Influence of teachers on classroom learning environment.

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Abstract
The teaching-learning process is vital in any system of education. Through this process the teacher has the role of helping learners to acquire desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to make them independent and useful members of society. These outcomes can only be achieved when the learner is placed in a learning environment that is learner friendly, responsive, and enabling. Learning styles adopted by the teacher must be learner-centered to encourage inquiry and discovery. Pedagogical curriculum questions that guide the teaching–learning process must focus on promoting an inclusive learning environment. The paper recommends that special attention should be given to teachers because of their centrality in attaining and maintaining quality of education. Improvement of the quality of teacher education programmes and development of a performance evaluation system for teachers to determine the competence, assess strengths, provide support and assuring continued growth through differential experiences should be given top priority.

Keywords: Teaching, Teacher, Constructivism, Behaviourism, Learning Environment

Introduction
Globally, governments place great emphasis on quality of education that results from the teaching-learning process. The quality of education that is obtained is very much dependent on the learning environment that the learner is placed in through the influence of the teacher and school administration. This paper seeks to discuss the influence of the teacher on learning environment. The paper has captured the concept of teaching and theoretical basis for teaching, key pedagogical questions, concept of the teacher and teacher characteristics, concept of learning environment and strategies for creating a positive learning environment in the classroom. The last part of the paper presents the conclusion and the way forward.

The concept of teaching
Teaching entails processes aimed at promoting learning for all learners. According to Fisher (2005) teaching is a process that goes through four phases: activation of prior experiences of learners by engaging them in solving contextual problems. A learner is not a tabula rasa and thus has experiences that
are relevant to acquisition of knowledge, skills and aptitudes; Demonstration of skills to promote new knowledge. In this phase the teacher should act as a facilitator and the learner is required to actively participate in the learning activity. The third phase is the application of skills where learning is promoted by allowing learners to use new knowledge or skills to solve problems. The final phase is integration of what is learnt in real world activities which are attained by encouraging learners to integrate or transfer new knowledge into their everyday life or when learners are given an opportunity to publicly demonstrate their knowledge or skills. New knowledge is integrated in real life when learners are able to use the knowledge in creating, inventing or exploring new ways to use the learnt knowledge and skills.

Effective teaching should be responsive. This involves supporting learner’s individual needs and growing independence. The teacher should observe learners carefully and then figure out where they are going and then help them to get there (Goodman, 1996). To teach responsively includes: helping the learner focus his/her attention; providing reassurance that the task is manageable, structuring the task to help learners decide what steps should be taken and in what order; demonstrating how an expert does it; “thinking aloud” to let the learner observe expert thinking, and modeling self-evaluation. Day (1999) argues that ‘teaching is more than a craft’. This suggests that teaching is an ‘educational science and a pedagogical art’. He argues that effective teachers should focus on learning, participation, collaboration, cooperation and activism as touchstones for their practice.

Altonlee (2003) articulates the following as characteristics of quality teaching:

- A focus on student achievement
- Pedagogical practices that create caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities
- Effective link between school and the cultural context of the school
- Learning opportunities which are efficient and sufficient
- Teaching which is responsive to student learning processes
- Multiple tasks and contexts that support learning cycles
- Curriculum objectives are well aligned
- Pedagogy scaffolds feedback on students’ task engagement
- Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse
- Teachers and students engage constructively in goal oriented assessment

Teaching demands the role of teachers who must have a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. In many developing countries Kenya included, teaching is considered a low-status career hence people chose it as a last career option. Teaching in Kenya is marked by many teachers’ strikes due to low remuneration. The year 2015 started with a teachers strike called by the two unions (Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Kenya Union of Post-secondary Education) which oversee the welfare of teacher and pressure the employer (Teachers Service Commission) to provide better salaries and allowances to teachers. This led to total paralysis of learning in all public secondary and primary schools countrywide for two weeks.

**Theoretical basis for teaching**

Teaching has its roots in theories that have been advanced by various scholars. Among the significant theories are those of constructivism and behaviorism.

**Constructionism**

Constructionism is a theory of knowledge with roots in philosophy, psychology and cybernetics. It is based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. It states that people construct their own
understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. The theory asserts two main principles whose application has far reaching consequences for the study of cognitive development and learning as well as for the practice of teaching and interpersonal management. These two principles are: knowledge is not passively received but actively built by the organizing subject; and that the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organisation of the experiential world.

The first explicit formulation of constructivist theory of knowledge was proposed by Giambattista who coined the Latin phrase “verum est ipsum factum” and explained that to know something means to know what parts it is made of and how they have been put together. In the modern psychology, the notion of cognitive construction was first forced into a major component theory by James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Cybernetic and control theory being concerned with self-regulating systems, developed a similar approach to cognition according to which adaptation to the environment and a viable conception of the world must and can be constructed from input of “information” (Von Foerster, 1992). Characteristics that pertain to constructivist method are:

- Active learner engagement
- A democratic learning environment
- Interactive learning activities that are learner-centered
- Teacher acts as a facilitator of the learning process

**Paradigms of constructivism**

Constructivism can be categorized as cognitive or social.

**Cognitive constructivism**

Cognitive or Piagetian constructivists regard the purpose of education as educating the individual child in a way that supports the child’s interests and needs. This approach assumes that students come to the classroom with ideas, beliefs and opinions that need to be altered or modified by teachers who facilitate this alteration by devising tasks and questions that create dilemmas, for students. Knowledge construction occurs as a result of working through these dilemmas. Characteristic instructional practice include ‘discovery learning” and hands on activities such as using manipulative; student tasks that challenge existing concepts and thinking processes; questioning techniques that probe students beliefs and encourage examination and testing of these beliefs. The internal development of learners is the focus of the teaching environment. Issues of power, authority and place of formal knowledge in the learning environment are not emphasized. It is essentially a decontextualized approach to learning and teaching.

**Social constructivism**

Social or Vygotskian constructivism emphasize education for social transformation and reflects a theory of human development that situates the individual within a social cultural context. Individual development derives from social interactions within which cultural meanings are shared by the group and eventually internalized by the individual. Through this, individual’s construct of both the individual and the environments are changed. The subject of study is the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social and cultural milieu. The approach assumes that theory and practice do not develop in vacuum; they are shaped by dominant cultural assumptions. Formal knowledge, the subject of instruction and the manner of presentation are influenced by the historical and cultural environment that generated them.

**Principles of constructivism that teachers can adopt**

According to Jonassen (1999), “the following are guiding principles of constructivist thinking that educators must keep in mind.

a) **It takes time to learn**
Learning is not instantaneous. For significant learning, learners need to revisit ideas, ponder them, try them out, play with them and use them.

b) **Learning is an active process in which the learners use sensory input and constructs meaning of it.**

Learners need to do something because learning involves the learners engaging with the world.

c) **People learn to learn as they learn**

Learning consist both of constructing meaning and constructing systems of meaning, that is, each meaning the learner construct makes them better able to give meaning to other sensations which can fit similar patterns.

d) **The crucial action of constructing meaning is mental**

Constructing of meanings happens in the mind. Teachers need to provide activities which engage the mind as well as the hands of the learner.

e) **Learning involves language**

The language the teacher uses influences learning. People talk to themselves as they learn, and language and learning are inextricably intertwined.

f) **Learning is a social activity**

Learning is intimately associated with making connection with other human beings. Conversations, interaction with others and collaborations are integral aspects of learning.

g) **Learning is contextual**

Learner do not learn isolated facts and theories in some abstract ethereal land of mind separate from the rest of their lives. They learn in relationship to what else they know, what they believe, their prejudices and their fears.

h) **One needs knowledge to learn**

It is not possible to assimilate new knowledge without having some structure developed from previous knowledge to build on. The more we know the more we can learn.

i) **Learning is not the passive acceptance of knowledge which exists “out there”** Learning involves the learner engaging with the world and extracting meaning from his/her experiences.

j) **Motivation is a key component of learning**

Motivation helps to sustain attention of learners and is thus essential for learning.

**Constructivism and classroom**

Constructivist teachers pose questions and problems, and then guide learner to help them find their own answers. They use many techniques in the teaching process. For example, they may:

- Prompt students to formulate their own questions (inquiry)
- Allow multiple interpretations and expressions of learning (multiple intelligences)
- Encourage group work and use peers as resources (collaborative learning).

Learners are not blank slates upon which knowledge is etched. They come to learning situations with already formulated knowledge, ideas and understanding. This previous knowledge is the raw material for the new knowledge they will create. The learner is the person who creates new understanding for him/herself. A teacher coaches, moderates, suggests, and also allows learners room to experiment, ask questions, and try things. Learning activities require learners’ full participation. An important aspect of the learning process is that learners reflect on, and talk about, their activities. Learners also help to set their own goals and means of assessment (Gay, 2000).

Learners control their own learning process, and they lead the way by reflecting on their experiences. This process makes them experts in their learning. The teacher helps create situations where learners feel safe questioning and reflecting on their own processes, either in privacy or in group discussions. The teacher should also create activities that lead the learner to reflect on his/her prior knowledge and experience.
Talking about what was learned and how it was learned is very important. The constructivist class relies heavily on collaboration among learners. The main reason of using collaboration in constructivism is that students learn about learning not only from themselves, but also from their peers. When learners review and reflect on their learning processes together, they can pick up strategies and methods, from one another. The main activity in a constructivist classroom is solving problems. Learners use inquiry methods to ask questions, investigate a topic, and use a variety of resources to find solutions and answers. As learners explore the topic, they draw conclusions as exploration continues, and also revisit these conclusions. Exploration of questions leads to more questions (Pogrow, 2009). The role of the teacher in a constructivist classroom is to prompt and facilitate discussion. The teacher should guide learners by asking questions that will help them to develop their own conclusions on the subject matter. According to Parker (2007) good teachers join self, subject and learners in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self, they manifest in their own lives, and evoke in the learners a capacity for connectedness.

Johansson (1999) identified three major roles for facilitators to support learners in constructionist learning environments (CLEs): **Modeling** which Janssen describes modeling as the most commonly used instructional strategy in CLEs. Two types of modeling exist: behavioral modeling of the overt performance and cognitive modeling of the covert cognitive process. Behavioral modeling demonstrates how to perform the activities identified in the activity structure. Cognitive modeling articulates the reasoning (reflection-in-action) that learners should use while engaged in activities. **Coaching** as another role for facilitators aims to motivate learners. According to Johansson, a good coach motivates learners, analyses their performance, provides feedback, and advice on their performance. The final facilitator role is **Scaffolding** which focuses on the task, the environment, the teacher, and the learner to support learning and student performance beyond their capacities.

In constructivist assessments, the process of gaining knowledge is viewed as being just as important as the product. Thus, assessment is based not only on classroom but also on observations of the learner, learner’s work and learner’s points of view. Strategies that teachers can adopt include: oral discussion, mind mapping, hands on activities which allow learners to manipulate their environment or a particular learning tool, pre – testing to allow teachers determine the knowledge level of learners on the new topic and KWL(H) chart (what we know, what we want to know, what we have learned, how we know it).

**Strategies for using constructivism in teaching**
Taber (2011) suggests the following as useful strategies in a constructivism classroom.

**Small group activities**
Group learning activities cause learners to interpret experiences, knowledge, and beliefs and at the same time, knowledge and beliefs are found within each learner. Group activity allows them to gain new experience.

**Learner developed instruction**
Constructivist learning theory places importance on the learners’ point of view. Teachers should make a point of including learners’ requests in the design process. It helps to bring some form of prior knowledge to presentations.

**Meta-cognition and Reflection**
Meta-cognition refers to the ability to reflect on one’s own performance. Meta-cognition allows the learner to plan, set time lines, and allocate resources. Reflection allows the learners the opportunity to develop, assess and organize their thoughts.
How does constructivism differ from traditional ideas about teaching and learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Classroom</th>
<th>Constructivist Classroom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher-centered class</td>
<td>1. Learner-centered class</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole with emphasis on basic skills</td>
<td>2. Curriculum emphasizes big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include parts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Resource materials are mainly text books and workbooks</td>
<td>3. Resource materials include primarily sources of materials and manipulative materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.</td>
<td>4. Pursuit of learner questions and interest is valued.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Teachers disseminate information to learner; learner are recipients of knowledge</td>
<td>5. Teachers have dialogue with students, helping learners construct their own knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teacher’s role is directive, rooted in authority</td>
<td>6. Teacher’s role is interactive, rooted in negotiation</td>
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<td>7. Knowledge is seen as inert</td>
<td>7. Knowledge is seen as dynamic, ever changing with learners experience</td>
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<td>8. Learners work primarily alone</td>
<td>8. Learners work primarily in groups.</td>
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<td>9. Learning is based on repetition</td>
<td>9. Learning is interactive, building on what the learner already knows.</td>
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<td>10. Teachers seek the correct answers to validate learners lessons</td>
<td>10. Teachers seek students point of view in order to understand student learning for use in subsequent conceptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Learners are viewed as “blank slates” onto which information is etched by the teacher</td>
<td>11. Learners are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world.</td>
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Adopted from- Brooks and Brooks (1993)

**Behaviorism**

Behaviorism is based on behaviour changes. The main focus is on new behaviour pattern being repeated until it becomes automatic. It is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of the learner. Behaviorism is directed by stimuli. An individual selects one response instead of another because of prior conditioning and psychological drives existing at the movement of the action (Parkay and Hass 2000).

Advocates of behaviorism include: Pavlov (1849-1936), the Russian psychologist best known for his work in classical conditioning or stimulus substitution, Thorndike (1874-1949) who did research in animal behaviour. His theory connectionism stated that learning was the formation of connections between stimulus and response. He formulated three laws in relation to how learning takes place: The **“law of readiness”** which states that before a connection is made between the stimulus and response (S.R), the learner must be ready physically and mentally. The **“law of Exercise”** which states the more the S-R bond is practiced the stronger it will become, and the **“Law of Effect”** which states that when a connection between a stimulus and response is positively rewarded it will be strengthened and when it is negatively rewarded it will be weakened. Teaching therefore must be pleasing. The teacher must consider needs and interests of learners. Greater satisfaction motivates them to learn.
Other Protagonists of behaviorism include Watson (1878-1958) who demonstrated on classical conditioning, and Skinner (1904-1990) who carried out studies on operant behaviour emphasizing on a rewarding learning environment. To incorporate behaviourist principles in teaching certain considerations should be made:

- **a)** learning outcome must be written in observable and measurable terms
- **b)** desired performance must be stated in advance
- **c)** assessment procedures to verify learning must be indicated
- **d)** instructional strategies to shape desired skills should be specified
- **e)** Ways of providing appropriate feedback should be indicated.

Based on the two theoretical approaches, the following questions become pertinent pedagogical questions for teachers.

**Pedagogical curriculum questions for teachers**

- **a)** Does the pedagogy value the students’ points of view? The curriculum should encourage students to think reflectively for themselves. This question invites educators to respond to questions such as;
  - Do I encourage student participation and problem solving?
  - Does my pedagogy indicate that I value students’ effort to form a point of view or consider answer to an issue or problem? (Doll, 1992).

- **b)** Does the practice encourage teaching in imaginative and creative ways? This question highlights the duty of teachers to discuss their need for the freedom to teach their subjects artistically and guide their learners imaginatively (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008).

- **c)** Does the staff use culturally responsive teaching? This requires teachers to use the knowledge of their learner- whether historical, religious, national, aesthetic, epistemological, political, and familial to enhance their learning and teaching. That is, the teacher should incorporate student realities into his/her pedagogical plans (Gay, 2000).

- **d)** Does student inquiry have a significant place in learning? How are the students involved in inquiry and how does the teacher respond, is the teacher respecting the point of view of the learners in their inquiry, are the inquiry of the learner respected and considered in the learning process?

- **e)** Does practice draw on research related to effective methods of teaching? This question invites individuals, groups, and school staff to openly discuss whether;
  - They are aware of current research related to their teaching and if they consider their teaching habits consistent with the recommended (Pogrow, 2009)
  - This question is a valuable tool in seeking to determine whether, and to what degree professional development of staff is aligned with their responsibilities.

- **f)** Does the pedagogy reinforce written and articulated values? This question asks educators to determine whether their professed-written and articulated value statements are enacted in the way teaching is undertaken.

From the discussions it becomes clear that for effective learning to take place, the learning environments must be positive environments.

**Who is a teacher?**

A teacher is a person engaged in interactive behaviour with one or more learners for the purpose of effecting a change in those learners. The change, whether it is to be in knowledge (cognitive), skill (psychomotor) or feeling states (affective), is intentional on the part of the teacher (Pontefract &Hardman(2005). The essential task of the teacher is to arrange the conditions of the learner’s
environment so that the processes of learning are activated, supported, enhanced and maintained (Gagne, Briggs & Wager (1992). The classroom becomes an important venue for delivery and acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and attitudes. Auronson, Barrow and Sander (2007) posit that teachers have a direct responsibility to shape a student’s academic achievement and are the most important school-based factor in education. This is why it is important to examine which teacher characteristics may be related to creation of effective learning environments and student achievement.

**Characteristics of great teachers**

According to Canter and Canter (2002) great teachers portray the following characteristics:

1. Have high expectations for all learners - they expect that all learners can and will achieve in their classroom and do not give up on under achievers.
2. Have clear, written out objectives
3. Are prepared and organized. They are in class in good time and ready to teach.
4. Great teachers engage students and get them to look at an issue in a variety of ways.
5. Great teachers are masters of their subject matter- They exhibit expertise in the subjects they are teaching and spend time continuing to gain new knowledge in their filed. They present materials in an enthusiastic manner and instill a hunger in their learners to learn more on their own. To be effective, positive learning environments are deemed necessary. Teachers are not responsible for teaching only but also to create an enabling learning environment.
6. The teacher also exhibit great sense of mastery of the content of what he/she is teaching.

**What are the major concerns?**

Obama (2006) noted that the teacher is an important factor in determining academic achievement of students’. Filling the classrooms with learners in not enough, for Education for All (EFA) to have positive social and economic impact, children must be enabled to learn basic minimum competencies of literacy and numeracy to enable them benefit from and contribute to their society’s future. Unfortunately evidence suggests that many learners who attend school are not learning.

A study carried out by Gathumbi (2009) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education indicates that forty percent of the primary teacher trainees lacked desired English language skills. They end up teaching English skills yet they are poor in listening and writing, which are key skills in teaching of English and other subjects. The UWEZO (2010) assessment report indicated that nearly half of standard four learners could not read standard two level stories and that, a third of children in class two could not read a paragraph on their own. Similarly the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) assessment of standard three learners in numeracy and literacy reported poor learning achievement. The report indicates that achievement in both reading and numeracy was below the standardized mean of 300 (KNEC, 2010).

A research on quality of country’s education system established that an average standard six pupil in Kenya is likely to be brighter than his or her teacher. A report compiled by an arm of United Nations, UNESCO (2008) found that primary school teachers scored on average only 69 percent on tests of grade 6 mathematics material which is below the mean mark for several city schools. In all likelihood, the same teachers would perform more dismally in class seven and eight tests due to complexity of the content. Worse still, the survey established that no teacher had a complete mastery of any subject including the one they taught bringing into focus the capacity among teachers to impart correct knowledge in their pupils. The situation is made worse by the shortage of trained teachers. Could teacher based factors contribute to these concerns or is it issues related to classroom learning environment? Let us now consider the two questions.
Teacher factors that contribute to effective learning

Teacher personality: Personality may be viewed as the dynamic organization of those traits and characteristic patterns of behaviour that are unique to the individual (Callahan, 2006). Personality influences the behaviour of the teacher in diverse ways, such as interaction with learners, selection of teaching strategies, utilization of instructional resources and selection of learning experiences (Murray, 1998). The effective use of a teacher’s personality is essential in conducting instructional activities. Personality aids teaching since communication takes place between the teacher and the learner even in absence of spoken word (nonverbal communication). The teacher whose personality helps create and maintain classroom or learning environment in which learners feel comfortable and in which they are motivated to learn is said have a desirable learning personality (Callahan, 2006). Each individual has characteristic attributes of personality which influence both the manner in which the person behaves towards others and the ways in which they respond. A teacher with pervasive authoritarian characteristics for example is likely to reflect them in his/her relationship with the learners and in the teaching techniques used (Morrison and McIntyre, 2005).

The nature of interactions and influences in the school are important factors in determining the learner’s perceptions of the school and his/her attitudes towards school related persons and activities (McCombs and Miller, 2006). This factor involves the interplay between the personality of the teacher and that of the learner. According to the theory of interpersonal perceptions by Stevenson and Kritsonis (2009), learner’s attitude toward the teacher will affect his/her attitudes towards subjects taught by the teacher and towards the school. Additionally, it may be postulated that the learner’s attitude toward a teacher is a function of the teachers’ personality.

Teacher’s sense of efficacy: Efficacy refers to teacher’s judgment on his/her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning (Tschannen and Hoy, 2001). Studies by Good and Brophy (2003) show that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy take more risks, set higher standards for themselves and their learners, and provide the potential for highest academic gains among learners. Teacher efficacy also has been shown to be related to other behaviours that have the potential to impact student achievement. For instance, teacher efficacy has been shown to strongly relate to teacher’s adoption of innovations (Guskey, 1988; Smylie, 1988) and classroom management strategies (Gibson and Dembo, 1984) which sustain student motivation and self-esteem.

Good and Brophy (2003) argued that teacher efficacy may influence achievement through teacher persistence. Teachers with high efficacy take responsibility for student learning and may view learner’s failure as a push for greater effort to improve achievement. Such teachers spend more time monitoring and working with their learners providing the means for higher levels of learner engagement. Efficacious teachers are more likely to implement instructional strategies to enhance student learning, rather than just covering the curriculum. They also take more risks and have confidence in overcoming classroom challenges which contribute to higher student achievement. In contrast, teachers with low efficacy feel they only have minimal influence on students learning outcome. Such teachers give up more easily when confronted with difficult learning situations, are less resourceful and feel that learners cannot achieve due to extenuating circumstances, (Ashton and Webb, 1986). Such teachers tend to create classroom cultures that undermine learner’s sense of efficacy and cognition development and rely on extrinsic motivation or punishment to get learners to study (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher’s teaching style

Teaching style is the expression of the totality of one’s philosophy, beliefs, values and behaviour (Williamson and Watson (2007). Teaching style is a very influential factor in learner’s learning
experiences (Knowles, 1980) and is a critical component in determining the extent of students learning since teachers provide the vital human connection between the content and the environment and the learners (Heimlich and Norland, 2004).

Concept of learning environments
Learning environment refers to the whole range components and activities within which learning takes place. Learning environments are typically constructivist in nature, engaging learners in “sensemaking” or reasoning about extensive resource sets. Creating and implementing a learning environment means careful planning by the teacher. The learning environment must be envisioned in both a physical space and a cognitive space. Learning environments typically include four components; an enabling context, resources, a set of tools, and scaffolds (Hannafin, Land & Oliver, 1999).

a) Enabling context
This can be externally induced or individually generated. In the case of external inducement, learners are presented with cases or problems for them to design relevant processes and select appropriate tasks to interpret the case or problem. In individually generated approach, learners seek appropriate processes to manage personally chosen and relevant problems. This is designed to help; activate prior knowledge that exist on a topic and also help learners to choose appropriate strategies that may have been deployed on prior tasks.

b) Resources
Successful learning environments provide extensive resources for use by learners; electronic website, videos, printed- based books, human resources, real specimen among others.

c) Set of tools.
Tools do not inherently promote higher order thinking but provide a mechanism through which such thinking may be enhanced. Such tools include: Information processing tools: These tools involve searching, collecting of data, organizing learning from available information and interpreting it into new learning. Manipulation tools to allow learners to test and revise theories and hypotheses, Communication tools which allow learners to discuss and debate topics, issues, projects and other educational issues, and Scaffolding tools which provide procedural and conceptual directions as well as advice. Metacognitive scaffolds prompt learners to adapt particular learning strategies and processes.

d) Potential outcomes
Outcomes may include: motivation from relevant topics with real world implications; improved transfer of knowledge from content to specific problems; better understanding of inquiry processes including evaluation of knowledge, identifying needs and testing of ideas and internal locus of control, increased self-efficacy, increased responsibility.

Stipek(1996) and Altonlee(2003) highlight the need for the classroom environment to be a place that allows students to learn. A teacher must be able to identify the ebbs and flows of each class and work with students to create the learning environment. Every teacher must assess what is going on in the class through various means.

Guidelines for creating a positive classroom learning environment
1. Creating a positive learning climate requires the involvement of learners. To involve learner:
   - Allow them to provide input regarding schedules, activities and other events
   - Plan hands-on work, group and individual projects and classroom activities.

2. A positive learning environment is created through the use of a variety of learning methods including:
   - Audiovisual aids
   - Illustrated lectures
   - Demonstrations
   - Small group activities
   - Role-play and case studies
   - Guest speakers
   - Brainstorming

3. The effective teacher helps to create the positive learning environment by using a variety of techniques for providing positive feedback:
   - Use of positive responses during questioning
   - Giving of verbal praise
   - Recognizing appropriate skills when coaching
   - Letting learners know how they are progressing towards achieving learning objectives.

4. Teachers should be sure to treat the learners as individuals. To do this
   - Use learners names as often as possible
   - Involve all learners as often as possible
   - Treat learners with respect
   - Allow learners to share information with others.

5. To maintain the self-respect of learners, the teacher can:
   - Provide corrective feedback in an appropriate manner
   - Reinforce those practices and beliefs embodied in their course content.
   - Provide teaching that adds to their sense of competence and self-esteem.
   - Recognize performances and accomplishment of learners.
   - Avoid exposing weaknesses of learners.

**Conclusion**
Teacher’s influence in creating a positive learning environment is significant. Teachers should create enabling learning environments which are inclusive of all learners and also take care of social interactions among learners. To lead to individual development of the learner, the teacher should adopt a variety of teaching resources and strategies. In the teaching process, the teacher should be innovative and be an expert in the subject area to carefully take care of changing learning contexts as well as address diversity among learners.

**Way forward**
1. Special attention should be given to teachers because of their centrality in attaining and maintaining quality of education in any country.
2. Since the quality of our teachers is determined by the quality of our teacher education programmes, then improving the quality of teachers translates into improving the quality of teacher education programmes. It must be emphasized that an education system is as good as its teachers.
3. There is need to develop a performance evaluation system for teachers to determine the competence, assess strengths, provide support and assure continued growth through differential experiences.
4. The possibility of developing mentoring programmes supported by a teacher handbook should be considered.
5. There is need to focus on diagnostic teaching in an attempt to remedy learner errors and misconceptions.
6. The teaching-learning process should provide tools and environments that help learners interpret the multiple perspectives of the world.
7. Teaching should enable context-and content dependent knowledge construction.
8. Teachers should support collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation.

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