

A Pinch of Learning, A Dash of Teaching: A Brief Report on My Journey with Teacher Leadership Program

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The name of this program caught my attention. When we think of leaders, the profession of teaching is nowhere in that list. The realization that a teacher is a leader is the core of creating a collaborative, free-flowing space of learning.

Reasons for Joining

I came to know about TLP via a friend. I had a quick chat with Vasudha and enquired about the program. Being from psychology background, I instantly got intrigued with the nature and content of the course- particularly, exercises on experiential learning.

Since I had not attended the introductory session, I did not know what exactly to expect out of this program.

Experience during Sessions

Each session was enriching. Not only was content intriguing but also the way of introducing and conducting those sessions ensured maximum involvement. For instance, when facilitators used 'coin' to introduce the concept of gravity. With experiences of fellow participants and engaging discussions, I was forced to reflect on a myriad of issues around and about the processes of learning and teaching. Throughout this journey, I experienced my previously held thoughts and beliefs being challenged and that developed a space for newer, more inclusive perspective.

Shifts in Perspective:

I have had a bunch of leanings through this program. I am listing some below:

- Taking a moment of pause before responding is the best way one can be authentic towards self and the listener.
- Words are truly powerful, especially coming from the teacher.
- Learning is a responsibility, a majority of which is to be owned by the learners. Facilitating that process is a teacher's responsibility.
- Connecting with students enhances learning- makes teacher closer to the student's reality and experience. Empathy and belongingness play an important role.
- A teacher operating at higher level(s), motivates students to operate at higher level(s). This is a powerful realization. As a teacher we keep ourselves in check, not students.
- I was able to develop a deeper, more concrete definition of what education and educating mean to me.
- An understanding of the reason for the subject and topic at hand, on the part of students enhances learning and therefore, it must not be overlooked.
- Each student is special; teaching must cater to enhancing those specificities and not putting all in one standard box.
- Evaluating student's learning is intrinsic to the process of learning. Various methods can be explored.

Things that I took to My Class:

- I learnt certain practices that I was motivated to take to the class enlisted in the following points:
- Giving students agency to make rules of the class, checking if they are being followed at every regular interval.
- Writing objective(s) of each class- helps students to stay focused
- Giving detailed feedbacks
- Learning through projects

Changes I Observed in My Students:

- Students took responsibility of classes being held, and other rules and regulations.
- Students actively asked for my suggestion/opinion. Not for my validation.
- Holding discussions and taking class-related decisions amongst themselves
- Students who used to stay quiet in initial classes eventually started raising their hands to answer.

Some Challenges I am Struggling With:

- Motivating some students
- Breaking the hierarchy inside classrooms and creating a co-learning space. I aim that my students see me as a fellow learner not an all-knowing teacher.
- Generating healthy competition amongst students.

Concluding Thoughts: It has been a wonderful experience. I have found teaching to be intimately linked with learning. I resonate strongly with the following quote by Robert Heinlein; which also explains the title of this report:

“When one teaches, two learn.”

I am hopeful that this journey would continue within and outside.