

Pedagogical Innovations in Social Science Classroom: Need for a Better Insight



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Abstract

A classroom has the basic setup of transition of knowledge from educator to educants. It has been long realized that methods applied in teaching of social sciences make classroom more boring and thus ineffective due to the fact that traditional methods of teachings are fruitful only when subjects are realistic. Subjects of social science are conceptually drawn and hence require aid of innovative techniques when taught. This paper aims in understanding the challenges concerning teaching of social science subject and the importance of innovative teaching methods for effective learning of the subject.

Keywords: Social-science Classroom, Innovative pedagogy, School Curriculum and Effective learning.

Introduction

Teaching is not only a profession but also an art to inspire the students to learn. Thousands of years ago we learnt how to teach and gradually with time our teaching methods and styles got evolved. In earlier times, methods were teacher-centered in which teacher had full control of the class and students were only passive listeners, but according to the requirement of teaching-learning process this shifted from teacher-centered to pupil-centered. Yet, generations have passed without any major improvements in the procedures and style of teaching in our classrooms. Our pedagogical strategies are still old and monotonous, lacking creativity and innovativeness (King & Sen, 2013).

It's not that subjects like science and mathematics only need innovative pedagogy, indeed subjects like social science or humanities require more of innovative and creative environment, that makes the subject interesting and meaningful to learn.

Aim of the Study

This paper focuses on the importance of social science subject in school curriculum, challenges concerning its teaching strategy and aims to bring in focus innovative pedagogy for social sciences to attain a better insight of the subject.

Literature Review

It has been long realized that pedagogy used in social science classrooms is ineffective because of the monotonous way of imparting knowledge. Since then, quite a research work has been carried out in this area. After a thorough review of different journals, thesis, books, dissertations and articles, the following researches have been found on different teaching strategies used in social science classrooms-

Veerkar, P.P (1980) carried out a study based on Integrated approach of teaching Social Studies, resulted in better achievement of students.

According to Jaychandran, J (1980), Using programmed filmstrip as a teaching method could result in the development of high cognitive abilities.

Pandey, S.N (1986) studied Effectiveness of Advance organizer and Inquiry training models for teaching social studies and the students reaction were in favour of the two models based instructions.

Wolf (1993), advocated inquiry approach for teaching geography.

Pondany (1994), on the basis of his research results favoured historical research methods to study history.

According to Skoda (1996), the biographical approach to history was proved effective.

According to Beam, K (2000), who carried out a research using multiple intelligences (MI) instruction in comparison to traditional textbook instruction, both the strategies are equally significant.

George,M; Mitofsky,J (2001) also concluded that inculcation of MI based teaching instruction can improve both interest and achievement of social science students.

Hemaletha, P K (2002) studied effectiveness of inquiry approach in teaching history at school level which resulted in better achievement of pupils taught through inquiry approach method.

Hanley,C; Hermiz, C (2002) Action research also showed positive results in favour of MI based instructions.

Shirsat, M (2002) and Dudhal, M (2008) found discussion method to be more effective in teaching IX class history.

Kevin Bolinger and Wilson J. Warren (2007) conducted a review on teaching method used in social science classroom titled, "Methods Practiced in Social Studies Instruction: A Review of Public School Teachers' Strategies" and concluded that teachers are using passive method of teaching rather than active, resulting in suggestions for urgent need of adapting active methods of imparting knowledge.

Kale, P (2007) conducted a comparative study of the Effectiveness of the Multiple Intelligences (MI) – based teaching and traditional classroom teaching of a topic in history for Std IX and concluded that MI based teaching is far more effective than traditional one.

Bhujbal, A (2009) and Dixit, J (2010) found out Computer Assisted Programme (CAP) more effective in teaching of history.

William B Russell III and Stewart Waters (2010) conducted a research titled "Instructional Methods for Teaching Social Studies: A Survey of What Middle School Students Like and Dislike about Social Studies Instruction" and found out that middle school students find passive learning very boring, they want to be taught social studies through innovative teaching methods so that they can be active participants in the teaching-learning process.

Project method is also an effective and significant method for social science classrooms. (Malkekar, 2010).

Use of audio visual aids helped in better achievement of history class students.(Jadhav,2010).

Majoka, M.I (2011) studied effectiveness of Cooperative Learning for Teaching Social Studies to Students with Different Ability at Elementary Level and it was found out that cooperative learning is equally effective for high, average as well as low achievers.

Dramatization method helped students to score considerably higher in class of social science. (Kolage, 2011).

Archana S Chaudari(2012) conducted a study using multiple intelligences based teaching of history for std 6th and concluded that MI based teaching method is very effective as compared to the traditional teaching method.

Mistri,D (2012) compared Inquiry training model and traditional teaching to teach one unit of history for standard VIII and the posttest scores were higher than the pretest scores of the achievement test after the treatment.

Even use of concept maps in teaching of history is proved to be very effective. (Nalavade, 2012).

The above discussed researches bring to light that there are various pedagogies other than traditional lecture method to be used in social science classrooms.

Social Science Education And Its Importance In School Curriculum

Social Science is an important subject of our curriculum which deals with society, its people, their interrelationships, their behavior, growth and development, resources they use and many more. The main aim of studying social sciences is to understand a society as a whole, considering all aspects, to make inter connections between various subjects, to draw connections between our past, present and future and eventually finding solutions of social problems.

Social Science is not a single subject rather amalgam of several disciplines under its domain. Some important branches or sub-disciplines of Social Science are Economics, History and Archaeology, Geography, Political Science and Sociology.

The incorporation of Social Studies in the curriculum right from primary to secondary classes through a combination of subjects like – History, Geography, Cultural Studies, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, etc signifies its importance and its role in a student's life.

Social Studies help Students

1. To get aware about the world and environment, in understanding how different societies have evolved, the important events that have occurred in the past, about eminent personalities who had made marvelous, life changing inventions and discoveries creating an everlasting impact universally. (Dhandhanian, 2016).
2. Foster critical thinking skills like comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Also help students to observe, learn and understand human behaviour, values, attitudes and the interrelationships which exist among different people enhancing social understanding as a whole. Knowledge of different religions, cultures, beliefs, castes, values, languages, festivals, food, etc helps students to develop a wider perspective of society and makes them aware that different societies and their culture are diverse, yet they are interdependent and inter-related beautifully. They become acquainted about the importance of democracy, rights and freedoms and most importantly, they understand that in order to live peacefully everyone needs to respect and trust other's opinions, values, lifestyles, cultures, practices and ideologies that co-exist in society. (Dhandhanian, 2016).

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3. To become better Citizens by providing relevant knowledge and information about Political Ideologies, Constitutional Laws, Citizenship, Rights and Duties, Morals and Virtues, Social Code of Conduct through subjects like Economics, Political Science, Civics, etc, thus making pupils aware of their roles and responsibilities, eventually preparing them to grow up as active, responsible, and reflective members of society. (Dhandhanian, 2016).

So, keeping in mind the above mentioned points we conclude that incorporation of Social Sciences in school curriculum ensures all-round development of student's personality.

Challenges and Issues in Teaching Social Science

There is not a single area in our curriculum which does not have any issue in pedagogy. All curriculum subjects share some of the same challenges and concerns, but individual subjects seem to have their specific concerns.

Social Science teachers face a lot of challenges in teaching their subject which may not be faced by teachers of other disciplines.

First and the foremost issue is its vast and expanded syllabus. It is literally impossible for the teacher to cover each and every topic elaborately so it is just touch on for most of the topics.

Most of the students find social science subjects very boring. They try to find connections between the subject and their lives and when they fail to do so they completely lost interest in the subject resulting in poor learning (Kelly, 2017).

Seldom teachers understand to use different and interesting instruction methods to make their subject interesting, and in grasping student's attention but most of them use the same traditional and old lecture method in classroom which makes it boring for them as well as for the students. So, lack of teaching aptitude is the major reason.

Subject like history is full of dates, events, era and names so the learning process doesn't go beyond recalling.

Textbooks of social sciences are really boring, some don't have even pictures and most teachers rely only on textbooks without any creativity, practical experiences and modern technology, so it makes both teaching as well as learning burdensome.

Also there is a trend in our society, to give science subjects more emphasis over humanities so students bring with them that priority and again it becomes one of the reasons of their lacking interest in social sciences.

If we look thoroughly to these problems, it's not that these cannot be rectified, serious considerations can evict these problems gradually.

Innovative Pedagogy for Effective Learning of Social Sciences

Social Studies is not a subject to merely get good grades in class rather it is that area of our curriculum which connects us from society, from past, present and even future, knowledge and understanding of which make us responsible and

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reflective citizens. All we need to do is, just to make an effort for making it worth learning.

Our first step should be to confine the vast syllabus of social studies, so that both educators and students don't have pressure of syllabus completion on their minds and teaching-learning process will become more meaningful.

There should be short-term courses for the teachers for developing proper teaching aptitude so that they teach not merely for the sake of livelihood but for the enlightenment in real sense.

Now, most important of all is teaching method or strategy, teachers should switch over to more innovative and creative teaching styles rather than sticking to old lecture method. There are a number of innovative techniques for teaching, some of them are:

Graphic Organisers

Graphic organizers are visual displays that demonstrate relationships between facts, concepts or ideas. They help to enhance learning and understanding of subject matter by building connections not only with different topics of same subject rather with different areas of curriculum. So, both teachers and students can use these graphic organizers as very effective tools for meaningful learning. Some of the examples of graphic organizers are concept maps, mind maps, webs, etc (Teaching strategies, n.d.).

Cooperative Learning

There should be friendly environment in classroom, like there is no hesitation between teachers and students. Teacher should act as a friend and guide rather than a dictator. Interactive sessions and discussions should be done in the classroom so that students actively participate, not merely become passive listeners. These activities result in meaningful learning because there is exchange of ideas and co-operation. (Teaching strategies, n.d.).

Using Oral and Visual Activities

This includes the use of pictures, photos, drawings, audio conferences, booklets, biographies, interviews, role plays, simulations, and demonstrations etc so that classroom experiences become lively for both teacher and students (Teaching strategies, n.d.).

Outside the Classroom Teaching

It includes field trips, educational tours, excursions, use of technology like using smart phones or tablet devices for learning purposes, etc. these outside classroom activities play a crucial role in teaching-learning process because students get first hand experiences which naturally facilitate effective teaching and learning (Claiborne, Morrell, Bandy & Bruff, n.d.).

Creative Teaching

Classrooms are full of young creative minds. Boring teaching somewhere is responsible in restraining creative ideas to get manifested. Teachers should themselves be creative and welcome students also to present their ideas freely. This may include puzzles, games, etc. (edsys, 2017).

Storyboard Teaching

Rudyard Kipling said "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten." Storyboarding should be used in social science classrooms so that highly complex and conceptual ideas can be put in an easy way across students. (edsys, 2017).

Stimulating Classroom Environment

Learning environment plays a prime role in learning and development. Social science classrooms should be well decorated with maps, posters and charts of historical events, etc that can intrigue students to explore and learn. (edsys, 2017).

Textbooks play a very crucial role in effective pedagogy, so it is time to transform our textbooks from boring to much more creative and attractive. Incorporation of more realistic images should be there and information should be presented in the form of graphic organizers so that textbooks facilitate meaningful learning too.

Guest speakers should be invited from time to time so that learning become alive and students get inspired, feeling a sense of passion in them towards their subject.

A teacher should always remember that social studies is not only about memorizing dates and events. It's about making our students capable of finding solutions to social problems and always making our society a peaceful and better place to live in.

Conclusion

Social Science is a subject that deals with real people lives and their interrelationships. Presently this area of curriculum is looked upon as just a qualifying subject. There lie numerous reasons to its negligence and on top of them is ineffective pedagogy which needs to be rectified. There are a number of innovative teaching techniques for effective and meaningful learning like concept mapping, mind mapping, web charts, role playing, discussion and demonstration methods, field trips, educational tours, advanced gadgets, etc. Incorporation of these teaching strategies in and outside of the social science classroom can prove to be extremely useful in effective teaching and learning. One should realize that non-science subjects also need incorporation of magnets which make these subjects more interesting. Though pictorial or conceptual mappings are not so frequent in social sciences but effective pedagogy can bring the solution. Subjects like civics can be dealt with implication of role playing where students can understand the simulated conditions and feel in-depth action-reaction circumstances. Likewise, asking students to act like lawyer and witness can help them deeply understand the courtroom sessions. Post lecture sessions help students to solve mental uprising of queries that fill the gaps in lecture learning. Field trips and educational tours aid in not only learning the subject matter but also develop contextual and mental understanding of the theme.

Conclusively, paper focuses on imbibing innovative pedagogical techniques in the learning set. Shifting from traditional teaching methods to innovative methods requires immense change in the

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mindset of educational policies that can be boosted by the similar studies as carried in this paper. Challenges, though are serious but once implied will show positive results.

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