METHOD OF TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex multifaceted activity often requiring the teacher to juggle multiple tasks and goals simultaneously.The term "Teaching Method" refers to the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for instruction by the teachers to achieve the desired learning by the students. Teaching method depends on what fits the teacher's educational philosophy, classroom demography and subject area. Teaching method can be categorised into four types-teacher-centered methods, learner-centered methods, content-focused methods and interactive methods.

Teacher-Centered Method

In this approach, the students are viewed as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to passively receive information with an end goal of testing and assessment. The teacher is looked upon by the learners as an expert or an authority. Examples of such methods are expository or lecture method which require little or no involvement of learners in the teaching process. Due to the lack of involvement of the learners in what they are taught, such method are also called "closed-ended". In this teaching model, teaching and assessment are viewed as two separate entities. Student learning is measured through objectively scored tests and assessments.

Learner-Centered Method

In learner-centered method, the teacher plays a dual role as a teacher and a learner at the same time so that the classroom extends rather than constricts the teacher's intellectual horizons.While the teacher still holds the authority figure in this teaching model, the teacher and the students play an equally active role in the learning process. The teacher becomes more a resource rather than an authority and his primary role is to facilitate student learning.

In the process, the teacher also learns and discover new things. Examples of learner-centered methods are discussion method or discovery or inquiry based approach.In this method, teaching and assessment are connected and student learning is continuously measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment, including group projects, student portfolios, and class participation.

Content-focused method

In content-focused method, both the teacher and the learners have to fit into the content that is taught. Generally, this means the information and skills to be taught are regarded as sacrosanct. Emphasis is laid on the clarity and careful analysis of the content and both the teacher and the learners cannot alter or become critical of anything with the content. A method which subordinates the interests of the teacher and learners by the content is the programmed learning approach.

Interactive Method

The interactive method borrow a bit from the aforesaid three methods without necessarily laying undue emphasis on either the learner, content or teacher. These methods are driven by the situational analysis of what is the most appropriate thing to do in a given situation forthe learners and the teacher. Interactive method require a participatory understanding of varied domains and factors.

SPECIFIC TEACHING METHOD

The specific method of teaching can be applied during the course of classroom instruction. It is however, important to note that the choice of any form of method should not be arbitrary, but needs to be governed by the criteria as mentioned before. At the same time each method is not fool-proof, but has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Lecture

We usually consider lecture as the normal method of teaching as it is convenient and the most suitable with large classroom sizes. Lecture is the oral relaying of factual information which includes principles, concepts, ideas and theories about a given topic. The lecturer actively tells, explains, describes or relates whatever information the learners are required to learn or understand. It is therefore teacher-centered. The learners on the other hand are very inactive, doing all the listening and understanding. Teachers usually use whiteboards or chalkboards to

emphasize important points in their lecture. Today, many lectures are accompanied by some sort of visual aid, such as a slideshow or a film.

The lecture method of instruction is recommended for presenting an organised body of new information to the learner. A good lecture should not be too long as to exceed the listeners' attention span. It should address a single theme. In a good lecture technical terms are carefully explained using illustrations with familiar examples and analogies. A good lecture should build on existing knowledge.

The lecture method has a few advantages that has kept it as the standard approach to teaching for so long.

- The lecturer is the authoritative figure who alone shapes the course. Therefore, lectures remain highly consistent when it comes to the kind of information and the way it is delivered.

- Lectures are literally expanded explanations of information deemed important by the lecturer. As such, students can absorb large quantities of new material.

- Little effort is required by the students as they need only to pay attention during the lecture and take notes. It is the most straightforward and uncomplicated way to expose students to large quantities of information.

Despite the popularity of lectures, the lack of active involvement of learners limits its usefulness as a teaching method. Not being actively engaged in a discussion over certain material can make the material itself seem worthless to a student.

Classroom Discussion

Discussion in classroom is the most common type of interactive teaching and involves a two-way communication between the teacher and the learners. The teacher gives equal opportunity for every student to interact and put forth their views. A discussion could also follow a presentation or a demonstration. It is therefore, a more active learning experience for the students.It helps to foster learners' involvement in what they are learning and consequently enhance student understanding, broaden student perspectives, highlight opposing viewpoints, reinforce knowledge and build confidence. Discussion may also be used in the classroom for the purpose of lesson development, making trainees apply what they have learnt or to monitor the learners by way of feedback (Petrina, 2007).

Cooperative Teaching

Cooperative teaching refers to a method of classroom management that emphasizes group work and reciprocal teaching. Students learn best from their peers when working in groups.Cooperative learning establishes a personal connection between students and the topic of study by allowing students to actively participate in the learning process by talking with each other and listening to the views of one another. Group projects and discussions are examples of this teaching method. Teachers may employ cooperative teaching to assess students' abilities to work as a team, leadership skills, or presentation abilities. A group discussion may cover the whole topic of study with the teacher acting as a resource for the students answering questions and reviewing their progress as needed. Cooperative teaching is more effective than lectures in motivating learners and fosteringthem a sense of autonomy.Cooperative learning falls under the student-centered approach because learners are given responsibility of their learning and development.

Demonstration

Demonstration is the process of planned teaching of occupation skill or scientific principle through examples or experiments. A demonstration may be used to prove a fact through a combination of visual evidence and associated reasoning.Demonstrations help to raise student interest and reinforce memory retention because they provide connections between facts and real-world applications of those facts.

Brainstorming

The purpose of a brainstorming session is to discover new bright ideas very quickly by encouraging participants to let ideas flow freely, building on and improving from previous ideas. No idea put forward, however crazy, should be rejected. The ideas are listed exactly as they are expressed on a board or flipchart, or written on bits of paper. The combination of swiftly generated ideas usually leads to a very animated and energizing session. Even the more reserved participants should feel bold enough to contribute. After a brainstorming session, the ideas can be discussed further and evaluated, for example listing the best options in a systematic way. Ideas when grouped and analysed may lead to innovative ideas. A brainstorming session can work well with a large group and usually takes less time. It is best to limit the time for plenary brainstorms, as you might lose the attention of some participants (Makokha and Ongwao, 1987)

Role play

In role play, participants use their own experiences to play a real life situation. When done well, role play increase the participants' self-confidence, give them the opportunity to understand or even feel empathy for other people's viewpoints or roles, and usually end with practical answers, solutions or guidelines. Some trainees may feel a role play is too exposing, threatening or embarrassing. This reluctance may be overcome at the outset by careful explanation of the objectives and the outcome. Some role play can generate strong emotions amongst the participants. It is therefore essential that a role play is followed by a thorough debriefing. This provides the opportunity for the trainer and the participants to raise and assess new issues.

Inquiry based teaching

Inquiry-based teaching is a pedagogical approach where the students explore academic content by posing, investigating, and answering questions. Also known as problem-based teaching, this approach puts students' inquiry at the center of the curriculum. The role of the teacher is to help students generate their own content-related questions and guide the investigation that follows. The teachers commit to provide rich experiences that provoke students' thinking and curiosity; to plan carefully-constructed questioning sequences; to manage multiple student investigations at the same time; to continuously assess the progress of each student as they work toward their solution or final product; and to respond in-the-moment to students' emerging queries and discoveries. An inquiry-based curriculum develops and validates 'habits of mind' that characterize a life-long learner. It teaches students to pose difficult questions and fosters the desire and skills to acquire knowledge about the world. Students are given opportunities to take ownership of their own learning, a skill necessary for one to succeed in college and in most professional settings.

Experiential learning

Experiential learning is a learning process whereby students "learn by doing" and by reflecting on experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, hands-on laboratory experiments, practicums, field exercises, and studio performances. Learning from experience might be called "nature's way of learning". It is "education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life" and includes learning that comes about through reflection on everyday experiences.Experiential education is implemented across a range of mediums- outdoor education, internships, group-based learning projects, excursions, etc.

Conclusion

An individual's learning style refers to the preferential way in which the student absorbs, processes, comprehends and retains information. For example, when learning how to build a clock, some students understand the process by following verbal instructions, while others have to physically manipulate the clock themselves. Individual learning styles depend on cognitive, emotional and environmental factors, as well as one's prior experience. It is generally accepted that student learning styles fall into four categories: Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing preferences and Kinesthetic popularly known as Neil Fleming's VARK learning model in short. The VARK model acknowledges that students have different approaches to how they process information, referred to as "preferred learning modes."Allowing students to access information in the manner they are comfortable with will increase their academic confidence.