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"Debate" learning method and its implications for the formal education system

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Regarding the importance of enhancement in learner's social skills, especially in learning process, this study tries to introduce one of the group learning programs entitled "debate" as a teaching method in Iran religious universities. It also considers the concept and the history of this method by qualitative and descriptive - analytical approach. Making a comparison between this and other similar procedures, educational benefits of this method and its application and necessity are derived. Research findings show that this group broad-based and learner-oriented strategy with a successful track record and specialized training and religious centers, has two instructional and educational functions such as mastery learning, creating a learning continuum, continuity in the learning, thinking centered learning, creative learning, increasing the speed of learning, the promotion of the evaluation power, the promotion of entrepreneurial skills, the promotion of mental health, the development of verbal skills, teaching critical thinking and the promotion of social skills.

Key words: Debate, broad-based approach, study groups, participatory methods.

INTRODUCTION

The main mission of the educational system is to provide opportunities for students to get practical and useful training to create thinking field and to enhance their social abilities. Therefore, the learner's devotion to education, a necessary need to learn and the personal commitment to the training process serve as challenges to the education system.

On the other hand, social skills training, the ability to express constructive criticism and theory of integration with the group's mission are important parts of the educational system that won't be done; because it needs to create the enabling environment to foster creative thinking and critical thinking in learning for the development of scientific, intellectual and social needs in the group. Latent strategy in the learning process is needed, as an important issue that has been transferred

to the periphery in the education system, and completely decoupled from teaching method. These challenges refer to the need of a fundamental change in the goals and methods of classroom management. Firstly, the individual and traditional teacher-centered models should be replaced by cooperative patterns. Then, the learner as an active factor should have an active role in learning process. Beside this, other learning objectives in the field of behavioral skills should be taken into consideration.

In order to select the appropriate strategy among participatory methods, "debate" is taken into consideration in this research. Although this method has a long history in the field of the religious schools, and has a unique attributes, its consequences and how it works in the field of education and training is unknown and obsolete.

Considering the challenges posed and the need for new strategies to approach educational systems, this study seeks to answer questions concerning the research new strategy approach that can be performed at various levels of formal education, based on the evidence:

1. What are the main components of the debate?
2. What are the advantages of using debate compared to other participatory methods?
3. Based on what functions and consequences, application of the debate recommended at different levels of performance?

METHODOLOGY

This study chooses the qualitative research paradigm. Purposive sampling, documentary method of data collection and the interpretive-descriptive method of data analysis were used in the study. The contents of all the documents that have been introduced into the debate method and its application were studied. At the first step, the sources were identified and were analyzed. In the second step, the results were classified and were analyzed.

Debate concept and its history

The debate, which means scratching and digging, is a kind of dialogue to find answer or solution. In other words, two or more people are talking about a topic, exchanging ideas to deliver opinion. The debate is meant to explore, and exploring the truths through interactions have a significant impact on the mental aspect of the human mind (Soraya, 2005). The "debate" includes regular and targeted verbal exchange of concepts and ideas that can be done by a group of people. This form of learning is used in formal systems to collaborative learning processes. The "debate" is a specific training methods that has specific steps (Rahimi, 2009), which are discussed in this study.

Part of the history of this debate includes the ancient Greek philosophers' debate on education that was shaped by the Sophists (fifth century BC) who formed the dialectic

and rhetoric method. Socrates in his dialectic method, to prove the error and fix the mistakes and confusion of mind, used debate in the form of question and answer to detect the addressees' errors. Then to get to the truth, conversation, question and answer would continue to avoid devoid fallacy and do a dialectic debate based on purposeful logical reasoning. Socrates was the main designer of the irregular education debate through which one could easily overcome the opponent. After Socrates, Aristotle was the first who found fame in this method because he conducted Socratic teaching style into methodological ones (Phajoohande, 2001).

But the main debate of the history of "debate" refers to the Quran, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Shiite Imams and some of their companions' customs that make students proficient in the development of Islamic culture and education. This method formed the "circles of the mosques education".

Among the Persian philosophers, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) in the fifth century as an explanatory of the Aristotelian tradition was the heir of this method. Suhrawardi's philosophy, which is called eclectic philosophy (involving intellect and intuition), regularly propose a different philosophical system with intuitionist outlook. It is the combination of two philosophical and mystical views, namely Aristotle's logical reasoning and Plato's mysticism. Suhrawardi has rather suggested this belief in the field of acquiring knowledge by humans that depends on three levels of knowledge, namely intuitive knowledge (using senses), knowledge via observation (mystical intuition) and illuminated knowledge (Nowrozi et al., 2012:). Therefore, knowledge firstly can be acquired through logical reasoning debates.

From then on, Nasirodin Toosi in his book "Adabol Motealemin" has pointed out the debate method. He believed that for a student, debate is one of the requirements. He also stated that participating in the process of "debate" is better than one-month repetition of a lesson. This method has been used for many years and specialized in the field of education and religion, but some circumstances faded this process from the formal educational system.

Presentation of debate

Based on primary and traditional teaching methods division, two teaching and learning methods –instructional and debate- have been proposed. This division calls the teacher-centered and learner-centered teaching methods to mind.

Instructional method of teaching refers to a set of classical and tradition methods. This method despite having slight differences with one another in the way they executed, they all have a common indicator that distinguishes them from other types, and that is to

consider the master as a sole presentation and the learner only as a listener. It really does not give the learner any other role in the process of teaching and learning (Pajoohande, 2001). In these teacher-centered teaching methods, students do not participate actively in the learning process.

In contrast to instructional method, debate is a kind of learning method, and also functions as a strategy for studding as well. This learner-oriented method is more comprehensive, and bilateral relationship between teacher and learner will occur and each one has his/her own share in the learning and teaching process.

In the scope of administering, "debate method" is a general concept that refers to three methods, but in the theoretical domain, "debate" is a special method which does not have the weaknesses of other forms of group learning methods. Despite this advantage, it has been neglected in formal educational systems.

Different patterns of debate

For more clarification, the methods that mistakenly replaced "debate method" are stated below:

The debate in groups of learners

One of the debate patterns refers to a debate between groups of learners in relation to the issues presented in the classroom to be used solely by the students in order to understand the subject better. It is a common practice in many educational systems, but now, executive obligation in doing that in religious fields are more than academic and scientific ones.

The importance of this debate, particularly in religious schools and training centers is that it is not only limited to group reading, however, all members of a debate group actively attempts to answer the posed question and solve the problem. Thus, multiplicity of ideas and the group collaborative effort causes and explores the new issues because the learners focus on the power of their mind actively (Pajoohande, 2001). This situation occurs in methods such as brainstorming, but in debate, it is possible to use more from the power of the brain and to expand language and speech skills, to strengthen communication skills, to change attitudes and even to extend human relationships.

Psychologically, this pattern helps learners to be more confident through motivation (Rahimi, 2009). And, everyone is required in this model to play their role (Pajoohande, 2001). These patterns if successful in teaching, the professor not only internalizes the concepts taught in mind, but also enhance learning.

Classroom debate

Another example of application of the concept of "debate"

refers to the time of training and the time of the interaction between teachers and learners. In this pattern, firstly a problem purposefully will be designed, and then the students will be encouraged to participate in debates either directly or indirectly. They will search all together actively as a team.

Then each group will present their findings, and argue the issue using their own reasons. This approach functions as a workshop in which the master is only a guide and controller of the discussions. He uses his own educational experience to arouse and make the learners aware of thinking errors in the path of discovering an idea. The results are obtained by the professor and cooperation of all groups (Pajoohande, 2001). In this connection, interactive debate engages the learner in the learning opportunities and creates changes in the structure of individual acquaintance. Some educational researchers believe that some part of the weakness and inefficacies of university educational system refers to absence of this approach and educational vision (Rahimi, 2009).

In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, the learners should be involved with the new knowledge that cannot be achieved only through hearing information (Fazli, 2003). And even if these data are transferred to them systematically and logically with specialists, the learners will not be able to reach their understanding of that information and they need to explore and experience it in different situations.

Multi-stages debate

This is the third pattern of the "debate" that present the goal of this research. This pattern includes both previous processes and other processes that besides having all the advantages of previous stages have other positive effects on teaching and learning, which distinguishes it from other educational systems. This debate includes the systematic program of preliminary study; preliminary debate, attending classes, studding, and debating that are done in several stages.

The first stage (preliminary study and preliminary debate)

The first stage of the debate that has great impact on the speed of learning and developing, and flourishes the learners talent, begins with two phases that included preliminary study and preliminary debate. This could also have a positive impact on the speed and the classroom administering process. Besides, it can determine the scientific fields that should be followed. It also makes the learners more curious in the process of learning (Motahari, 1990). The process begins with a review of the following specified topics:

Step One: Preliminary study

This stage is accomplished before the teacher presentation, it can be a great help in understanding the problem and it brings up some questions in the learners mind. If this kind of study is only including the lesson text, it will provide helpful planning in the human mind to master course content (Rezaie, 2001). Because it provides them the overall course content of the lesson, and it let them have a whole image of the course in their minds. In addition to cause curiosity and strengthen inner potentiality, preliminary study brings about mental concentration in learners in the classroom, as well as to create a question that increases their motivation to understand the vague points. Preliminary study is done based on a particular text. The learners obtain the mastery of the theory design to make them able to review, criticize and defense, and finally to summarize and make conclusion. This stage ends up by writing briefly what has been found in order to use it in debates (Nuri and Wafa, 2001).

Step Two: Preliminary debate

Preliminary debate is done after the preliminary study and before attending the classroom. This step has important impact on the readiness of the mind to accept the lesson and to focus on the content. In this debate, according to the sources studied, one learner acts as a teacher, he/she provide condition for all of the companies to participate actively in the debate. He/she argues the future lesson and answers his friend questions, and then makes a conclusion and phrases the materials. In the preliminary debate, divergent views put together, and each of the participants review what the other understood. Therefore, the learners will be aware of their own weaknesses and strengths. They also will be able to understand and tolerate the others capabilities (Hadavi, 2004).

The second stage

Following the earlier mentioned steps, it is important to attend master's classes and the learners' demand is clearer. Transition from the earlier mentioned stages helps learners achieve the purpose of finding answers to the uncertainties associated with the learning outcomes that have been achieved in the first phase. Therefore, learners' motivation increases and their mind will get to explore the content (Hadavi, 2004). So attending class is mandatory in this learning and teaching method.

Attending these kinds of classes with the situation that is full of questions is very effective in the learner's inclusive growth. The point which is very important and useful here is that the aroused questions may even affect and change the teacher's mind. Thus, this step is to create a spirit and an ability of critical thinking and enhance a spirit of criticism in the whole generation.

Third stage

The final or the stage after presence in the class includes further study and complementary debate.

First step: Further study

For those active learners who have passed the previous stages, further study help them to overcome any other remaining ambiguous points after all these steps (Hadavi, 2004). Pervasive thinking is more important at this stage of the study.

Second step: Further debate

Basically, debate after the lesson is repetition of the teacher's instruction course that can be done comprehensively and scholarly. At this stage of the debate, the person who is going to present the lesson should be serious enough in his job, and those who are listeners should actively participate in the issue. Expressing the problems, protesting and presenting critical designs should be welcomed by the participant in order to solve all problems and overcome all weaknesses (Hadavi, 2004). Therefore, this step can strengthen the learners' reasoning power, problem solving ability, and the pervasive perception. This stage of the debate, in fact is the presentation of lesson plan by students. What is important in this step is that the debate topic should be a coordinated lesson.. It must be completed before the start of the new lesson (Rezaie, 2002).

Components of debate group

Organizing a group is necessary for debate, thus organizing an active and proper group will help the debate process. Any successful group should be able to manage the fields and conditions of learners and ensure its durability (Soraya, 1384). A proper group should have the following conditions:

1. In order to make a balance between the members of the group and achieve mutual effects through interaction between individuals, the group members should be more than two. However, if it is too much, it will prevent learners to do some of the group activities.
2. Being in the same level is very important because the

group activities will be fatigue for the lower level members, and they may lose their motivations (Hadavi, 2004). The opposite case is also traumatic.

3. Common interest between two or more members of the group can lead the group to success and sustainability of that group, so it is necessary to select a group of people who are seriously interested in the topics (Soraya, 2005).

4. In the selection of the members of a group, not only the instructional aspect should be consider, but also the moral aspect, responsibility and the individual characteristics should be taken into account (Rezaei, 2005).

Conditions of participation in the study groups

There are some rules and conditions that help us conduct and promote the debate learning method:

1. Since the learner is considered as the most important agent in learning process, curriculum planning, how to begin the lesson and how to continue it should be done from easier to more difficult and from introduction to the main text.

2. Previous study is an important factor to enhance the quality of the debate. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage the learners to study the lesson before participating in the class.

3. The participants should take notes from learned materials during the debate.

4. A useful debate should follow its aims; the participants should not try to apply their own ideas without considering the goals of the debate.

5. The debate should be conducted based on the principle of reasoning. It should be conducted according to scientific documents.

Special benefits and functions of debate learning method:

The debate has certain functions that can be divided into two categories of instructional and educational functions:

Instructional functions:

Mastery learning

Since the debate method in education involves both the teacher and especially the learner's mind, it is the most effective teaching methods through which the learners can better discover and tackle the uncertainties. The learners can also better realize their shortcomings, and they will be able to achieve mastery skill on the content and how to express them.

Creating a learning continuum

Updating the pervious information is one of the benefits of using debate in the education. The learners' pervious information will be activated, they will be able to confront new acquired materials, and they will come across new understanding and awareness. This new understanding can affect the future learning process. Therefore, the learners' pervious, new and future leanings can be traced as a continuum.

Continuity in the learning

Since the learners are active in the debate method, they will gain dynamic personality in acquiring knowledge. The learners will be motivated enough to put in his efforts continuously because they constantly compare them-selves with the group. There are competitive conditions in which the learners as members of a group are persuaded to improve interpersonal and interpersonal skills. The learner's awareness of their weaknesses may motivate them to find out the causes and source for a solution. And in this way, they will be motivated toward learning more and fixing their knowledge and their success in subsequent debates.

Thinking centered learning

Debate and discussion leads to rapid growth of the learners' perceptional faculty. In addition to acquire the lesson, the learners will learn how to deal with and organize the learning process and how to collect and organize the content and present it. Therefore, the learners' thinking power will be enhanced during the process of debate.

Creative learning

In the debate learning group, in addition to understanding the context, imposing spontaneous and innovative questions about the content can lead the learners to create and face new ideas.

Increasing the speed of learning

The systematic process of the debate enhances the learning speed and causes accuracy in acquiring, and speed in transmission of learning materials.

The promotion of the evaluation power

Whenever the learners realize their shortcomings and

gain mastery skill on the content, they will be able to have a comprehensive evaluation of the course. The learner is constantly faced with opportunities for self-assessment, for example, in the first phase of the study, he found out how he can use the pre-studied content and how much content is needed in the classroom. He also may evaluate his knowledge after attending a class.

The promotion of entrepreneurial skills

Debate is actually a form of training and professional preparation, because in addition on how to persuade others, it leads to open-mindedness, critical and logical thinking. It also teaches learners many communication skills such as management, teaching and training. Initiating these fields would promote and encourage the entrepreneurial culture.

Educational functions

As it was mentioned earlier, the necessity of using group methods for training and improving the strategy of social culture and communication is obvious. Debate and discussion method will have undeniable effect on systematic process, and also creating attitude and insight in people. Some of the most important ones will be mentioned:

The promotion of mental health

Equal opportunity to develop human relationship and formation of rooted, sincere and long-term friendship in group is possible; also flourishing talents little by little for opportunities that will be resulted in debate method and this capability will lead to self-confidence. While sometimes a person feels inferior, but with debate and discussion he will realize his talents and capabilities, and the theme of detecting his talents will be provided for him and he may know himself better this way.

The development of verbal skills

Creating a spirit of criticism and upgrading ones character are results of being in group. In debate method, tolerance in person will be improved, and he will learn to accept other people's idea in a right way and fairness, and justice will be crystallized in his behavior. This critical thinking will affect the liberalism soul.

The promotion of social skills

Systematic process of debate in each step will consist part of behavior and social skills because during debate and discussion, and being present at class the learner will learn the possibility of suitable behavior change relating to the theme, and he will improve his interaction and also he may increase his communication skills. The other point is that the debate method is suitable for training society goal, because in the same situation of a society having weak or powerful people, a positive interaction will be created and all of them depending on their level of understanding will benefit in groups or classes. Upgrading analysis and deciding ability are kinds of skills that the learner will learn in this method and after that, management ability and leadership in group will come after that.

Conclusion

Nowadays, successful learning centers tent to cooperate learning strategies because they have considered the natural internal need of cooperation in human as a bases for their job, and in fact they are changing their direction of static learning to dynamic one that needs motivation and systematic method and process. On the other hand, they care about development of social skills so changing the education process and learning methods is an obligation and moving from one-sided processes to useful two-sided ones in cooperative form is a need. In answering the first question based on introducing debate method according to research findings in Figure1, these are thinkable.

One important training method that can provide educative and training process is debate method. In this method, the learner will participate in training process actively and assume the responsibility for learning eagerly, and they will be given the opportunity to transfer their ideas, experiences to others and also their mind will be more engaged and involved and they can obtain deep reflection on the content of lessons. Also in this method, mental involvement with a curious reaction and self-motivation will lead to scientific, rational and social development and will equip the learner to social experiences that will help him in the process of knowledge production and the use of his own skills in social life.

Democratic process in this method, checking issues with collective wisdom gives everyone the opportunity to express their opinion and view freely and consider others opinion with respect. In this process, the technique of gathering and organizing the subjects and presenting them will teach the learner to think logical and prepare suitable conditions for him to go from checking step to presenting new subjects. In this way, the professor acts as guardian, and goes through the targeted way with learner.

In answer to the second question, the results of the research show that the usage of educational system of inactive method and master axis (professor axis), the
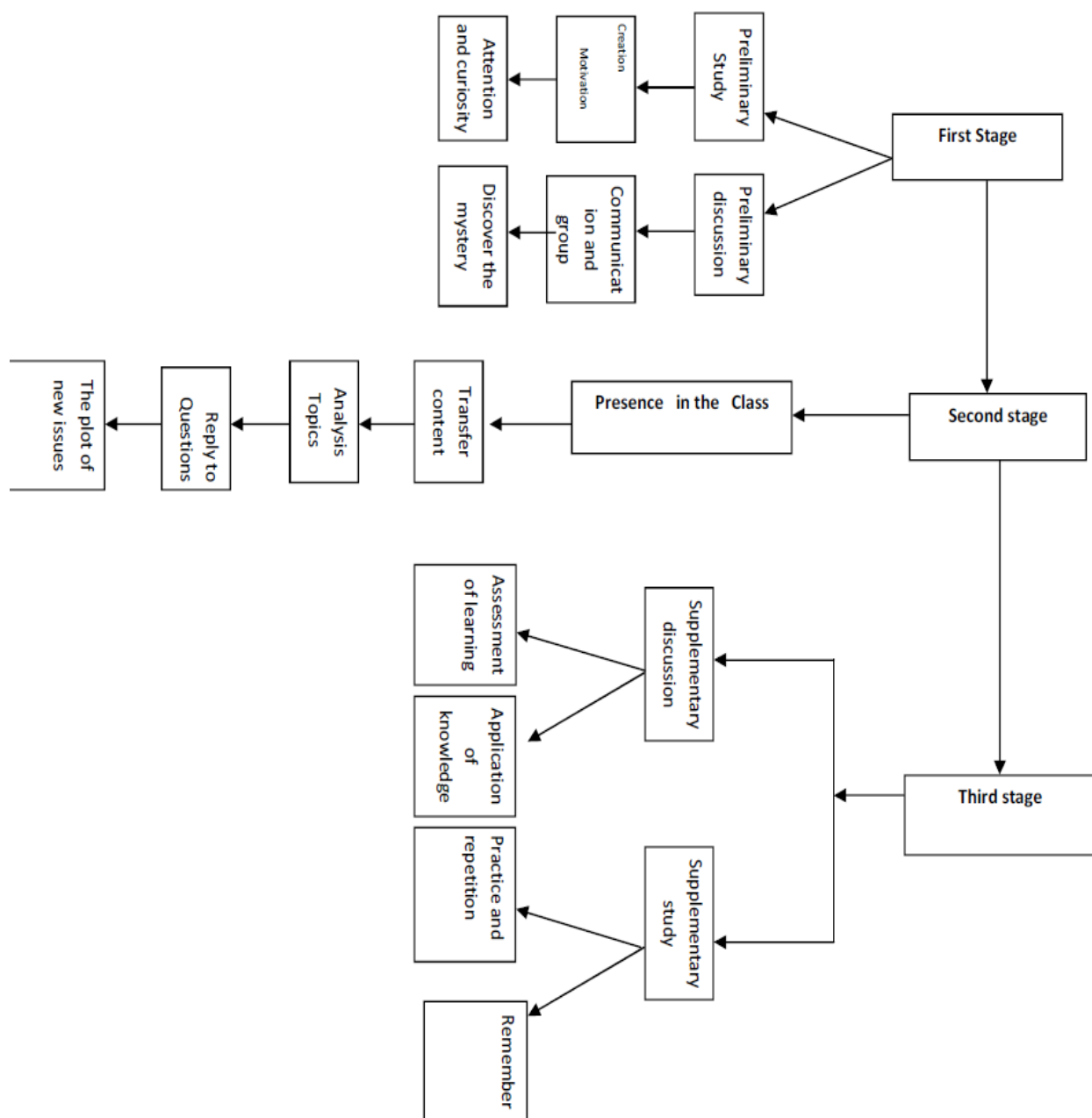
Figure 1. Debate method.

process of learning always encounters difficulties. These methods will delay in the development of the inference strength, and by reducing the role of learner in learning will make him causeless at class and finally it causes superficial and transitory education, while human brain is a social organization that is ready to be in society and groups since birth. So the need for cooperative education strategies in groups and by groups will be clear.

So debate method as an effective training strategy for activating more learners and as a symbol of dynamism of group in process of learning can be effective on the goals of education in all steps. And the efficiency of this method has been proved by scientific educational centers, and also the need for this method has been proved. First, educational system should provide the necessary condition for group works at school for all grades. They should take it serious and plan for it, because the learner should experience groups work skills besides educating.

So the educational system should be written in a way that in addition of training book content, it should also

teach students how to think freely and positively, and increase their self-confidence. Second the usage of this method should be matched with different subjects with different conditions and different ages.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

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