

OpenLearn Works



The Open
University

Week 1: Visions for teaching and learning

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Introduction

In this first week you will start to think and reflect upon your ideas about teaching and learning. How do you recognise good teaching? What ideas of learning and knowledge do you find convincing? Would you describe your own practice as 'learner-centred'? This week will provide an opportunity to explore these questions and relate them to your own practice. You will also find out about Open Educational Resources (OER) and TESS-India, a large-scale OER Teacher Education programme.

In total there are seven activities in this first week, including a quiz that is part of your portfolio of participation. In this first activity you will start to consider and articulate your vision for effective teaching and learning.

Activity 1.1: Your vision for teaching and learning

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Articulating your vision for teaching and learning is useful because it helps you to make your goals and ambitions explicit, and enables you to share them. It will also help you to judge the effectiveness of your actions as a teacher educator.

- 1 Note in your study notebook some key words or phrases to describe your *vision for quality classroom teaching and learning*. The following questions might help you to think about your ideal classroom:

- What would you observe teachers and students doing?
- What role are teachers playing?
- What characterises teacher–student relationships? How do teachers treat students?
- What sort of learning is taking place?

(Guidance on using your study notebook can be found in the document 'Your study notebook'.)

- 2 Watch the short videos of Sir Ken Robinson speaking. Sir Ken is an eminent educationalist and in his talks he expresses his personal position regarding the role of teachers, drawing on explicit moral values that embrace principles of truth, justice, fairness, equity, inclusion and ethical actions.

- 3 What similarities and differences are there with your own vision?

1 A global vision for teaching and learning?

International and national policy documents each offer a vision for education in their context – they may vary in their emphasis, but there are common themes. A very large number promote the ‘learner-centred’ classroom as an ideal, and good teaching as teaching that leads to students learning for understanding, rather than just memorising information. In India, the *National Curriculum Framework* (2005) outlines educational policy direction in India as follows:

Our current concern in curriculum development and reform is to make it an inclusive and meaningful experience for children, along with the effort to move away from a textbook culture. This requires a fundamental change in how we think of learners and the process of learning. Hence the need to engage in detail with the underpinnings and implications of ‘child-centred’ education.

‘Child-centred’ pedagogy means giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy requires us to plan learning in keeping with children’s psychological development and interests. The learning plans therefore must respond to physical, cultural and social preferences within the wide diversity of characteristics and need. [...] We need to nurture and build on their active and creative capabilities – their inherent interest in making meaning, in relating to the world in ‘real’ ways through acting on it and creating, and in relating to other humans. Learning is active and social in its character [...].

Children’s voices and experiences do not find expression in the classroom. Often the only voice heard is that of the teacher. When children speak, they are usually only answering the teacher’s questions or repeating the teacher’s words. They rarely do things, nor do they have opportunities to take initiative. The curriculum must enable children to find their voices, nurture their curiosity – to do things, to ask questions and to pursue investigations, sharing and integrating their experiences with school knowledge – rather than their ability to reproduce textual knowledge. Reorienting the curriculum to this end must be among our highest priorities, informing the preparation of teachers [...]

(NCERT, 2005:13)

If you are working in India and are not familiar with this policy, you should refer to [Chapter 2 of the National Curriculum Framework](#).

However, implementing these policy visions in classroom teaching is challenging. UNESCO’s *Global Monitoring Report* (2014) shows that not all children in school benefit from their education and many do not achieve the basic learning outcomes needed for work and a productive life. (

[Chapter 4 in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/4](#) gives further detail.)

In India, research on educational quality is conducted annually by ASER. Findings from [the most recent report](#), while contested by some, suggest that a large percentage of students in Indian schools are not achieving basic skills in reading and mathematics.

2 What needs to change?

Factors such as poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity, language and geographical location all significantly affect how much students learn when they are in school classrooms.

Activity 1.2: Educational policy and your experience

Allow approximately 20 minutes

- 1 What are the key features of policy in terms of teaching and learning for basic education in your country or state?
- 2 To what extent does policy resonate with your experience of teaching and learning in India or your country?
- 3 What do you think is the biggest challenge to putting your country's policy into practice?

Write a short note of your responses to these questions in your notebook.

2 What needs to change?



Figure 1

Giving all students access to a high-quality school education is the central aim of global and national education policies. As you have seen, there is an emerging consensus that quality in education is achieved through promoting:

- learner-centred practices that give value to each learner's prior knowledge and experiences
- school structures that enable student participation.

Realising this change depends on the quality of teachers; this in turn depends on teacher education. Research shows that teacher educators play a crucial role in developing skilled teachers (Musset, 2010:3).

What changes might you initiate in your own practice as a teacher educator and with teachers that you work with? In Activity 1.3 you consider changes needed in classrooms in your area.

Activity 1.3: Your vision for change

Allow approximately 40 minutes

- 1 In your study notebook, write three or four bullet points to describe what you would change in classrooms in your area in order to support your vision for teaching and learning. The following questions may help you:
 - Think about the classrooms you have visited recently. Have all the students been actively engaged in learning? How could you tell?
 - What would you like to see *teachers* doing more often or less often?
 - What would you like to see *students* doing more often?
- 2 Look at the examples below of classroom changes suggested by teachers and teacher educators at a recent workshop in India. Categorise them using the following headings:
 - Teachers valuing all children
 - Teachers guiding learning
 - Teachers as resourceful, skillful professionals
 - Teachers enabling dialogue
 - Teachers promoting active engagement

3 Open Educational Resources



Figure 2

- 3 Note down which statements you agree with and which you think are most important. What category represents the most significant change for teachers in your area?
- 4 Select your top three ideas for change. Discuss your ideas with a colleague or peer and explain why you think these are your highest priority. What ideas or priorities does your colleague have? How do they compare with your own?

3 Open Educational Resources

There are many materials available to help teachers develop their practice. Some of these are Open Educational Resources (OER).

In most countries – and in India since 1957 – the author or creator of an original work such as a book, learning resource or video is given exclusive rights to its rights and distribution, usually for a limited time. This is known as copyright and allows the author or creator to charge users for access to the work.

With the invention of the internet, it has become much easier for everyone to share content across the world and for educators to share and adapt materials. This idea of sharing resources is the basis of OER. These are resources with an open licence, where the author or creator remains as the rights-holder but chooses which rights to retain and which rights to waive (see [the Creative Commons website](#) for more details). In an OER

the creator allows users to access and reproduce the materials without cost and, under certain open licences, to adapt or change the resource.

OER have been defined as:

any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

(UNESCO, 2015)

Advocates of OER argue that they can support improvements in curricula and support teaching by giving everyone access to a much wider range of materials. This is particularly important in contexts where there are few materials or limited access to universities or other institutions of learning. But remember, just accessing OER will not bring about change; it is using the ideas in classrooms and workshops that matters, which is the theme of this MOOC.

You will find out more about OER in Activity 1.4.

Activity 1.4: Finding out more about OER

Allow approximately 1 hour

- 1 Explore the following websites to find out more about OER.
 - UNESCO: [What are Open Educational Resources \(OER\)?](#)
 - Commonwealth of Learning: [Defining OER](#)
 - Commonwealth of Learning:
[A Basic Guide to Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#)
 - Algonquin College: [OER tutorial](#)
- 2 As you explore the websites, make notes about the advantages of OER in your work, any problems you anticipate with using OER and any questions you have about using OER.
- 3 Discuss your questions with a colleague or peer.

4 Introducing TESS-India

TESS-India is an example of an innovative project that uses collaboratively created, original OER for teacher education.

The TESS-India OER provide structured learning opportunities for teachers, helping them to move from generalisations about learner-centred practice to specific, contextualised instances. There are eight core sets of text OER to support teachers of different subjects in primary and secondary schools:

- Elementary English
- Elementary Maths

- Elementary Science
- Elementary Language and Literacy
- Secondary English
- Secondary Maths
- Secondary Science
- School Leadership.

Each of the first seven OER sets in the list above contains 15 units modelling key pedagogic practices through topics from the appropriate school curriculum. (The School Leadership set contains 20 units.) You can view the lists of units by visiting the [TESS-India website](#).

Each OER offers several activities for teachers to carry out in their classrooms with their students, alongside case studies and links to videos – which are also OER – that exemplify these pedagogic practices in Indian classrooms. The OER have been localised for use in each of the seven states where the project is available (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Assam and West Bengal) and are available in six languages.

It is important to note that the TESS-India OER are not a discrete course or programme, and do not aim to replace the textbook. Instead, they are resources that can be incorporated in a variety of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. Depending on the teachers you work with, the TESS-India OER can be used in multiple ways to meet teachers' needs.

Activity 1.5: Exploring TESS-India Teacher Development OER

Allow approximately 30 minutes

- 1 Visit [the TESS-India website](#) and find the different subject sets of OER in various languages under the 'Learning resources' section.
- 2 Explore one set of OER that is relevant to your practice.
- 3 Download or print two or three particular OER that you would like to use with teachers. You will be using these OER later in the MOOC. For example, if you work with language teachers in elementary schools, you might be interested in downloading two or three of the 15 OER that can be found under 'Elementary Language and Literacy'.

5 TESS-India pedagogy

The TESS-India OER are designed to help move teacher educators and teachers towards deeper engagement with the participatory 'learner-centred' pedagogy articulated in Indian policy documents (NCF 2005, NCFTE 2009). Through engaging in the OER activities, teachers are encouraged to *move away from* practices based on traditional assumptions about learning and learners, which are teacher-centred and hierarchical. Instead, they are supported in *moving towards* understandings of effective teaching and learning that are underpinned by research. This learning movement is described in the table below.

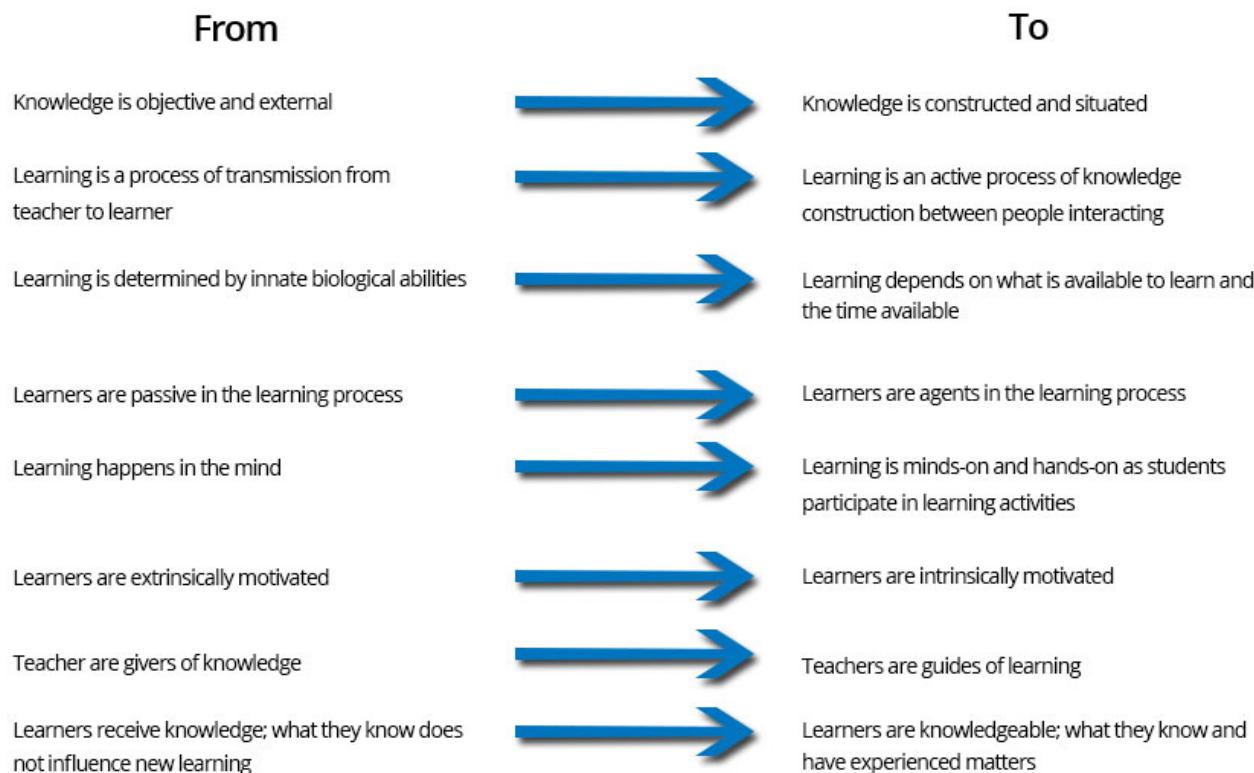


Figure 3

Reflection point

Think about three or four teachers that you know. Where would you place them on each of the dimensions above, on the left or the right? Where are their views on learning mainly located?

How does this link to your response to Activity 1.1?

The pedagogy in the TESS-India Teacher Development OER focuses on modelling practice for teachers that consistently conceptualises students as:

- knowledgeable
- constructors of meaning and problem solvers
- self-regulated and self-directed
- intrinsically motivated if learning activities have personal meaning and cultural authenticity.

The pedagogy of the TESS-India OER challenges a ‘teacher-centred’, lecture-driven approach, and positions learners in a way that is congruent with the policy that you encountered earlier this week. But what does this pedagogy look like in the classroom? You will explore this in Activity 1.6.

Activity 1.6: Implications for teachers

Allow approximately 40 minutes

- 1 [Listen to Professor Patricia Murphy from The Open University](#) talk about the thinking behind India's NCF (2005) and how it informed the development of TESS-India's OER.
- 2 As you listen, note down the implications for classroom practice of the learner-centred pedagogy. For example, if it is important to recognise students' prior knowledge and experience, what can teachers do to understand what their students know? And what kinds of activities can teachers carry out to enable students to interact in order to actively construct knowledge?

6 Reviewing your learning

Activity 1.7: Assignment 1 – Reviewing your learning

Allow approximately 20 minutes

To complete the first week of the MOOC, try this short quiz (10 questions) on the key points that you have covered. Once you have responded click on 'Check' to check your answer.

This is part of the portfolio of participation.

7 Moving forward

In this first week you have looked at how contemporary education policies tend to emphasise a 'learner-centred' approach, and what this might mean for classroom teaching. Many teachers are unfamiliar or unconfident with enacting an active, participatory approach to learning in their classrooms.

In Week 2 of this MOOC you consider how you, as a teacher educator, can give teachers experiences that help them to develop more learner-centred, participatory practices.

Now go to Week 2: Active learning in practice.

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