

Teaching Strategies: Meaning, Characteristics and Importance

Introduction:

In a comprehensive way, teaching is considered as an activity, undertaken to make learners acquire knowledge, develop skills and attitude which ultimately prepare them for their future roles and responsibilities in true sense. It helps in making children fit for the larger society by imbibing the social and cultural norms and values. Being a planned activity, teaching aims at attaining goals of education where emphasis is given on individual as well as social development of the children. Teaching occurs between teacher and students or a group of students in an academic environment conducive for proper learning. In the words of **B. O. Smith (1960)**, “**Teaching is a system of actions intended to produce learning.**” In another definition by **Thomas F. Green (1971)**, it was defined as “**the task of a teacher which is performed for the development of a child.**” According to **H. C. Morrison (1934)**, “**Teaching is an intimate contact between a more mature person and a less mature one which is designed to further the education of the latter.**”

On the basis of these definitions, it can be said that teaching is designed with the purpose of producing learning and helping students/learners in the process of their overall development. It aims at achieving the pre-determined goals of education. Teaching is not a rigid or fixed activity, but tends to change with changing time and context. Its flexibility makes it more effective. Teaching learning is a complex process which involves learners, teacher, teaching learning material, suitable teaching strategies and conducive learning environment leading to meaningful learning (**NCERT, 2013**). For making teaching more effective and learning more long lasting, teachers use different teaching strategies which are specific steps, actions, behaviours or thoughts, teachers use to enhance learning and its production. Here, we will be focusing

on teaching strategies, its meaning, salient features or characteristics and importance.

Meaning of Teaching Strategies:

Etymologically, the word ‘**strategy**’ came from the ancient Greek word ‘**strategia**’ or ‘**stretegos**’ meaning ‘**art of troop leader**’, ‘**office of general**’ or ‘**the art of the general**’. Its original meaning is associated with the ‘**steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war**’. The war like meaning has faded away, but the features such as control and goal-directedness remain the same in modern version of the world (Oxford, 1990). Likewise, teaching, as an interactive social process, also entails control and goal directedness. According to **Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary**, strategy means “**a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose.**” In correspondence to teaching, these are the plans adopted by teachers according to their objectives for achieving their purposes. In their book, ‘*Essentials of Educational Technology*’, **Mangal & Mangal (2009)** have defined the term teaching strategy as “**the plans, means and specific ways especially devised and employed by the teachers for guiding, directing and showing path to the learners for the realization of the set instructional or teaching learning objectives.**” It may also be defined as specific plans or ways devised and employed for the realization of the goals. Every goal directed activity’s accomplishment depends upon the strategies adopted for reaching the goals. In simple term, teaching strategy stands for the type of strategy the teachers use in carrying out their teaching and/or instructional works (**Mangal & Mangal, 2009**).

In their book ‘*Teaching Practice: Problems and Perspectives*’, **E. Stones and S. Morris (1972)** wrote, “**Teaching strategy is a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure, desired learner behaviour in terms of goals of instruction and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy.**” The definition denotes that strategy is a plan which is structured in such a way to reach the goals of learning or teaching. Different objectives of

teaching ask for implementation of different strategies which work as the means by which delivery or transfer of educationally structured content is provided to the receivers' end. The teaching strategies describe how the ends will be achieved by different means or resources.

In other words, it is an organizational plan or set of systematic procedures designed to convey subject matters to the learners. Teaching strategies are the integral part of effective teaching which is pivotal and pervasive instrument for providing instruction (**Beck, 1998**) as per educational goals or objectives. There are different teaching strategies such as recitation, discussion, explanation, role play, games and simulation, independent work, questioning, cooperative task groups, discovery, drills and debate, etc. No teaching strategy is better than others in all circumstances. It should be selected rationally. Teachers have freedom of selecting the appropriate teaching strategy or set of strategies according to their instructional objectives. They are free to even integrate diverse teaching strategies also for accomplishing their goals. The decision regarding the selection of appropriate teaching strategy is strongly influenced by the outcomes the teacher wants learners to achieve. Learning is the process of acquiring new information and abilities so those teaching strategies must be selected that help students to think about, understand and remember the information that is directly aligned with the outcomes teachers want students to achieve (Stahl, 1997).

Characteristics of Teaching Strategies: Every teaching strategy has distinct characteristics which make it pivotal in the process of teaching and learning. The general features and characteristics are given in the following manner:

- Teaching strategy is meant for a generalized plan, procedure, ways or means of carrying out the task of teaching. Thus, it makes teaching systematic and purposeful.

- Teaching strategy involves setting the goals of teaching, determining the steps or actions to be carried out for achieving the goals and mobilizing available resources or means for execution of action.
- Strategy of teaching helps in realization of educational objectives. It serves the effective purpose of reaching the educational goals.
- It is always related with teaching learning objectives and learners.
- Teaching strategies are selected according to the learning objectives formulated by teachers.
- Teaching strategies are diverse in nature which range from simple lecture or narration to more interactive discussion, brain storming and role play. Categories of strategies range from grouping to individualized; direct to indirect; structured, interactive to self-directed; and teacher focused to student focused.
- Strategies can be changed or modified depending upon teaching learning situation.
- By nature, it can be autocratic which is content and teacher centered or democratic which qualifies to be student centered and democratically organized.
- Different teaching strategies are simply different ways of helping students to learn or in other words, are different ways of helping them to achieve the learning outcome.
- It becomes a means for transferring the content of education from teacher to learners. It helps teachers to decide how to initiate learning process to engage learners; how to transact the concept and what teaching learning materials can be selected to make transaction enjoyable and learning meaningful (NCERT, 2013).

- It makes learning more effective, easy and fruitful. In order to make it effective, there should be a match between learning objectives and teaching strategies.
- It doesn't only consider the logical presentation of content but also psychological aspects of learners such as their interest, needs and motivation level.
- It helps in implementing the principles and maxims of teaching into the classroom to the maximum.
- It includes the activities both on the part of learners and the teacher for creating appropriate teaching-learning environment for the realization of objectives.
- It requires a number of well-planned tactics for its effective implementation.

Importance of Teaching Strategies:

Teaching strategies are very important in bringing desirable changes in the behaviour of learners in a systematic and well-planned way according to the pre-determined learning objectives. Different strategies have different characteristics and importance in the field of teaching and learning. Here, general importance of teaching strategies is given in the following way:

- Teaching strategy is the pivotal and pervasive instrument for providing instruction (**Beck, 1998**).
- It can be used for engaging students in critical thinking, collaborative work, creative thinking and developing skills and attitude.
- Effective use of teaching strategies brings positive learning outcome in the students.
- It gives scope to teachers to think critically and rationally about their own practices inside and outside the classrooms.

- It helps in generating interest of students and it promotes deep and long lasting learning.
- It helps in maximizing the students' learning by involving them to actively participate in teaching learning process.
- Through teaching strategies, teachers deliberately create the opportunities to let students think reason and debate their understanding.
- If effective strategies are adopted by teachers, students develop the sense of responsibilities for their learning and help in construction of knowledge.
- It helps in creation of conducive and congenial environment for learning.
- It improves the quality of teaching and learning. Experiments with new teaching strategies improve teaching.
- It helps in building good teacher-taught relationship.
- It transforms the dull content into interesting one.
- It makes learning more relevant to students by fulfilling their aesthetic, physical, emotional and cognitive needs.
- It promotes values among students when they work in group through mutual assistance and shared decision making.
- It promotes greater understanding and increased retention by often providing for active and hands-on-learning experiences.
- It develops social skills among learner.
- It is the most basic instructional tool.

Conclusion: In conclusion, it can be said that teaching is a social process which is exercised for the purpose of producing learning. This learning becomes effective and productive by incorporating certain strategies according to the instructional needs and requirements. These strategies are defined as the plans adopted in teaching for reaching the instructional objectives. These teaching strategies are diverse in nature and are selected and used by teachers as per their

needs for realization of their goals of teaching. Undoubtedly, effective use of these strategies helps in creation of conducive and congenial classroom environment and development of required skills, knowledge and attitude in learners.

Objectives:

The main objective of this module is to acquaint students with:

- Concept, meaning and definitions of teaching strategies;
- Salient features and characteristics of teaching strategies; and
- Importance of teaching strategies for teachers as well as for students.

Glossary:

- i. **Teaching:** Teaching is a complex social process of producing learning.
- ii. **Teaching Approach:** Teaching approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about learning and teaching are specified.
- iii. **Teaching Method:** Teaching methods are the overall plan for the orderly presentation of material and is based upon the approach to teaching. Method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills and content to be taught and order in which it will be presented.
- iv. **Etymology of strategy:** Etymologically, the word ‘**strategy**’ came from the ancient Greek word ‘**strategia**’ or ‘**stretegos**’ meaning ‘**art of troop leader**’, ‘**office of general**’ or ‘**the art of the general**’.
- v. **Strategy:** The strategy is plan for realization of pre-set goals. According to **Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary**, strategy means “**a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose.**”
- vi. **Teaching Strategy:** In correspondence to teaching, the strategies are the plans adopted by teachers according to their objectives for achieving their purposes. Teaching strategy is a plan which is structured in such a way to reach the goals of learning or teaching. These strategies describe how the ends will be achieved by different means or resources.

- vii. **Learning Outcome:** It is the statement that describes significant and essential learning which learners have achieved and are able to demonstrate at the end of the course.
- viii. **Instructional Objectives:** It is a statement that is specified in measurable and behavioural terms what learners will be able to do as the result of the instruction.
- ix. **Different Teaching Strategies:** Teaching strategy is the integral part of effective teaching that is pivotal and pervasive instrument for providing instructions as per educational goals or objectives. There are different teaching strategies such as recitation, discussion, explanation, role play, games and simulation, independent work, questioning, cooperative task groups, discovery, drills and debate, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- i. **What do you understand by teaching?**
Answer: Teaching is a social process, occurring between teacher and students in learning environment. It is intended to produce learning.
- ii. **What is strategy?**
Answer: A strategy is any plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose.
- iii. **What is the etymological meaning of strategy?**
Answer: Etymologically, the word ‘strategy’ came from the ancient Greek word ‘strategia’ or ‘stretegos’ meaning ‘art of troop leader’, ‘office of general’ or ‘the art of the general’.
- iv. **How will you define teaching strategy?**
Answer: In correspondence to teaching, these are the plans adopted by teachers according to their objectives for achieving their purposes. It may also be defined as specific plans or ways devised and employed for the realization of the goals. In simple term, teaching strategy stands for the type of strategy the teachers use in carrying out their teaching and/or instructional works.
- v. **What is learning outcome?**
Answer: Learning outcome is the statement that describes significant and essential learning which learners have achieved and are able to demonstrate at the end of the course.
- vi. **What is the meaning of instructional objectives?**

Answer: These objectives are the statements that are specified in measurable and behavioural terms what learners will be able to do as the result of the instruction. Strategy of teaching helps in realization of educational objectives.

vii. State features of teaching strategies.

Answer: The general features are given in the following manner:

- Teaching strategy is meant for a generalized plan, procedure, ways or means of carrying out the task of teaching.
- Teaching strategy involves setting the goals of teaching, determining the steps or actions to be carried out for achieving the goals and mobilizing available resources or means for execution of action.
- It is always related with teaching learning objectives and learners.
- Teaching strategies are diverse in nature which range from simple lecture or narration to more interactive discussion, brain storming and role play.
- Strategies can be changed or modified depending upon teaching learning situation.
- Different teaching strategies are simply different ways of helping students to learn or in other words, are different ways of helping them to achieve the learning outcome.

viii. Give some importance of using teaching strategies for teachers.

Answer: The importance of teaching strategies is given in the following way:

- Teaching strategies can be used for engaging students in critical thinking, collaborative work, creative thinking and developing skills and attitude.
- It gives scope to teachers to think critically and rationally about their own practices inside and outside the classrooms. It helps in maximizing the students' learning by involving them to actively participate in teaching learning process.
- Through teaching strategies, teachers deliberately create the opportunities to let students think reason and debate their understanding.
- It helps in creation of conducive and congenial environment for learning. It improves the quality of teaching and learning. Experiments with new teaching strategies improve teaching.
- It helps in building good teacher-taught relationship.

- It promotes greater understanding and increased retention by often providing for active and hands-on-learning experiences.
- ix. How are teaching strategies important for student?**
Answer: Effective use of teaching strategies brings positive learning outcome in the students. They feel highly motivated to participate in teaching learning process. It helps in generating interest of students and it promotes deep and long lasting learning. It makes learning more relevant to students by fulfilling their aesthetic, physical, emotional and cognitive needs. It develops social skills among learner.
- x. On what basis, a teacher should select teaching strategies?**
Answer: There are different teaching strategies such as recitation, discussion, explanation, role play, games and simulation, independent work, questioning, cooperative task groups, discovery, drills and debate, etc. No teaching strategy is better than others in all circumstances. It should be selected rationally. Teachers have freedom of selecting the appropriate teaching strategy according to their instructional objectives, content, context, learning goals and learners.

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