



## IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL TEACHING SKILLS

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### **Abstract**

*Educationists all over the world have started realizing that only securing enough teachers will not do but more important is securing teachers with right type of knowledge, skills and attitude. A teacher may have abundant knowledge but the right way of conveying units of knowledge to the students can make him competent teacher. For this he needs to expertise over the teaching skills. Teaching has its repertoire of skills. Over the years efforts are being made to identify the essential teaching skills which a competent and effective teacher should have. There are many sources of information for identifying these skills. All those concerned with initial and in-service teacher training, those concerned to monitor the standard and quality of teaching, those involved in schemes of teacher appraisal, those involved in research have produced a massive literature about classroom teaching skills. This paper highlights the different areas of teaching skills identified with the help of these sources of information.*

**Keywords:** Identification, Teaching Skills, teachers



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### **Introduction**

Teaching is an art which is complex in learning. Explaining the complexity of learning how to teach, Brown (1975) has given analogies of learning to fly a jumbo jet and to transplant heart which require a large number of skills. Teaching also has its repertoire of skills. So, a large number of skills are required to perform the ultimate task of teaching. Teaching skills have been defined differently by different scholars. According to Gage (1968), "teaching skills are specific instructional activities and procedures that a teacher may use in his classroom. These are related to various stages of

teaching or to continuous flow of teacher's performance." The Asian Institute For Teacher Educators (1972) defined teacher skills as those activities of teaching that are especially effective in bringing about desired changes in pupils and are related to continuous flow of teacher's performance. Passi (1968) says that a set of teaching acts or behaviours performed with an intention to facilitate pupil's learning can be called teaching skills. Similarly Wragg (2005) sees teaching skills as strategies that teachers use to facilitate pupil's learning. Kyriacou (2007) also defines teaching skills as discrete and coherent activities by teachers which foster pupil learning. All the above views specify that a group of verbal and non-verbal acts and behaviours intended to facilitate and support pupils' learning directly or indirectly are teaching skills. So teaching skills are related to the way in which the teacher has carried out the activities and what results have been achieved as to improve students' learning.

### **Features of teaching skills**

1. The important elements of teaching skills are knowledge, decision making and action (Kyriacou, 2007) in the same manner as those of playing skills, e.g. playing tennis involves player's knowledge about the game, his decision making and the actions he takes while playing.
2. They are purposeful and goal-directed activities which are essentially problem solving i.e. concerned with all short-term and long-term problems of effective teaching.
3. Teaching skills are interactive in nature as these skills cannot be displayed in isolation from their interaction with pupils' behaviour. Teachers need to modify and adapt their actions continuously in the light of taking account of changing circumstances as a driver does while driving.
4. Their level of expertise is evidenced by the display of precision, smoothness and sensitivity to context.
5. Teaching skills can be learnt and improved by training and practice.

### **Various approaches to identify essential teaching skills**

Teaching skills vary from very broad and general skills such as planning of lessons to very specific skills, such as the appropriate length of time to wait for pupil to answer a question in a particular situation. So, it is somehow difficult to identify a list of teaching

skills. Over the years there has been a wealth of writing about and use of lists of teaching skills, both by those involved in teacher education and by educational researchers.

Passi(1968) gave four approaches for identifying teaching skills : first, by observing teachers' class room behaviours; second, by analyzing teaching tasks through interviews and discussions with teachers; third, by analyzing school curriculum and objectives and thinking what teaching acts would help in achieving them and the fourth approach he said would be by developing a model of good teaching based on opinions of teachers, pupils, headmasters etc. Following one or other approach attempts have however been made to identify essential teaching skills.

Allen and Ryan (1969) of Stanford University gave a list of fourteen teaching skills which include stimulus variation, set induction, closure, teacher's nonverbal cues, reinforcements, fluency in questioning, probing questions, higher order questioning, divergent questioning (four skills related to questioning), attending behavior, use of illustrations, lecturing, planned repetition and communication. Adding some more skills like establishing frames of reference, providing feedback, pre cueing etc. to this model of 14 skills Far West Laboratory at California (1970) gave a list of 18 teaching skills.

The Asian Institute for Teacher Educators (1972) pointed out 13 broad areas of teaching skills in relation to 5 areas of educational objectives. The social, mental, emotional, psychomotor and health and aesthetic development of pupils are these five areas of educational objectives.

Lalita (1975) at the Centre of Advanced Study of Education (CASE), Baroda, on the basis of interviews with headmasters of high schools prepared a list of pre-instructional, instructional and post-instructional skills. Based mostly on the lists of teaching skills developed at the Stanford University, the Far West Lab and CASE, Passi and Lalita (1975) conceptualised 21 skills which are essential for teaching competence. They developed Baroda General teaching Competence Scale in which these skills have been classified under heads: Planning (pre-instructional), presentation, closing, evaluation and managerial skills. Hay McBer (2000) also identified a list of teaching skills which includes high expectations, planning methods and strategies, pupil management, assessment and homework. A mass of material on the skills displayed by teachers considered to be effective is found in the writings and research work done on the notion

of the effective teacher (Compbell et al. 2004; Kerry and Wilding, 2004; kyriacou, 1997; Muijs and Reynolds, 2005). Teachers judged to be effective appear to display such skills in their teachings as establishing an orderly and attractive learning environment, concentrating on teaching and learning, well organized and well-structured lessons coupled with clarity of purpose, conveying high expectations and providing intellectual challenge, monitoring progress and providing intellectual feedback and establishing clear and fair discipline.

One of the sources of information about teaching skills is found in the material dealing with the appraisal and performance review of established teachers (Jones et al. 2006; Middlewood and Cardrio, 2001). These include the data from lesson observation schedules and rating scales used to identify the extent to which teaching skills were displayed in the lessons observed. These writings and schedules typically focus on areas such as: preparation and planning, classroom organization and management, communication skills, setting of work for pupils, assessment of pupils' work and record keeping, knowledge of relevant subject matter and relationships with pupils. Thomas and Pring (2004) and Petty (2006) are of the view that a set of literature on teaching skills comes from the attempts to provide an evidence base to inform developments in policy and practice in education, it includes both original research studies and systematic reviews. Such literature is an evidence base to assess the impact of different types of teaching approaches and strategies on pupils' learning. In USA, Stronge (2002) in an analysis identified five sets of key teaching skills: the teacher as a person, teacher as a classroom manager and organizer, organizing for instruction, implementing instruction and the teacher teaching-monitoring pupil progress and potential. Another analysis by Marzano (2003) identified three sets of key skills: instructional strategies, classroom management and classroom curriculum design.

Another source of information is the departments of education and skills which are increasingly involved in drawing attention to the key teaching skills. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in UK in its consideration of teaching in secondary schools produced a training pack dealing with teaching skills in four areas: designing lessons, teaching repertoire, creating effective learners and creating conditions for learning. Packs such as these are available on DfES website([www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)). Similarly, Diploma in

Teaching Skills for Educators, Allison trains teachers for variety of skills and the most important are the ability to communicate effectively with students, motivate them to learn and implement successful instructional planning within the class. Nazir(2011) in a Training Course on Microteaching, expressed that total 103 teaching skills have been identified necessary for an effective teaching. Out of these 103 skills, 20 skills have been tested by Stanford University. Teachers were trained for 10 out the 20 skills during this training course. Published reports on standards in education, handbooks and other support materials dealing with the quality of teaching observed during the inspections of the schools are another source of information for pin pointing worthwhile teaching skills.

Writings and materials concerned with the teaching skills that student teachers are expected to develop during their initial teacher training is also an important source of information related to teaching skills (Stephens and Crawley, 1994). These include a variety of profiling documents to record students' progress in developing teaching skills over the course of training. Some government agencies also specify the list of skills to be developed. For example, Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), 2007 published a list of professional standards that primary and secondary school student-teachers in England and Wales need to acquire in order to be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from September 2007. Professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding and professional skills are the three areas of the QTS standards. These standards are modified from time to time.

Kyriacou(2007) identified and developed seven sets of essential teaching skills involved in contributing to successful classroom practice. They are described as under:

1. Planning and preparation: the skills involved in selecting the educational aims and learning outcomes intended for a lesson and how best to achieve these.
2. Lesson presentations: the skills involved in successfully engaging pupils in the learning experience particularly in relation to the quality of instruction.
3. Lesson management: the skills involved in managing and organizing the learning activities taking place during the lesson to maintain pupils' attraction, interest and involvement.
4. Classroom climate: the skills involved in establishing and maintaining positive attitude and motivation by pupils towards the lesson.

5. Discipline: the skills involved in maintaining good order and dealing with any pupil misbehavior that occurs.
6. Assessing pupils' progress: the skills involved in assessing pupils' progress, covering both formative and summative purposes of assessment.
7. Reflection and evaluation: the skills involved in evaluative one's own current teaching practice in order to improve future practice.

Kyriacou has also developed a table showing a detailed list of essential teaching skills required for the above mentioned seven areas.

The role of the teacher in the twenty first century is shifting and as a result teachers need different skills to be competent and successful. Global technological developments demand that every educator should have top 20 technology skills (Turner, 2005). These are the skills relating to Word processing, Spread sheet, Database, Electronic presentation, Web navigation, Website design, E-mail management, Digital cameras, Computer network knowledge applicable to school system, File management and Windows Explorer, Downloading from web, Installing computer software, Web CT or blackboard teaching, Video conferencing, Computer related storage devices, Scanner knowledge, Knowledge of PDAs, Deep web knowledge, Educational copyright knowledge and Computer security knowledge.

Horn and Staker (2012) also outlined five skills which necessarily be important for many teachers in future in a teaching environment of schools adopting Blended Learning Models in which students are engaged in different activities and working on different concepts and skills and teacher as a facilitator works in small groups or one-on-one with students. As result teachers need different skills to be successful. The required teaching skills for this model are: comfort with chaos, student learning data analysis and decision making, targeted learning opportunities to support students engaged in different activities, specialization due to differentiated roles of teachers and the technological prowess for online teaching.

Many effective areas of teaching skills have been developed so far .There is but an interplay between the different areas of teaching skills discussed above as the skills exercised in one area may simultaneously contribute to another area. To integrate suitably the repertoire of these skills is another competence of a teacher. There are many teachers

who after years of their experience still have evident shortcomings in some skills. It is so because the degree of skilled performance depends upon skill involve knowledge, decision making and action. All these three elements are subject to the various general abilities of teachers. The teacher may simply not have built up the knowledge about the effective use of skills or have difficulty in making the appropriate decisions which use that knowledge or have difficulty in carrying out the actions required in a skilled manner. The relevant general abilities of a teachers involved may not simply be intellectual ones, since much skilled performance depends on the aspects of teacher's personality or even acting personality. Developing teaching skills also depends on teacher's motivation. Teacher vary immensely in the extent to which they are prepared to invest time ,energy and effort to reflect upon, evaluate and improve their teaching skills. Microteaching or other skill- training courses may train the teachers for these skills but expertise learning of these skills could be possible in real situations only.

**Conclusion:** A consideration of the areas of teaching skills identified on the basis of various sources of information indicates that fairly worthwhile teaching skills can be identified. As the nature and modes of teaching in the global world are changing very fast so definitely agreed list of teaching skills is difficult to be developed. Overall, in considering teaching skills, it seems to be most useful to focus on fairly broad and general skills which are meaningful to teachers and relate to how they think about their teaching. More specific skills can then be discussed as and when they help, illustrate and illuminate how these general skills operate (Kyriacou). It is important to note that developing sound teaching skills is a process that is always in operation throughout the teaching career of a teacher. For most effective teaching it is crucial that the teaching skills are never allowed to rest for too long because the world that teachers are preparing young people to enter is changing fast and the teaching skills required for competent and effective teachers are evolving likewise.

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