

Professional Development Strand

Unit 7: Teaching Methodology

## **Module 7.1 Introduction to Teacher Centred and Student Centred Approaches**



**Student Support Material**

## Acknowledgements

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## Unit outline

| Unit                               | #   | Modules  |
|------------------------------------|-----|--|
| Unit 7<br><br>Teaching Methodology | 7.1 | Introduction to Teacher Centred and Student Centred Approaches<br>(Core) |
|                                    | 7.2 | General Teaching Methods<br>(Core)                                       |
|                                    | 7.3 | Multigrade Methods<br>(Core)   |

## Icons



Read or research



Write or summarise



Activity or discussion

## Table of contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Teacher Centred and Student Centred Approaches Module</b>    | <b>1</b>  |
| Rationale   | 1         |
| Objectives  | 1         |
| How to use this material  | 1         |
| Assessment  | 1         |
| References  | 2         |
| <b>Introduction</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| What approaches are most effective?                             | 3         |
| <i>Teacher centred and student centred teaching</i>             | 3         |
| Selecting an appropriate teaching strategy                      | 4         |
| Whole class, group and individual instruction                   | 6         |
| <i>Whole class teaching</i>                                     | 6         |
| <i>Whole Class teaching with modified objectives/activities</i> | 8         |
| Small group teaching  | 9         |
| <i>Individualised teaching</i>                                  | 10        |
| <i>Learning contracts</i>                                       | 10        |
| Summary   | 11        |
| Self evaluation   | 11        |
| <b>Key Terms and Glossary</b>                                   | <b>12</b> |

# Teacher Centred and Student Centred Approaches Module

## ***Rationale***

This module is written as one of three in a three-credit point unit. The actual break-up of topics and time allocation is flexible, and to be decided upon by the individual lecturer.

The remaining modules, which comprise this unit, are:

**Module 7.2 General Teaching Methods**

**Module 7.3 Multigrade Methods**

Effective teachers draw on a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning to cater for the different needs of their students. This module introduces teacher centred and student centred approaches, and examines the role of whole class, group and individual instruction.

## ***Objectives***

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Describe the differences between teacher centred and student centred approaches
- Describe how both can be incorporated into daily classroom programs
- Explain how whole class, group and individual instruction can be included in the teaching program

## ***How to use this material***

This module is written as a series of topics, identified in the table of contents, and by their large sub headings. Each topic includes some readings and activities to complete. Your lecturer will guide you through the materials during the lecture program.

Sometimes, you may work directly from the book during the lecture. Sometimes, your lecturer may ask you to complete an activity or reading for homework. Your lecturer may include additional information and topics.

## ***Assessment***

Your lecturer will provide details of assessment requirements during the first week of lectures. These assessment tasks will provide the opportunity for you to show your understanding and apply your knowledge of the theory to practical situations.

## **References**

Whilst all the readings that you need are contained in these resource materials, additional references used in the writing of this module are included.

Mc Burney-Fry, G. (1998) *Improving Your Practicum; A Guide to Better Teaching Practice*. Social Science Press, Australia

Barry, K., King, L. (1998) *Beginning Teaching and Beyond (3<sup>rd</sup> ed)* Social Science Press, Australia

Killen, R. (1998) *Effective Teaching Strategies, ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed)* Social Science Press, Australia.

# Introduction



## ***What approaches are most effective?***

*Adapted from Killen, R. (1998) **Effective Teaching Strategies**. Social Science Press, Australia.*

There has been much written about effective teaching and many suggestions given about techniques teachers can use to enhance the learning of their students.

It is difficult to say if any one approach is better than another, because there are so many factors involved during any one teaching episode, eg, students' attitudes, abilities and learning styles, and teachers' beliefs, knowledge and abilities.

Some points from the research indicate that effective teaching is often characterised by the active involvement of students, student collaboration, and an emphasis on academic achievement. The role of the teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning rather than a source of knowledge.

## Teacher centred and student centred teaching

It is often said that there are two basic approaches to teaching: **teacher centred** and **student centred** approaches.

**Teacher centred approaches** are more traditional in nature, focussing on the teacher as instructor. They are sometimes referred to as direct instruction, deductive teaching or expository teaching, and are typified by the lecture type presentation. In these methods of teaching, the teacher controls what is to be taught and how students are presented with the information that they are to learn.

**Student centred approaches** (sometimes referred to as discovery learning, inductive learning, or inquiry learning) place a much stronger emphasis on the learner's role in the learning process. When you are using student-centred approaches to teaching, you still set the learning agenda but you have much less *direct* control over what and how students learn.

Module 2 of this unit will examine a number of these teaching approaches, or strategies, in more detail.

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 **7.1 Activity 1**

*Think back to your days at primary school. Do you remember your teacher using more teacher directed approaches, or more student centred approaches? Give some examples of what you recall.*

*Think about your high school years. Was there a change?*

*Think about your studies now at teachers' college. Are your lectures now more student centred than teacher centred?*

*Discuss this with your group.*

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These two approaches to teaching differ in a number of important ways, including what the teacher does, the organization of instruction, how much the students are involved actively in learning, how much the students are responsible for their own learning, and how learning is assessed. In either approach, the teacher has the central role as both the planner and the facilitator of student learning. The real difference is how you structure and monitor your students' learning.

### ***Selecting an appropriate teaching strategy***

When selecting a strategy to use, you have to decide how you will organise the learning environment so that your students will have experiences that help them to achieve the objectives or outcomes that you have identified.

That is, you ***have to choose teaching strategies according to what it is that you want the students to be able to do as a result of your teaching.***

Student learning is a process of acquiring new information and abilities, therefore you must choose teaching strategies that will enable the students to best ***process*** or work through the tasks in order for them to learn, and to enable this learning to be stored permanently in their mind.

No teaching strategy is better than other for every circumstance, so you have to be able to use a variety of approaches or strategies and make decisions about when each is most likely to be effective.

You may have a favourite way of teaching, and some books call this your ***preferred teaching style***. This may be the one you are most comfortable with, but it may not be the best choice for every lesson that you teach, and not all your students may feel comfortable learning this way.



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 **7.1 Activity 2**

*Reflect on your preferred teaching style. Which style do you prefer as a learner? Which do you prefer as a teacher? How can using different strategies benefit the learner?*

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If you want your maintain your students' attention and increase achievement, then you will need to master all the teaching strategies that may be useful in your particular teaching area. You then have a choice of approaches to use effectively for different situations.

You will need to have the confidence to try out the strategy; 'give it a go' even if you are not comfortable about it. Be prepared to experiment, and learn from your experiences.

You may not find it easy to decide which teaching strategy to use for a particular lesson because the number of factors that should be considered is quite large. It is important to recognise that having the content knowledge is simply not enough to enable you to teach effectively. You must also know how to get the students engaged in their learning and how to organise information so that the learners can profit from their experiences.

Before you select the approach or strategy you will use, you must consider the:

- Objectives or outcomes of your lesson
- Requirements of your learners
- Learning context
- Content of the lesson

Only then can you decide which strategy you may select.

**Whatever approach to teaching you use**, it is important to keep the following points in mind:

- Your focus should be on **LEARNING** rather than teaching (i.e. on the learners, rather than yourself)
- To facilitate learning, you should encourage students to **THINK**
- You should encourage thinking by engaging students in suitable tasks and **ACTIVITIES**
- You should help students to **LINK** their learning to other subjects and with what they are learning outside school
- You should create a **POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** that promotes curiosity and encourages students to ask questions
- You should help students to **LEARN HOW TO LEARN**

Killen ( 1998) Effective Teaching Strategies, p.vii)

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## 7.1 Activity 3

*In groups, look at each of the dot points above. Select three, and discuss what you could do in your planning and teaching to develop these.*

*For example, to focus on learning rather than teaching, you could make sure you include group activities which promote discussion and co-operation. You could set tasks which involve finding out, and ask some questions which ask for higher level thinking responses.*

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## **Whole class, group and individual instruction**



The most common three organisational groupings used by teachers are:

- Whole class teaching
- Small group teaching
- Individual teaching.

### Whole class teaching

This is the simplest approach for the teacher. There is only one lesson to prepare and the lesson is aimed at the average ability in the class. It is easier for you to keep an eye on the students and keep good discipline.

There are, however disadvantages in this approach if you use this way of teaching all the time.

- Whole class teaching is often very teacher centred
- The lesson is aimed at the average student and those with above average or below average abilities are not catered for - low achievers may get frustrated, high achievers may be bored.
- Discipline can become a problem with students who are not interested because the work is too hard or easy

Whilst whole class teaching as an approach does have its disadvantages, it still has a legitimate place in any classroom. Some examples of teaching approaches, which fall under this category, are **exposition**, **explicit** and **demonstration**.

### **Whole class approaches may be useful if:**

- The whole class is reasonably homogeneous
- Material is ordered and straightforward

- There is a limited time to learn material
- The teacher does not have the opportunity to identify different achievement levels eg, at the beginning of teaching practice, or on appointment to a school, during the first days of the school year or a relief teacher taking a class for a short period



### Ways to assist in maintaining whole class attention

- Keep the teacher talk presentations brief – mix them up where possible with student activity
  - Make your talk more interesting with visual aids or music
  - Try to include concrete and personal student examples in the talk
- Ask questions during the presentation and pause sufficiently (wait time) to give the expectation that student responses are really wanted
- Seat potentially disruptive students where you can see and reach them

### Some activities / topics which may be suitable for whole class teaching

- An introduction to a new teaching unit
- An activity of general interest such as a film, slide or video presentation
  - A demonstration of a process, eg making something
  - A briefing talk for an excursion or visit
  - Teaching of a complex concept or skill

*From Marsh, (2000) Handbook for Beginning Teachers. p102*

## Whole Class teaching with modified objectives/activities

You may have a lesson that you wish to introduce to the whole class, but the lesson needs some adjustment to accommodate for the low and high achievers. In this situation, students would benefit from a lesson with **modified objectives/activities**.

If you modify the learning objectives or the activities within a lesson, it provides the advantage of maintaining the benefits of whole class teaching, but allows scope for the modification of objectives and activities for the low and high achieving students.

One way to do this is to set a basic assignment for the whole class and an extension activity for the more able students or faster workers. A teacher would begin the lesson with the whole class, explaining and demonstrating content and task. All students then complete the basic assignment and the more able proceed to the extension activity.

Another variation would be to modify the scope and difficulty of the basic task for low achievers. For example, lower achievers may be expected to complete easier and fewer items than other students. A further variation is to give whole class instruction and then provide extra or modified instruction and activities to students who need assistance according to their specific needs, eg. a group of six students may be experiencing difficulty in the subtraction part of a long division problem; another group may be working on the multiplication part.

Bloom's taxonomy is also a useful tool for adjusting the level of work to cater for individual differences. The teacher could match the levels from the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, by using the associated verbs, to achievement levels in the class. For example, low achievers would be working with tasks related to knowledge and comprehension. Students achieving at a sound level may be required to work from the application and analysis categories. High achievers would be required to complete the tasks from the previous areas, and complete an evaluation activity from the higher levels of Blooms taxonomy.

Some examples from Blooms' stages include:

**Knowledge:** define, recall, describe, name, show, locate, select, tell, label, identify.

**Comprehension:** explain, illustrate, interpret, infer, summarise, compare, contrast, estimate.

**Application:** use, calculate, demonstrate, make, construct, perform, apply, predict, solve, find.

**Analysis:** analyse, classify, discriminate, compare, relate, select, breakdown, hypothesise

**Evaluation:** choose, discuss, criticise, judge, debate, evaluate, justify, defend.

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## 7.1 Activity 4

*You are taking a language session with a Grade 4, reading a big book story together with the class and completing an activity on cloze. Describe how you could modify the objectives and activities to better cater for the range in your class. Choose from the methods described above.*

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### **Small group teaching**

*From Barry and King p 303*

Small group teaching has a number of advantages over whole class teaching:

- Small but positive gains in academic achievement especially in terms of higher achievement, greater student productivity, higher level reasoning, more creative thinking and problem solving, better transfer of learning and enhanced communication skills
- Enhanced social development - students who work in small groups have better relationships, more positive acceptance of differences among students, higher levels of self esteem, clearer understanding of cooperation and teamwork and a more positive attitude towards subject matter, peers and school

There are many different ways of grouping students in the classroom:

- Random groups
- Interest based groups
- Ability groups
- Grade groups
- Cross age tutoring groups
- Mixed aged groups
- Friendship groups

Small group teaching is often incorporated into the body of a lesson. The teacher may begin with a whole class approach, introducing the lesson and discussing the main teaching points. When the teacher has completed this section of the lesson, the students may move into small groups for an activity. These activities will often be developed around specific objectives or outcomes for the group. The teacher may move around the groups as they work, or focus the teaching on one group for the particular session.

The topic of working in groups is covered in the third module of this unit, **Multigrade teaching**. Should you require more information, Module MG.2 *Managing the Multigrade Classroom* also has additional information on grouping and co-operative learning.

## Individualised teaching

The teacher works on a one-to-one basis with a student. The student may be working on the same task as others, or may have special work to suit the level of the student's ability.

The rest of the class must be engaged in purposeful activity if the teacher is to focus on one student only. This can be hard to organise if you have many students in a crowded classroom.

One of the common ways teachers spend individual time with students is hearing the student read aloud. You can organise to hear every student read over the period of a week if you schedule the times when the rest of the class is working independently.

Mastery learning is a teaching approach designed for individualised teaching. The basic assumption in mastery learning is that knowledge or skills can be learned lineally, (that is, step by step) provided instruction is appropriate and sufficient time is given to learning.

Usually, objectives and subject matter are broken up into small or manageable sequential units of work with specific objectives. Before a student can proceed from one unit to another, mastery must be demonstrated, typically by obtaining a score of 80% or more on a criterion referenced test.

## Learning contracts

Some students lack motivation and interest in their learning while others like to be given choice and responsibility for learning. In both cases, students may benefit from a learning contract.

A learning contract is an agreement between a teacher and student (s) or a class, to complete a topic or unit of work in a given time, perhaps half a day, a day, a week or longer. The degree of independence will vary according to individual needs, interests and abilities.

A contract usually contains:

- A statement containing directions and a signed agreement between the teacher and the student
- A learning objective(s)
- Information about resources required
- An activity (ies)
- A point where feedback will be given (around the middle of the contract).
- An incentive for completing the activity on time
- A statement about assessment

Learning contracts are useful if you have an individual who clearly needs a different program to the rest of the class.

## **Summary**

As a student, you will have experienced many different approaches to teaching and learning. Some of these may have been teacher directed, some student centred, and others in between. Making the choice of which strategy to use should be based upon the objectives you wish to achieve and the needs of your students.

Module 7.2 will explore a number of teacher and student centred strategies in more detail.

## **Self evaluation**

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### **7.1 Activity 5**

*Answer the following questions in your workbook.*

*What have I learnt from this module?*

*What do I need to know more about?*

*How will I find out?*

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## Key Terms and Glossary

***Teacher Centred Approaches:*** In these approaches, the teacher controls what is to be taught and how students are presented with the information that they are to learn.

***Student Centred Approaches:*** Approaches which focus the student as the centre of the learning process. The teacher plays the role of facilitator or guide to students' learning.

***Homogeneous Groups:*** Groups made up of members of the same type, eg, age, ability, grade level, gender.

***Heterogeneous Groups:*** Groups made up of members of different types, eg, mixed age, mixed ability, mixed grade levels, mixed gender.

*Add to this list to build your own glossary.*