

On Teaching Skills

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I. Relationship between teaching skills and phases of teaching

Stated broadly, teaching can be viewed as consisting of three phases- pre-active, interactive and post-active. The pre-active phase is that wherein a teacher prepares the class, motivates the students and introduces the topic. It is not a phase where learning is stamped-in, rather what is learnt is recalled, reviewed and the previous experiences of students is revisited. Hence, the teacher is found in an 'eliciting' stance more often. The skills involved in such an act are instructing, questioning, and narrating (example to be given). Even though the teacher may use other skills such as explaining and illustrating with examples, they are used very rarely. Whereas, in the interactive stage, the teacher has to provide learning experiences with a view to communicate the content and achieve the instructional objectives. Here, the teacher employs 'informing' and 'facilitating' stance (can be elaborated). The skills such as explaining, use of blackboard, use of audio-visual aids and illustrating with examples (examples to be given) are more predominant in this phase. The post-active phase is one of summarizing, reviewing, and assigning further work. The skills used in this phase are closure and questioning (examples to be given). Thus, the teaching skills are not used uniformly at different phases of teaching.

II. Relationship between teaching skills and methods of teaching

Learning in the classroom is not of a single type. In teaching of sciences and mathematics, the teacher aims at teaching different categories of content. The subject matter of a discipline is categorized as fact, concept, generalization, rule, principle, law, proof, problem solving, attitude and skill (example for each to be given). It is known in psychology that all these are not learnt in the same way. A teacher defines what is to be learnt in a given class by stating the instructional objectives. For achieving them, the learning experiences are designed by the teacher. Say for example, facts are to be memorized and hence the learning experience would consist of rephrasing and repetition (may add example from subject). Asking the learner to recall the fact does the testing of such learning. Whereas, a concept is to be learnt discriminately by setting aside the attributes of one concept from those of others. The student needs to learn a concept by studying the examples and has to arrive at a generalization or rule. The testing of such learning is done by asking for additional examples from the student. (Illustration from a topic to be given)

A method is a sequential arrangement of learning experiences provided in steps and phases. Since different categories of content are learnt differently, the methods used for teaching them are also different. For example the expository methods such as lecturing and lecture-demonstration are better suited for teaching a process or procedure (may illustrate by mentioning a specific process). Whereas, inquiry approach is

suitable for learning a generalization or law (may illustrate by giving a specific generalization from a topic). Concepts are learnt through the method of concept attainment. Further, the methods vary according to the subjects as well. Mathematics is axiomatic by nature and hence deductive method is more appropriate for teaching it. Science is learnt inductively following the scientific method of heuristic method. Induction requires organization and presentation of instances and examples. Mathematics involves use of premise and logical argumentative style (may present a specific instance from a topic). Hence, a teacher employs various methods for teaching various subjects and categories of content.

Every method has a specified role for the teacher and learners. In heuristic approach, the teacher presents problems, asks questions and provides reinforcement while the students indulge in explaining, testing hypothesis and inferring. On the contrary, in the expository approach used while teaching biological sciences, the teacher undertakes different kinds of explanations, uses audio-visual material and specimens extensively and undertakes blackboard drawing. While teaching a proof in mathematics, the teacher has to be logical in explanation, may employ questioning to check understanding and use blackboard writing extensively. Thus, the skills required for teaching through different methods are not same. There is a relationship between what is to be learnt, how it is learnt and how to teach it. If in some methods teacher has to provide reinforcement in some others he has to withhold reinforcement. In some methods if he shows things and demonstrates in others he uses verbal explanations only.