

INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*"The supreme art of teaching is to awaken joy in
creative expression and knowledge"*

-Albert Einstein

Teaching is a gift of self-borne love, nurtured by aspiration and manifested in wisdom, devotion and selfless action. The act of persons interacting with each other and sharing experiences is usually termed as teaching. The evolution of formal education transformed the process of interaction and experience sharing into "Teaching" (Mahapatra, 2004). Teaching is a dynamic and complex process. Generally, it is a challenging task between a mature personality and a less mature one. The classroom teacher has to deal with his task both as an artist and scientist. The dictionary of education (Goods, 1973) presents both the narrow and broad meaning of teaching. In narrow sense, teaching is an act of instructions confined to an educational institution. The broad meaning of teaching implies management of learning situations by an instructor. Teaching is a set of complex skills that resolves into a number of such simple components as teachers' behaviour and teaching art, which are effective in bringing about desired behavioural changes in pupils.

Life is the best teacher. But what about the other teachings which one needs to make a career, be educated, be learned, or be knowledgeable? For this, there is a need of a qualified teacher to enlighten, motivate and coax into the world of knowledge. A teacher uses different methods to achieve these objectives. Teaching methods can be defined as the types of principles and norms used for instruction. These are specific instructional techniques and procedures that a teacher may employ in the classroom, depending on what information or skill the teacher is trying to convey. When a teacher is deciding on his method, he needs to be flexible and adjustable

according to the needs of students. Such attributes of a teacher can be effectively assessed by success of the students in the classroom.

Different teaching methods are used to make the students understand the subjects. When deciding what teaching method to use, a teacher needs to consider students' background, knowledge, environment and learning goals. Teachers should be aware that students learn in different ways, but almost all children will respond well to a poised and responsive teacher. Students have different ways of observing information and of demonstrating their knowledge. Teachers must use multiple techniques that help students to retain information and strengthen understanding. A variety of strategies and methods are used to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn. Technically speaking, teaching is an information-giving process that flows from teacher to students. The different teaching methods are also called instructional methods, which may have its own strengths and weaknesses and may require at least some preliminary preparation. There can not be any "right" method for teaching a particular lesson, but there are criteria that can help a teacher make the best possible decision. The paper discusses some teaching methods.

1. Lecture

This is the age-old method of instructions by a teacher to a large group of students, based mainly on the Factory Model. This may employ various tools like Blackboard, Overhead, and Multi-media presentations.

Strengths: This is an easiest method of imparting knowledge to a large group of pupils. Factual material is presented in a direct and logical manner. It inspired the group.

Weakness: Since the communication is only from one side (monologue), it becomes difficult to analyze understanding by the students. Oratory skills of teacher are the most vital determinant of teaching efficiency.

Preparations: There should be a clear introduction and summary of the topic. Effectiveness should be related to time and scope of content.

2. Tutorial

This is a method that facilitates an intimate interaction of a small group of students with their teacher. This can include multilogue, case studies and problem solving exercises.

Strengths: It pools ideas and experiences from the group. It is effective after the lecture, film or experiences that need to be analyzed. It allows everyone to participate actively in the process.

Weaknesses: It can be effective for a group of 20 pupils. It is time consuming method. Effectiveness is a function of conducive environment. Otherwise, it can easily get off the track.

Preparations: It requires questions be prepared prior to the activity. Teacher should thoroughly prepare himself for efficient dealing of difficult questions.

3. Group Discussion

Students are put in very small groups not on the basis of ability but on the basis of variety of levels. Teacher allots a topic randomly, and pupils are required to put forth their views in an intimate discussion. They may also be assigned a task to accomplish together. The teacher acts like a facilitator or moderator, ensuing equal participation by all members of the group.

Strength: It allows participation by each pupil of the group. They feel more comfortable, and learn to be patient, less critical and more compassionate.

Weaknesses: Results depend upon the personality of the students. Intelligent students may dominate the group at the cost of average ones.

Preparations: Teachers must carefully prepare a list of relevant topics or assignment, which may entice keen interests from students.

4. **Brainstorming**

The students are informed about a topic or assignment well in advance and asked to come with full preparations for a dynamic process of discussion. On the prescribed day and time, this small group of students assembles with a teacher to openly share their knowledge ideas about the assigned topic.

Strengths: It allows out of the box thinking by students, ensures full participation by all of them, and draws on experience and knowledge of the group. One idea can easily spark other ideas. It encourages innovativeness, efficient communication and knowledge creation.

Weaknesses: It may be unfocused if topics or assignments are not related to the syllabi or happenings around pupils. This may also get off the track if continued for than 10 to 15 minutes.

Preparations: Teachers must choose appropriate topics and be alert not to allow the session to be boring or bogging down the participants.

5. **Role Play**

A small group of pupils from a class is asked to enact a role-play related to a defined situation or problem before the remaining pupils. A discussion follows the enactment. Such enactments may also be performed by the teacher or some external experts. This is usually a small time activity limited to a few minutes.

Strengths: It energizes pupils to think and express their feelings about the problems and issues that are real in nature or intimately related to pupils. It helps in understanding of complex issues in a simple manner. This is a highly suitable teaching method for older people.

Weaknesses: It is not appropriate for a big group and may not get instant response from pupils. It can aggravate feeling of insecurity among

the weaker students.

Preparations: The teacher needs to be very careful in selection of the problems or issues for role-play. The latter must be defined clearly for smooth participation by the enactors.

6. Case Study

It is a research oriented activity, based on an in-depth investigation of any topic of the syllabi. It may be descriptive or explanatory, providing a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information and reporting results. It may also be a hypothetical description of events, prompting the pupils to provide appropriate solution or understanding of the events.

Strengths: It helps in development of analytical and problem-solving abilities of pupils. It allows exploration of solutions of complex issues. It prompts students to achieve new knowledge and skills.

Weaknesses: All students may not be interested in such a complex process. Insufficient information may lead to inappropriate results.

Preparations: The case must be clearly defined and written in simple language for a ready comprehension by pupils.

Teachers need to use different teaching methods in order to reach a diverse variety of students in an effective manner. The knowledge level of students and their background may help in adoption of a suitable teaching strategy. This is more relevant for the modern society living in a digital age without bothering for geographical boundaries. The fast evolution of internet and its easy availability has made the virtual class a distinct possibility. A suitable admixture of conventional and non-conventional teaching methods can efficiently handle the current generation of our youth.

References

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