

## QUESTIONING SKILLS AND TEACHER TRAINING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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### Abstract :

*Trainees are central to any teacher training programmes. The trainees need to develop the required skills to become effective teachers within the context of a changing world. There are several methods of teaching language and school subjects to the deaf, which they need to learn during training period. All these methods are developed on the foundation of 'questioning'. The natural, structural and combined methods of teaching language to deaf use questioning while practicing. Unless the trainees are well versed in questioning, they may face challenges in practicing these methods for deaf in classrooms. Hence, developing questioning skills among trainees during teacher training has great relevance in the field of special education.*

### KEYWORDS :

Questioning Skills and Teacher Training , foundation, Special Education.

### INTRODUCTION:

India is in dire need of more skilled special teachers in order to offer quality and comprehensive education to children with disabilities. According to the report published by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) on Manpower Development (1995), the total trained manpower till 1995 was estimated to be 13,365 as against the requirement of 3,62,300. A study conducted in 2009 by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Delhi in collaboration with RCI to assess human resource requirement in the field of rehabilitation and special education projected that almost 1, 80,000 trained professionals will be required till 2016 in the area of disability rehabilitation and special education. In order to meet the requirements, governmental and nongovernmental agencies are striving hard to increase the number and standards of teacher training colleges at diploma, degree and post-graduation levels.

### TEACHER TRAINING

The importance of special teachers is especially enormous during the formative years when children first join the early intervention centers. The teachers are expected to have the necessary teaching skills and competencies to perform their tasks efficiently in these centers . The quality of education is thus directly related to the nature and quality of the tasks that they carry out with the young deaf. Therefore, it is very important to have professionally qualified and skilled special teachers to ensure the right development of deaf students. Like other countries, the importance of having skilled teachers is enormous in India. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, (2009) has implications on the present teacher education system and the centrally sponsored scheme on teacher education. The Act directs the Central Government to develop and enforce standards for training of teachers.

The teachers in any educational institutions are expected to use the best practices and strategies to meet challenges and demands of their career. If the teachers are well trained and highly motivated, they can meet the expectations of all stake holders. Very often, teacher training programmes act as a catalyst in preparing such teachers. It is well documented that the major purpose of any teacher training programme is to prepare prospective teachers to meet challenges that they have to meet in future in the classrooms. Hence, teacher training is designed to develop highly specific and immediately useful skills in trainees. Teacher training in special education therefore is a specialized and significant segment of education entailing systematic preparation for the development of teaching skills among those who may have attracted towards teaching profession. The effectiveness of teacher training is reflected in the teaching of teachers in the classrooms. The performance of teachers for effective delivery of

instructions is thus related to the knowledge and skills that they acquire during training. Teacher training should be imparted so effectively with effective methods and strategies that the trainees may be able to perform in a better way in a practical situation. A sound programme of teacher training is thus required for effective teacher preparation. In the field of special education, teacher training programmes run in government and nongovernmental setup are under Rehabilitation Council of India, New Delhi.

### TRAINING OF TEACHING SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Generally, programmes for training teachers at diploma, degree and master levels require certain amount of practice teaching. The traditional practice teaching is planned in two stages: (i) observation, and (ii) practice. These stages spread over a period of a few weeks, a few months or a few years depending on how the practical part of the trainee's programme fit into his/her professional course for the training of teachers.

Observation is the first stage of practice teaching. It is divided into two phases namely; identification and analysis. A teacher trainee cannot be expected to give a performance of good teaching if he/she has never seen any. Therefore, the first thing to do is to show the trainee the model of good teaching that he/she may observe, study and analyze. He /she should be further able to identify the parts of the teaching process and should look at the right thing at the right time. It is also important on the part of the trainee to know when one part of it ends and the other.

Observation is generally followed by practice. Once the trainee has acquired knowledge of what constitutes teaching and the various essentials of it, she/he enters the second stage of practice teaching. She /he prepares the lesson plans and starts teaching in the allotted class. Very often, the trainee carries forward the same framework of teaching which was provided to them during observation stage.

A major criticism emerged was that the traditional system of training using imitation method produces incompetent teachers who are hardly prepared to face challenges in education. Sometimes, the trainees are forced to observe the teachings of less skilled teachers, thus force them to imitate the same without understanding the errors. To overcome these, one of the best practices evolved for modifying the behavior of teachers is to offer skill based training. Training on each of the teaching skills will help the trainees to gain correct knowledge of each skills and their effective use during practice teaching.

The special education teacher training programmes follows the curricula prescribed/approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India. The prime emphasis for all these training curricula is to equip the trainees in educating the deaf through specialized methods and techniques. Very often, the emphasis of teacher training at diploma level is given more on methods (natural, structural & combined) and techniques of language development (news, visits, directed activity etc.) and less on general teaching skills like questioning. Hence, it is quiet natural that the trainees & teachers overlook the intricacies in questioning and give undue importance on other aspects of the methods. However, good questioning can compliment all the methods and techniques of teaching.

### QUESTIONING

Questioning is one of the most popularly used teaching techniques followed by the teachers in classrooms. In fact, special and mainstream school teachers use questioning as an important technique for teaching the students with and without disabilities. It is considered as one of the most prominent and influential teaching skills that teachers prefer to use in classrooms. Considering its importance and practice in teaching, questioning has become an essential component in teaching even today.

Generally, teachers use questioning at every stage of intervention of deaf. The major purpose of questioning in classrooms is to provoke students' thought and evoke their expressions. Each question thus asked varies in its nature, type and purpose. During pre intervention stage, teachers use questioning to help to make connections to prior learning that can stimulate cognitive growth of students. During intervention stage, they use the same for effective content delivery so as to enable the students to comprehend the subject matter. Teachers also need to promote thought and inspire inquiry in students during intervention stage. Good and skilled classroom questions which are well developed and structured can engage students in a true exploration of the content they are learning. During the post intervention stage, teachers are entrusted to indicate students' academic progress from time to time. Good questioning allows them to tap the students' strengths and weaknesses in learning. Thus, one of the effective ways of intervention in the classrooms is through proper questioning. As Caram and Davis (2005) observe, when teachers' questions are used effectively, they can enhance pupil learning by developing critical thinking skills, reinforcing pupil understanding, correcting pupil misunderstanding and providing feedback for improvement.

### TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Teachers use several types of questions in classrooms. Questioning has a long and respected history as a technique (Cotton, 2001) and always been identified as the fundamental to outstanding teaching (Klein, Peterson, & Simington, 1991; Frazee & Rudnitski, 1995; Nunan&Lamb, 1996; Hussin, H., 2006). Questions can be effectively categorized at differing levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of School Learning (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) at cognitive level. In classrooms, the questions based on knowledge are used to assess whether the students have gained the knowledge of facts, principles, and relations etc. which are taught to them. Questions at understanding level focus on assessing the students' ability in comprehending, translating and interpreting the knowledge gained. Questions at application level require not only knowledge and comprehension but also skills in applying the same. Questions at analytical level are used to assess the ability of the students to breakdown the learned matter into it's constituent elements or parts and derive relationships between them. Questions at synthesis level are used to assess the ability of the students to put together elements or parts to form whole, which were not clearly there before. Questions based on the level of 'evaluation' are practiced to assess the ability of the students in making judgments of ideas, works solutions, methods materials etc. Evaluation is considered as the highest level of cognitive

ability in the taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). This taxonomy is popular in term of the hierarchical order thinking skills. Bloom's six cognitive domains questions are generally categorized under two major levels (i) 'lower level' and (ii) 'higher level' questions. Lower level questions are the first two i.e. knowledge and comprehension and higher level questions are those requiring complex application e.g. application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills. All these questions can be of objective, short answer or essay types depending on the expected length of answers.

Questions can also be of convergent and divergent types. Convergent questions have only one correct answer, and test knowledge of concrete facts. Divergent questions have no single correct answer and are more analytical in nature. These questions test the students' ability to synthesize information based on their knowledge and experience. These types of questions are always open-ended, allowing the students to express themselves as they demonstrate their ability to reason in the subject. A sound knowledge about different types of questions and skills in developing various types of questions can enhance their teaching. Thus training of teachers play a detrimental role in achieving this mastery.

### CONCLUSION

The importance of questioning in teaching is well documented in the preceding paragraphs. Questioning is a key element present in all methods and techniques of teaching and a wide variety of questions are available for practice. Hence the efficacy of these methods and techniques in teaching the deaf is mainly dependent upon the skills in questioning. Right exposure to different kinds of questions and intensive training on questioning skills will surely enable the trainees to improve the educational standards of deaf.

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