



Methods of Teaching Social Science

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Abstract: Teaching is a process by which one interacts with another person to influence the learning of that person. It is the interplay between the teacher and the learners. As a valuable and practical art, teaching calls for intuition, creativity, improvisation, and expressiveness.

Though many teaching methods and techniques are associated with integrated Social Science, there is no single mode of teaching which fits all the learning situations. A Social Science teacher must be abreast of the innovations in teaching methods. To be effective, a teacher of Social Science has to be a source of information, a guide, an organizer of learning opportunities, and a person who can stimulate any environment for effective learning using the following teaching modes, among others, available to Social Science teachers.

Keywords: Discussion Method, Lecture Method, Observation Method, Source Method, Story Telling Method, Laboratory Method, Field-Trips, Deductive and Inductive Method, Dramatization Method, and Question and Answer Method

Introduction

The effect of contemporary educational philosophy and psychology developments on teaching methods has been revolutionary. The central place in the school, in theory at least, has been given to the student. Any process not based on 'student activity' is not in accord with recent educational views. The present century has been termed 'The Century of the Child.' Rousseau considers that the 'child' is a 'hero' in "The Drama of Education," and as such, he must play the dominant role.

The Secondary Education Commission has emphasized the need for suitable methods of teaching. In these words, "Every teacher and educationist of experience knows that even the best curriculum and the perfect syllabus remain dead unless quickened into life by the right teaching methods and the right kind of teachers. Sometimes even an unsatisfactory and unimaginative syllabus can be made interesting and significant by the gifted teacher who does not focus on the subject matter to be taught or the information to be imparted but on his students, interests, aptitudes, reactions, and responses. He judges the success of his lesson not by the amount of matter covered but by the understanding, the appreciation, and the efficiency achieved by the students."

1. Discussion Method

This method has been used in the teaching-learning process since time immemorial. It was widely used at the famous Nalanda University. In their walk, the Greek scholars used to discuss various problems and issues with their disciples. The discussion has been described as a thoughtful consideration of the relationships involved in a topic or problem under study. It is concerned with these relationships' analysis, comparison, evaluation, and conclusions. It aims at uniting and integrating the work of the class. It is carried out by organizing, outlining, and relating the facts studied. It encourages the students to direct their thinking towards the solution of a problem and use their experiences for further clarification and consolidation of learning material.

Discussion is distinguished from debate, in which the participants seek to prove a point rather than discover a truth. The uncontrolled exchange of verbalism may also mark debate.

Discussion is critical in stimulating mental activity, developing fluency and ease of expression, clarity of ideas in thinking, and training in presenting thoughts and facts. An exchange of views and opinions offers valuable training to students in reflective thinking.

Essential Parts or Constituents of Discussion. These are as under

1. The leader-the teacher
2. The group the students
3. The problem or the topic
- 4 The content-body of knowledge
5. Evaluation-change in ideas, attitudes, etc.

2. Lecture Method

This is the oldest teaching method given by the philosophy of idealism. As used in education, the lecture method refers to the teaching procedure involved in the clarification or explanation to the student of some significant idea. This method emphasizes the presentation of the content Teacher is more active, and students are passive, but he uses question answers to keep them attentive in the class. It clarifies matters, expands content, and motivates the students. A teacher can deliver his lesson effectively by changing his voice, impersonating characters, shifting a position, and using simple devices. While delivering his lecture, a teacher can indicate the exact shade of meaning he wishes to convey by his facial expression, gestures, and tones.

3. Observation Method

It is rightly believed that observation under the careful guidance of a social studies teacher proves very effective in learning, and facts, skills, and behavior learned are retained for a more extended period. Observation or direct experience or visits to actual places, say, a monument, a fort, a field, a river, a temple, an institution, etc., provide ample opportunities for students to see, hear, examine, gather data, and ask questions. Visits to hospitals, telephone exchanges, telegraph offices, study trips to airports, etc., show how people and goods are transported from one place to another. Pupils understand better the working of markets, cooperative stores, and factories when they see their working and thus acquaint themselves with production, distribution, exchange, and consumption processes. Such experiences are most conducive to learning. Concrete data on cultural, industrial, political, and geographical facts and relationships being more tangible, visible and 'describable' is a tremendous motivating force for further enquiry in social sciences. Observation lends vitality to the subject-matter of social studies.

The following techniques are adopted in the observation method:

1. Field Trips or Educational Excursions.
2. Community Surveys.
3. Community Service Projects

4. Source Method

The source method implies the use of original material and sources in the teaching of social studies. A source method provides firsthand experiences and leads to a better understanding of the subject. Sources may be divided into two categories:

- (a) Primary Sources.
- (b) Secondary Sources.

(a) *Primary Sources*

Physical remains or relics or unconscious testimony in far-off historical sites, roads, pyramids, human remains, clothing, food, fortification, utensils, pottery, building, implements, machinery, furniture, weapons, fine arts, and museum pieces of many kinds, inscriptions, chiseled stories, monuments, tombs, coins, stamps, tape-strips, scenery and portraits, sculptures, historical paintings, etc.

Consciously transmitted information in the form of oral or written testimony; written sources include constitutions, charters, court decisions, official minutes or records, autobiographies, letters, diaries, genealogies, contracts, deeds, wills, permits, licenses, affidavits, depositions, declarations, proclamations, certificates, bills, receipts, magazines and newspapers, accounts, advertisements, maps, diagrams, books, pamphlets, films, catalogs, paintings, inscriptions, recordings, transcriptions, and research reports. The oral tradition includes ballads, anecdotes, tales, and sagas.

(b) Secondary Sources

These are those sources that are written by those who are not on the scene of the event. They describe the reports of those who either participated in an event or were eyewitnesses. Generally, they are several times removed from the original firsthand account of events, and as such, they are usually of limited worth.

An act passed by the Parliament is primary data, whereas its extracts published in newspapers are covered by secondary data. The report of the University Education Commission is preliminary data but contents published in textbooks form the secondary data. Many history textbooks and encyclopedias are examples of secondary sources.

5. Storytelling Method

Storytelling is one of the most important methods of teaching social studies. It is an art that enables the teacher to come very close to the heart of the students, and thereby, he attracts their attention. Some teachers are born storytellers and are very fortunate in this respect. This art of storytelling aims at presenting to the pupils, through the medium of speech, clear, vivid, engaging, and ordered sequences of events in such a way that their minds reconstruct these happenings, and they live in the imagination through the experiences recounted either as spectators or possibly as participators. Storytelling enables the teacher to make lessons lively and exciting to the pupils. Stories of great personalities, reformers, writers, saints, discoverers, scientists, etc., must be told to the students. Storytelling helps in enhancing the interests of the students in the subject. It goes a long way in firing the imagination of the students. Storytelling can be relied upon by the teacher as the best companion for helping develop his pupil's character traits, such as charity, purity, truthfulness, and courage. The art of storytelling can be cultivated by:

1. Observing skillful narrators.
2. Studying the work of successful story writers.
3. Practicing storytelling.
4. Critically evaluate one's performance and bring about necessary changes.

6. Laboratory Method

The Laboratory Method in Social Studies involves the employment of source materials, supplementary references, mechanical devices, audiovisual aids, and many other life-like activities to supplement textbook instructions and to increase the effectiveness of presentation and mastery. The laboratory teaching mode refers not to a particular place or a special class period but to an activity. The activity can occur in a regular classroom, outside the school, or in a specially designed room.

The critical point to note in this method is that students manipulate concrete objects, equipment, etc. under the direction of the teacher. Since teaching Social Studies in both primary and Secondary Schools is done in units, the laboratory method provides opportunities for applying knowledge and skills. The advantages of this method may not fully be realized because of the lack of the facilities and equipment necessary to use this method effectively.

This method can be used for almost all the topics in Social Studies. Interviews and discussions on issues can be recorded, videotaped, and played back to the class.

7. Field-Trips

Field-trips involve journey with the pupils to observe and investigate situations outside the classroom. Many expeditions might go beyond the school corridor, building, or playground. The teacher may find illustrative examples within the school itself—his students. In the immediate vicinity of the school there may be available for examination and observation such things as different soils, vegetation, a river, etc. The teacher may sometimes invite the co-operation of local industry or public services and visit places like the Oba's palace, museum etc.

Experiences gained from field-trips are vivid, lasting and often more meaningful to the students because they are real-life situations. There are three stages to the field- journey: preparation, field trip itself and recapitulation stages. Obviously, the success of this method depends a great deal on the age of the students.

The preparation stage must be extensive with the teacher knowing precisely what he hopes to achieve during the field-trip. At this stage, he should collect all the information possible about the area to be visited. Adequate preparation should be made to contact the people concerned in the place to be seen for due permission. Necessary arrangements should be made for transport, accommodations (If required) and the period of the visit.

The third stage, known as the recapitulation involves reporting back on the expedition. Here a great deal of consolidation is done on the information gained during the field-trip. This may be through discussion, the exhibition of specimen collected or sketches and diagrams drawn during the journey. Field-trip would be appropriate for topics like Man and His Environment, Man and His Economic Activities Problems of Urbanization, etc.

Though field-trip makes lasting impression upon the students, it involves a lot of efforts, energy and time on the part of the teacher and the learners.

8. Deductive and Inductive Method

There are two general approaches or procedures in problem-solving—the Inductive and Deductive. The whole method of teaching and learning is based on induction and deduction.

Deductive Method

This method is the other way round. In the deductive method rules, generalizations and principles are provided to the students, who are then asked to verify them with the help of particular examples. The students are told that places at this altitude are cold and that specific measures are taken to prove it. Such models can be multiplied.

Inductive Method

The inductive method is a method of development. In the inductive method, the child is led to discover truth for himself.

The various processes in the inductive method are (1) observation of the given material: (i) Discrimination and analysis noting differences and similarities, (ii) Classification, (iv) Abstraction and generalization, and (v) Application or verification.

In the inductive method, the pupils are led from particular instances to general conclusion. Concrete examples are given and with their help students are helped to arrive at certain conclusions or principles. This

method is beneficial in teaching science including geography, mathematics and languages. By examining several science examples, the students conclude that heat expands and cold contracts.

In a geometry lesson, the students, by measuring the angles of a triangle, conclude that their sum equals two right angles.

In a geography lesson, the students conclude that temperature decreases as height increases by examining the heights of the places located at high places. The students may explore the highlands and temperatures of places like Simla, Nainital, Dalhousie, Darjeeling, etc.

In a lesson in economics the students, by examining a number of cases, may conclude that agriculturists in India are in debt. The process runs like this. Ram is in debt; Sham is in debt; Krishna is in debt. Ram is an agriculturist. Sham is an agriculturist Krishna is an agriculturist and so on. From this, it will be concluded that all these persons are agriculturists and are in debt In a language lesson, the teacher may give examples while teaching the proposition, like 'Ram is in the room. The cat is under the table. The book is on the table' and may lead the students to find out the definition of 'preposition.' We find that a crow is black; another crow is also black; another crow is black and so on and say that all crows are black. This method is more useful in lessons where rules, definitions, generalizations, laws and casual connections between facts are to be established.

9. Dramatization Method

It is one of the most effective methods of stimulating the students in what they learn. It is a natural way by which students express freely their understanding of the life around them. The method allows for a great deal of involvement and participation by the students physically, emotionally, and mentally. When a lesson or topic is dry, dramatization could effectively help sustain the students' attention and interest. Play involves direct techniques such as mining playlets and role-playing which can be allocated for such practices. The teacher could engage students who could be more active in academic work. This opportunity would create a sense of belonging in them. The teacher must prepare adequately to allow the participants know what part to play. The drama to be staged must rely a good deal on the realistic imagination of the students to make it practical and relevant.

Unfortunately, this image may sometimes be too realistic to be relevant. While student written plays are helpful and often the most critical part of the exercise, they take up a lot of time which the teacher may feel they do not justify. Nevertheless, dramatization provides among other things, an avenue for respect of opinion of others, the attitude of co-operation among the co-actors, development of desirable skills, confidence, and self-esteem, and the opportunity for the students to express themselves freely. Students can be led to dramatize the function of a family, the role of the father or mother, honesty, leadership, followership etc. which are topics in the Social Studies syllabus.

10. Question and Answer Method

This is a standard teaching method used by teachers. The teacher in this method asks a question and then recognizes one student who answers the question. The teacher then reacts verbally to the student's response.

The sequence can continue with the teacher asking questions and a student at a time responding to the question. A situation may arise where another student can be asked to react to the previously given answer. Question and answer is, therefore, a process whereby the teacher asks a question, a student responds, and the teacher then reacts and asks another question answered by another student.

The question and answer method can be used throughout a lesson or part of the study. This method helps test the students' knowledge extent and depth. The process keeps both the students and teachers active throughout the lesson. A teacher of Social Studies employing this method should note that, it needs adequate planning and handling. A careful directed questioning technique can elicit answer about the students' immediate environment.

Hence, the questions and answer method could effectively teach topics like Man and His Environment and Man and His Economic Activities. The questions used should be clear, precise and unambiguous.

Conclusion

A review of the above concludes that most limitations are unreal and without much significance. Whenever a new method is suggested, criticisms are unnecessarily leveled. Traditional methods have been tried and found unsuitable to the changing needs of the time. New ways must be tested and, if found suitable be accepted even if expensive.

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