with the Learner, Teaching will be Magical Afterwards

Dr. VIJAY KUMAR GROVER
DAV College of Education
Abohar, Punjab
India

Abstract:

The paper is about highlighting importance and process of relation building for effective teaching at all stages of learning. Building relation is pre requisite for learning to take place. It is responsibility of teacher to build teacher-taught relation with qualities like developing trust, shunning ego and selfishness, leaving aside jealousy, and embracing forgiveness, morality and caring attitude. Author has attempted to dub the combination of these qualities in terms of successive refined levels of teacher-taught relationship. A teacher needs to climb in the relation ladder by integrating more and more positive qualities and excluding more and more negative qualities in his personality for reaching to the top of the ladder termed as 'Godly Relation'. As god has only intension to give rather than asking for return, so should be true for a teacher. Once such relation is build up learning is inevitable in due course of time.

Key words: teacher-taught relation, trust, task, quality of relation, relation ladder

If one needs to identify various factors for best teaching we can identify many, but if reduced to minimum it only requires two: Task and Relation. Task means for which one is appointed i.e. teaching which further consists of knowledge of contents/subject matter and knowledge of methodology i.e.

method of transferring and fixing the contents effectively in the mind of the learner. The interaction of the two factors could be represented as shown in the figure 1.

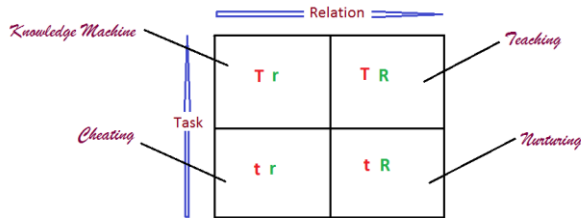


Figure 1: Task - Relation Interaction

Based on the two factors teaching can be classified in to four titles: smaller task smaller relation means cheating rather than teaching, bigger task and smaller relation means a knowledge machine which is least concerned for human aspect of learning, smaller task and bigger relation means nurturing which strives to save relation on the cost of knowledge transaction and finally bigger task bigger relation is teaching in real sense. Task one can learn by acquiring and sufficient practice of the subject matter and undergoing a pedagogical training which are both technical and exact in nature. But building relation with learners requires special mental orientation which matches with learner's interests, attitudes, values, behaviors and the like. In fact relation comes before the task, meaning thereby it is mandatory that learner must accept the teacher at first place before commencing the teaching learning process. This can only happen by building a soothing relation between the two. In adult relations, as between two friends the onus lies on persons involved for making, nurturing, promoting and maturing the relationship. But in case of teacher-learner relation the onus lies solely on teacher for initiating to maturing the relation. Teaching is all about making connections with people. It is about relationships and investment in others and their future and ours. Relation is like an echo 'do good get good' for a

teacher it is very much sure. Learners respect those teachers who treat them with respect and dignity. An irritating teacher can demand respect but can't command respect from learners, it more true for senior students. Benjamin Franklin once observes "when you are good to others, you are best to yourself" one can't help others without helping oneself; it is equally applicable to teacher-taught relationship. Thoughts, feelings and actions return to us may be sooner or later. It is crux of karma theory in Hindu mythology, which justifies even unmerited sufferings we bear in the course of life. Actually our understanding of karma theory is very shallow; we expect similar reciprocation of behavior from other whom we have favored for altruistic reasons. If we do favor to someone it is not necessary to be reciprocated by the same person. It is not always possible to meet the person but our deeds return in some other form an unexpected favor by someone else. We need to do well without any expectation in return; this idea a teacher must make guiding principal of life. Now the question is how a teacher can build relation with learners. There are some values a teacher needs to observe as elaborated ahead.

1. Developing Trust: Trust is the foundation of building all forms of relations. It depends on number of factors, some of which are described below.

a) Reliability/Dependability: if teacher demonstrates dependability in his dealings with students, learner starts trusting and starts sharing even the personal problems, as explained by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Education is actually the art of solving problems of life which one starts learning from the teacher once trust is developed. The indicators of dependability are: keeping promise, being punctual, maintaining privacy of the child, attending on individual basis, showing commitment in matters of children welfare and the like.

b) Consistency: it is very important parameter of building trust. A teacher needs to behave consistently in his dealings. Consistency is basis for reliability. If teacher praises a learner for a deed and ignores other for similar deed or at other occasion is an illustration of the inconsistent behavior. Consistency of behavior is demonstrated by characteristics like punctuality, meeting the dates, clearly stated discipline rules, clearly defined parameters of receiving reinforcement & feedback and the like.

c) Mutual respect: even a primary student understands meaning of respect, disrespect and humiliation, praise and pride. Respecting the learner is best tool for winning faith of the learner. Respect is a pleasant motivation for instilling faith among learners. It works wonders with younger children. Hugo Chavez rightly observes “Mutual respect! That’s what it takes to be friends”. And friendship with learner can only be achieved if teacher is ready to leave the ego of his designation and comes down to the level of learner as usually done by a mother for her child. Mutual respect in a classroom is visible from addressing learners by their good names, no pointing out of child’s cast, faith or other form of alliance, respecting learners’ choices and the like.

d) Fairness: it is appeal to justice and bias free behavior towards learners as well as his assignments. A teacher needs not only to be fair but also needs to demonstrate his fairness. The best formula for being fair is to exercise transparency in all his dealings. Fairness is indicated by actions like giving individual attention, respect of basic human values, distributing privilege and punishment on merit etc.

e) Openness: one can’t create trust by keeping secrets; however privacy is not at issue. An open mind is welcoming to new ideas and has capacity to accept criticism, which is the key

to faith building. Openness is demonstrated by freedom of expression for learners, accepting of learners' ideas, admitting mistakes committed while teaching and the like.

f) Congruence: here we are interested in congruence between what teacher says and what he does. What teacher teaches and preaches in the class he needs to exhibit in his own behavior. Congruence also helps in enhancing reliability of the teacher and hence faith grows in the relationship. Congruence is visible in the class if teacher keeps the promises made to students; learners appreciate teacher in his absence, admitting failures rather than giving excuses and the like.

g) Integrity: upholding moral practices may be termed as integrity which is essential in teaching profession. A teacher can inspire the learners by maintaining his integrity beyond doubt. Integrity of a teacher is visible when he is straight in his dealings, does not sacrifice morality for petty gains, takes impartial judgments, give learner his due and the like.

h) Character: character is defined as one's behavior as per his designation. If a teacher exhibits behavior worthy of a teacher we should call him of good character. Teacher is a guardian and in no situation can let down the regard attached to this designation. Parents don't send their wards to anybody but to a teacher only on behalf of school believing that teacher maintains character worthy of a guardian. Character is demonstrated by actions like treating learners as focus of all decisions relating to learning, activities and evaluation.

i) Courage: courage is last but not the least requirement for winning faith of the learner. Teacher must have courage to admit his weaknesses and mistakes, take side of learners when they are right, to take risk for welfare of learners and the like.

Without courage a teacher can't win the hearts of the learners and hence misses the opportunity of winning their faith.

Once you develop trust journey to healthy relation is well begun and you know well begun is half done. Trust is like a bank account deposit more, for longer time there will be more returns, a teacher has to learn it at the earliest. Trust in a relation need be ego free as this can destroy the whole edifice of relationship.

2. Ego free mind: K. Rockne states “Egotism is anesthetic that deadens pain of stupidity”. Khera (2004) opines “an egotist talks down to and looks down on others”. Ego free mind is a pre-condition for building any sort of relation. Teacher needs to come to the level of child for transferring maximum information most effectively. Ego prevents a person to forget once designation and possessions, which hinder the free interaction, necessary for a humanistic relation. When high trust and low ego combine a humanistic relation develops as described in figure 2.

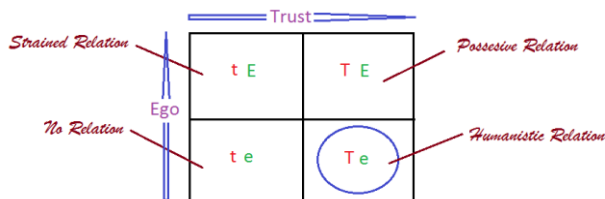


Figure 2: Trust - Ego interaction

Humanistic relation is the first level of refinement of relation in a classroom. Humanistic approach makes teacher a generous human being accepted by all sorts of learners which a teacher would like to be.

3. Avoid selfishness: selfishness is a psychological trait which poisons a relationship. When we say one need to be selfless, it does never mean forgetting one's self-interest. Selfishness is serving one's own interest at the cost of other's interest.

Whereas one is free to protect self-interest without hurting other's interest. If humanistic relation combines with selflessness one attains new refined stage of relationship, we name it as Altruistic Relation as described in figure 3. Other combinations obtained on interaction between humanistic and selfishness dimensions are also shown.

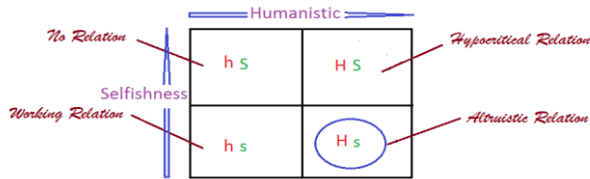


Figure 3: Humanistic-Selfishness interaction

High at humanism as well as selfishness is like hypocritical relation which is seemingly good but actually can't exist. Low at humanism and as well as selfishness (selfless) means it is working relation with limited vision. Low at humanism combined with selfishness can never result in worthwhile teacher- taught relation.

4. Avoid jealousy: It is most fortunate when a teacher starts feeling jealousy with his student and a parent with his child. In a fair/social gathering, when child is unable to see what is going on; father raises the child on his shoulder that he must be able to see even more, even farther than the father himself. Teacher must be able to experience pleasure of achievement in the attainments of his learners. Jealousy when interacts with altruistic approach obtain four combinations: Pious, Hypothetical, Working and No relation (see figure 4)



Figure 4: Altruistic - Jealous interaction

Low jealousy and high altruism is the combination which leads to developing pious relation between teacher and taught. Low jealousy and high altruism is a combination one can't imagine so termed as Hypothetical Relation. Low jealousy and low altruism seems to form a working relation in a given environment. High jealousy and low altruism can never be the combination for developing a worthwhile relation.

5. Forgiving nature: forgiveness is a characteristic a teacher must try to imbibe in his personality. A forgiving nature can help in saving a relation and has capacity even to rebuild a relation. A learner by virtue of his age is bound to commit mistakes, but teacher is mature enough to forgive and put the relation back on track. A pious relation when combined with the forgiving characteristic it acquires status of spiritual relation (see figure 5).

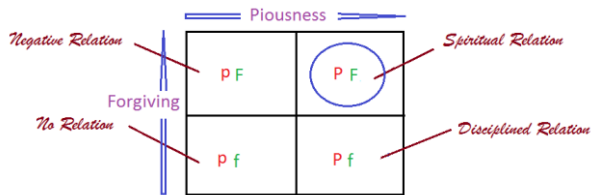


Figure 5: Piousness - Forgiving interaction

Other combinations can be high at piousness and low at forgiving i.e. Disciplined Relation which represents a typical teacher-taught relationship endorsed by Gurus at Gurukuls during Vedic age in India. Low at piousness and high at forgiving will be a damaging kind of orientation in teacher taught relation i.e. a lax attitude demonstrated by a teacher. Low at piousness and low at forgiving cannot be the combination for developing a worthwhile teacher and taught relationship.

6. Respect for moral and human values: morality is defined by a society as standard reference of refined behavior, whereas human values are free from reference of a society/community, need to be respected by every individual whosoever and where ever. When spiritual relation becomes moral as well we term it as Ethical Relation (see figure 6).

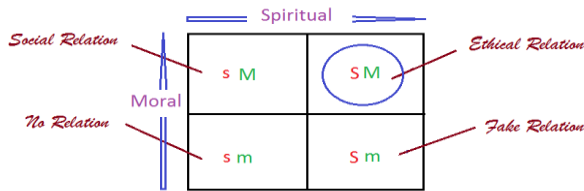


Figure 6: Spiritual - Moral interaction

High at spiritualism and low at morality seems to be a fake relation which no one can endorse in teacher-taught situation. Low at spirituality and high at morality is purely Social Relation as it only covers social dimension. Low at spiritualism and morality is no combination to lead a teacher aught relation.

7. Caring attitude: caring is essential feature of a teacher’s behavior. When it combines with ethical relation it makes godly relation (see figure 7).

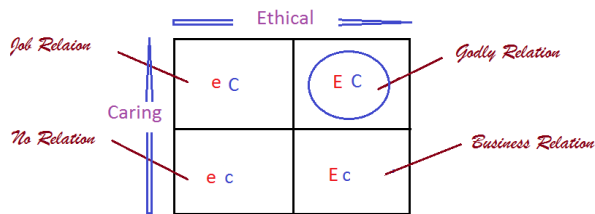


Figure 7: Ethical - Caring interaction

As God wants only to give without any expectation in return, so should be the case of teacher in teacher-taught relation. It is the highest level to which a relation can be elevated, and definitely we desire it for teacher–taught relationship. High

ethical orientation and low caring relation is a representation of pure professionalism as we are observing these days business like orientation of institutions and teachers. Low at ethics and high caring is a kind of manufactured relation as a requirement devised by the employer or organization for customer service. Low ethics and low caring can never be the combination desired in teacher-taught relation.

Godly relation is most refined form of teacher-taught relation we would like to see at every levels of teaching. The whole progression of relation building can be present graphically as shown in figure 7 named as relation ladder.

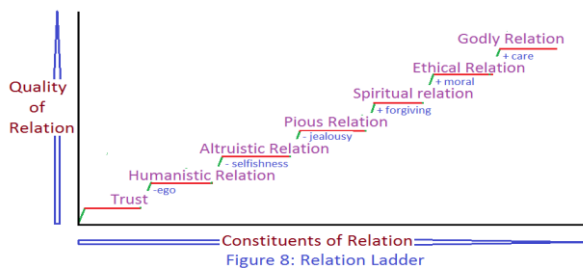


Figure 8: Relation Ladder

The simple idea is that teacher needs to keep on adding positive qualities and negating the negative values and successively reaching to the new level of refinement. Finally we advocate a teacher must understand good relations make you more energetic and enthusiastic and ever charismatic personality irrespective of age and designation. On the other hand lack of positive relation breeds stress, irritation, anger, poor health, lack of morality and unhappiness. It is teacher who needs to decide he wants to attain charismatic personality or remain maladjusted one. Personal reflection is critical for every teacher, regardless of how long they have been in the teaching profession. The quality of teacher's personality will definitely determine the quality of his students. This will reinforce the building of quality relation which is prerequisite for transfer of knowledge.

Research findings support and endorse our hypothesis of positive relation between teacher and learner for meaningful learning. Positive teacher-student relationships reduce conflict, learners are better adjusted to school, improved social skills, improved academic performance, and foster students' cognitive resilience (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The quality of early teacher-student relationships has a long-lasting impact. Specifically, students who had more conflict with their teachers or showed more dependency toward their teachers in kindergarten also had lower academic achievement and more behavioral problems through the eighth grade. These findings were evident even after taking into consideration (statistically) the extent to which students' behavior problems related to problematic teacher-child relationships (Berry & O'Connor, 2009). Students feel good if called by their names and when teacher ensure that they deserve to succeed (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Individual attention helps in making positive relation with shy and withdrawal students, which otherwise are difficult to manage (Pianta, 1999; Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, Justice, & Pence, 2006). Teacher should avoid giving explicit and implicit messages to your students (Pianta, et al., 2001; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2002). Teacher should ensure students that he wants them to do well in school through both actions and words. Teacher must create a positive climate in your classroom by focusing not only on improving his relationships with students, but also among peers themselves (Charney, 2002; Donahue, Perry & Weinstein, 2003). Teacher should offer students an opportunity for an emotional connection to their teachers, their fellow students and the school (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; McCombs, 2001). Persistent effort must be on from teacher side for building positive relationships with even difficult students. These students get benefitted from a good teacher-student relationship as much or more than their easier-to-get-along-with peers (Baker, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1998).

Positive teacher-taught relation helps learners at all stages of schooling. (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Meece, Herman, & McCombs, 2003; Wentzel, 2002).

In conclusion author is convinced beyond doubt that building positive teacher-taught relation is fundamental to effective teaching at all levels and for all types of students. A teacher must be a person who has natural inclination to build positive human relation and should undergo special training to orientate this inclination towards teacher-taught relationship. All those who feel they don't have this natural inclination and won't be able to develop such orientation should stay away from this profession, as we do not deal with files, we deal with lives.

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