

Editorial

Dealing with different types of students: Teachers' blind spot

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Teaching is a profession that teaches all of the other professions. A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart. Teaching is an art, science and skill. Teacher should have the creative proficiency of an artist, the precise attitude of a scientist and perfected skill of a craftsman. Learning is an active process. We have to actively engage the learners in learning activities if we want them to learn what we intend to teach.

The challenges of teaching learning are awesome—overcrowded classrooms, lack of student interest, absenteeism, high incidence of misbehavior, etc. Added to all the above, the present-day learners are technology savvy people who are referred to as Digital Natives which adds to the complexity of the teaching learning process.

According to John Adams, “*Teacher should know John as well as Latin*”. Here John means student and Latin means content of the teaching. Therefore, it is necessary for the teachers to know about the students' psychology in terms of their abilities, interests, attitudes, needs, stages of development and previous level of learning.

Each student is precious. Each has so much potential. They sit in front of teachers with hopes, expectations and ambitions. Students differ in terms of their physical, intellectual, social and emotional characteristics. Knowledge of the characteristics of students and how to handle that student is very crucial for teachers in the teaching learning process.

There are eight types of students; namely, compliant students, independent students, anxious students, snipers, heroes, attention seekers, discouraged workers and silent students.

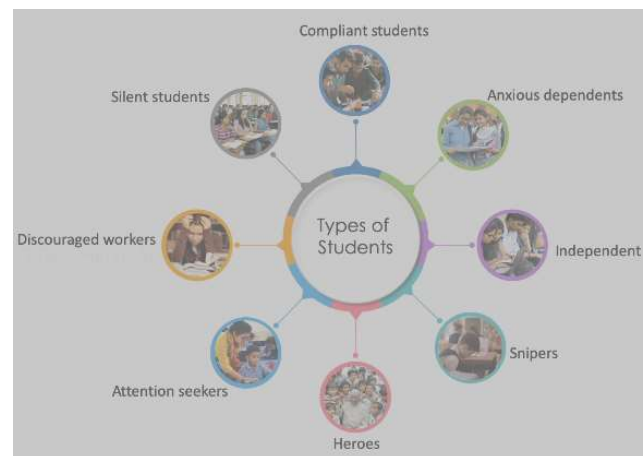


Figure 1: Eight different types of students¹

Types of Students

1. Compliant Students: It is very fortunate if a greater number of compliant students are present in a teacher's classroom.

Characteristics of compliant students are:

- Highly teacher dependent.
- Follow all the rules and regulations spelt out by the teacher.
- Highly conventional and task-oriented people.
- Learn what teacher wants them to learn inside the classroom.
- Always in agreement with the teacher.
- Usually prefer lectures by the teacher than discussion.
- Do moderately well in examinations.
- Have a high level of trust on teachers.
- Feel that the marks they get are justified.

Guidelines for handling compliant students are:

- Maintain a good relationship with such students as they show discipline and show the teacher that they care for all that the teacher does for them.
- The teacher should communicate what are his/her expectations of them.
- Keep a close watch on their performance and activities.
- Control them very softly but persistently.
- Encourage them to channel their energies to meet their structured requirements of the course.

2. Anxious Dependents: This is a very common type in any teacher's classroom.

Characteristics of anxious dependents are:

- Excessively concerned about the marks they score in the class tests and the examinations.
- Learn what the teacher asks them to learn but they always have a fear that they will miss something the teacher has told them.
- In the laboratory, they will keep on asking the teacher; 'Whether I am performing nicely?'
- In the class room when the teacher is completing a task, they will ask the teacher; 'Is this content very important? Will it be asked in the examinations?' and they will ask the teacher to repeat the content in the class again and again.
- They distress teachers occasionally and they feel that teacher may ask tricky questions in the examinations or the teacher will be unfair in marking their examinations. But, nevertheless, these are very good students and their anxiousness is required for successful performance.

Guidelines for handling anxious dependents are:

- Do not reject them. Accept them as they are.
- Do not get angry when they ask to repeat certain things or when they mistrust teacher.
- Give them words of encouragement to make them confident about their work.
- Reassure them that everything will be all right and stimulate their intellectual development activities.

3. Independents: It is a boon to a teacher, if independent students are present inside the classroom.

Characteristics of independents are:

- Prefer seminars rather than lectures and they are high participators in seminars or conferences.
- Very friendly with their teachers.
- Performance is always at a higher level.
- Never present the problems to the teachers and ask for solutions.
- Formulate own planning of given task.
- Often these students are detached from the rest of the group and aloof.
- Academically good, independent in handling academics and bring minimal problems.

Guidelines for handling independents are:

- Acknowledge their independence.
- Encourage them to excel in all the activities they undertake in the institute.
- Recognise and compliment their achievements inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

4. Heroes

Characteristics of heroes are:

- Resemble more or less like independent students but seek lot of attention.
- Heroes are sometimes optimistic underachievers who initially excite the teacher with their intensity and grand plan for independent projects but later they will disappoint the teacher with poor execution.
- Slightly hostile.
- Most of the times not committed to their goals.
- Love discussion but they ran into arguments.
- Promise very much but they deliver very little.
- Fear that they may not live up to their heroic ideal, even if they try to do their best.

Guidelines for handling heroes are:

- Encourage them to channel their energies into meeting the more structured requirements of the course.
- Maintain a good relationship with them.
- Communicate the teacher's expectations of them.
- Keep a close watch on them and apply soft control but persistently.

5. Snipers: It is very important for the teacher to handle the snipers so that the harmony of the class is maintained.

Characteristics of snipers are:

- They are a type of heroes but hostile to a teacher.
- Have very high expectations and have positive image about themselves but they have little hope of being recognised.
- Habitual rebels.
- Sit far away from the teacher.
- Often make cutting remarks in the classroom.

Guidelines for handling snipers are:

- Try to control the anger of handling such students.
- Ignore the hostile comments they make but do respond enthusiastically to their comments.
- Make lengthy and careful notes on their assignments.
- Try to establish rapport with them.
- Show strength rather than weakness in handling them.

6. Attention Seekers

Characteristics of attention seekers are:

- Come mainly to the class to socialize with others.
- Their social needs are very prominent than their intellectual needs.
- Very fond of discussion and form close relationships with the teachers.
- Capable of very good work, if it is made the basis for their reputation.
- Very good organisers of any activities.
- Easily influenced by others.

Guidelines for handling attention seekers are:

- Initially give them ample attention with no strings attached.
- Slowly reduce the level of attention and reserve it only for good academic work.
- Motivate them to move from social orientation to intellectual content.

7. Discouraged Workers: It is very difficult for a teacher to handle such students in the class and it is considered most difficult to encourage a discouraged worker type of students.

Characteristics of discouraged workers are:

- Generally, have depressed attitude towards themselves and their education.
- Do not find learning a pleasure.
- Preoccupied with some other activities and they don't have any enthusiasm.
- Mostly they have been pressurized by parents to select courses or there may be some problem either in the family or in the social circle.
- Feel that coming to the institution is not important.

Guidelines for handling discouraged workers are:

- Openly acknowledge that they have been noticed and their low morale is not good for their learning.
- Talk to them and try to find out what is hindering them from learning.
- Compliment them, whenever they do a good work.
- Try to inspire them, try to advise them about how learning is important and getting through the course is very important.

8. Silent Students: It is slightly discouraging for a teacher to have such students in the class; however, there are different ways by which teacher can encourage these students.

Characteristics of silent students are:

- Very quiet.
- Do not participate in the class activities on their own.
- Do not interact much with others and always remain aloof.

Guidelines for handling silent students are:

- At any cost, do not ignore them in the classroom.
- Establish eye contact with them and smile at them, whenever there is an opportunity.
- Walk up to them in the class and initiate conversation with them.
- Try to make them involved in all the discussions and conversations and seminars.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is the responsibility of every teacher to handle all types of students. The teacher should act accordingly to different types of students. Any classroom will be a mix of the different student types. Sometimes, the ratio may vary but the guidelines of handling students remain the same and teachers should use these guidelines to have a pleasant classroom.

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