



Teaching-Learning and Assessment in Social Science Classrooms

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Abstract:

There are various ways of teaching-learning according to the classroom situations and pupils; teacher can plan their teaching learning strategies. A large number of assessment strategies need to be infused throughout the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning. In the paper, Section I deliberates the processes of Social Science (SS) Learning using pictures and group discussion as teaching learning method to attain the Learning Outcome (LO) "identifies the role of Government in providing public facilities such as water, sanitation, road, electricity etc., and recognises their availability" in class VIII. With the help of pictures and through group discussion, students will be able to achieve the expected LO. Competencies like comprehension, reasoning, logical thinking, skills of analysing and recording, ability to provide explanation and team spirit will be developed. Section II deals with assessment and learning and contemplates collection of assessment data in the form of portfolio using different evidences, reporting and sharing.

Keywords: Learning outcome, competencies, assessment, social science, learning process

1. Introduction

Using classroom assessment to improve student learning is not a new idea. More than 30 years ago, Benjamin Bloom showed how to conduct this process in practical and highly effective ways when he described the practice of mastery learning (Bloom, 1968, 1971). But since that time, the emphasis on assessments as tools for accountability has diverted attention from this more important and fundamental purpose. Instead, the teacher must use approaches that accommodate differences in students' learning styles and intelligences (Sternberg, 1994). And by not allowing minor errors to become major learning problems, teachers better prepare students for subsequent learning tasks, eventually need less time for corrective work (Whiting, Van Burgh, & Render, 1995), and can proceed at a more rapid pace in later learning units. If assessments provide information for both students and teachers, then they cannot mark the end of learning. Instead, assessments must be followed by high-quality, corrective instruction designed to remedy whatever learning errors the assessment identified (see Guskey, 1997). All educators strive to have their students become lifelong learners and develop learning-to-learn skills. What better learning-to-learn skill is there than learning from one's mistakes? A mistake can be the beginning of learning. Some assessment experts argue, in fact, that students learn nothing from a successful performance. Rather, students learn best when their initial performance is less than successful, for then they can gain direction on how to improve (Wiggins, 1998). Developing ideas for corrective instruction and enrichment activities can be difficult, especially if teachers believe that they must do it alone, but structured professional development opportunities can help teachers share strategies and collaborate on teaching techniques (Guskey, 1998, 2000b). Classroom assessments that serve as meaningful sources of information don't surprise students. Instead, these assessments reflect the concepts and skills that the teacher emphasized in class, along with the teacher's clear criteria for judging students' performance. These concepts, skills, and criteria align with the teacher's instructional activities and, ideally, with state or district standards. Students see these assessments as fair measures of important learning goals. Teachers facilitate learning by providing students with important feedback on

their learning progress and by helping them identify learning problems (Bloom, Madaus, & Hastings, 1981; Stiggins, 2002).

2. The Context

Social Science (SS) teacher might have felt that students learn better, when they are encouraged to express about the familiar things. Students at the upper primary stage describe event/situation/learning experience in diverse ways. With this developmental nature of young students, SS encompasses diverse concerns of society. It includes a wide a range of content, drawn from the disciplines of History, Geography, Political Science, and Economics. It enables students to develop a critical understanding of society and lay foundations for an analytical and creative mindset and a greater attention to specific themes, with an eye to the disciplines through which Social Sciences Perspectives evolve. In order to clarify doubts and disputes that form in contemporary society, you might be teaching it through participation of students in discussions and debates.

Thus, one can say that the thematic nature of SS subject helps to address the curriculum load and enable students learn holistically and meaningfully. Being concrete learners, the subjects that are the focus of Higher Secondary stage, History, Geography, Political Science, and Economics, take shape in their mind, only in a manner that the disciplinary feature is simple. For example, the government's role (welfare) in providing public facilities (public goods) and in implementing laws that apply to market (perfect and imperfect) etc. is not viewed through narrow perspectives of disciplines by young students. In addition, they learn better, when they get opportunities to go beyond the classroom and relate school learning with their daily lives. SS learning involves developing different kind of skills, conceptual knowledge, dispositions and sensitivities. Learning tasks woven around the range of the learning processes/indicators given below can help accomplish the learning outcome.

3. Section I

3.1 Assessing Prior knowledge of the Students

The teacher will assess their understanding about the idea of public facility by asking questions in the class. Students are familiar with what are the basic needs for their life and facilities like road, railway, hospital, school etc. available in their surroundings and their importance in their day to day life in classes III to V in Environmental Studies and Classes VI and VII in Social and Political Life. But they don't know what is public facility and role of government in providing these facilities.

In Classes III to V children learnt through poems, stories and discussions held in classrooms and out of classrooms about different themes like water, travel and things we make and do etc.. i.e. through poem Water O' Water! , they learnt about rivers, waterfalls, lakes and springs from where they get water; through poem The train they learnt about how would they go from their house to different places and how would they keep themselves safe while travelling and through picture on Work we do, children learnt about work done by family members and all the different kinds of work are equally important. No work is better or worse than any other.	In Classes VI and VII children learnt about ideas and institutions through different narratives, fiction and non-fiction, images and other sources such as newspapers, magazines and books. They learnt about different livelihoods i.e. rural and urban, different markets and different opportunities offered by markets, what is government, types of government and important role it plays in our lives.
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She will explain that there are essential facilities that need to be provided for everyone and can be shared by all. These are known as public facilities. She will ask them to give example of various public facilities in their surroundings. She will take the example of road and ask them more questions:

- Did they notice road in their locality?
- Who has provided/built this road?
- Why is it essential and useful for them?

(The teacher now wants to take their learning further along with assessing their understanding about the idea of public facilities acquired so far).

Activity 1: The teacher will ask students to collect the pictures related with public facility from the newspapers and available in their surroundings and next day let them select the relevant pictures, discuss about them and share their observations and experiences.



Teacher should motivate learners to ask questions. Student's question may vary from PMGSY, State/UTs Public Works Department (PWD), National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), state highway and private companies, etc. Teacher should ask them that have they ever observed roads in private housing area. Is it a public facility? She should explain clearly that public facilities need to be provided for everyone and once it is provided, its benefits can be shared by all. The road in private housing area is not a public facility as it is built for the use of residents of that area only for which company has charged. When you go to your school, you have to use local road. If you go to vegetable market, you use road. If you go to Jaipur from Delhi then you have to use state highway and national highway, these are public facilities as these are used by all. Roads connect us with the market, school, hospital, villages, districts, different cities of a state and different states of India etc. These are provided by government and used by all. The responsibility to provide public facilities, therefore, must be that of the government. Government keeps budget for construction of roads. However, government can assign the work of construction of roads to private companies. Teacher should ensure visually challenged learners' participation in the activity and facilitate them with appropriate materials. The activity helps the teacher in assessing previous knowledge, observation skills, analysis, ability to differentiate, participation in class activities, empathy. Teacher's observation can go in the anecdotal records of the teachers.

(In this activity asking questions and expressing doubts is an important aspect of classroom learning. Questions from some students will help whole class to learn better)

4. Section II

Activity 2: Once discussions have taken place and all the doubts have been clarified, teacher can divide the students in groups. Each group will have to prepare a table and give their answers with explanation under three headings:

- Differences
- importance
- provision

Groups have to explain the differences between private and public facilities, their importance and role of government in providing public facilities and provide suitable examples on a chart. They should give a rank order for their answers. After finishing their group activity they can display their charts in different corners and all students can examine and compare each other's answers. In the last column they can give the rank to those points which have been found most suitable by maximum number of groups. In this exercise they will check the answers of the peers and will revisit the concept which will help them to

have better understanding. This activity will help the teacher to assess comprehension, reasoning, logical thinking, skills of analysing and recording, ability to provide explanation, team spirit.

Public Facilities: Differences, Importance and Provision			
Public Facilities	Individual answers with explanation	Rank Order of Importance	Rank Order of the Class
Differences	1. Consumed collectively 2. 3.		
Importance	1. Basic need... 2. 3.		
Provision	1. Government... 2. 3.		

Keep in the portfolio for records

With this suggested pedagogical process to develop project/activity on Economic presence of the government, LO that “a learner is able to identify the role of Government in providing public facilities such as water, sanitation, road, electricity etc., and recognise their availability” will be attained. The teacher will be able to assess them simultaneously.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to provide an exemplar of teaching learning where assessment go hand in hand and contributes to enhance the learning levels of students. It enables the teachers of Social Science in facilitating the students to attain learning outcome. With the help of picture and through group discussion, students may be able to identify the role of Government in providing public facility such as road and recognise its availability. Competencies like comprehension, reasoning, logical thinking, skills of analysing and recording, ability to provide explanation and team spirit will be developed. Teacher can also use the activity group discussion in other topics of Social Sciences.

Rubrics for Assessment			
Assessment	Needs Help	Can Do Better	Can Help Others
Knowledge with Understanding	Describes information in simple words and shows a tentative grasp of the of the activity	Provides some information using appropriate economic terms	Provides comprehensive information with a careful use of economic terms and clearly explains differences, importance and provision.
Team Spirit	Does not take much interest in the group activity.	Concentrates on his part of work and does not show interest in other's work	Take active participation and help the team members to understand and complete the activity. Observes others work

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