

Discussion Method

As per the modern educational doctrines, making students active in the class is vital for making learning simple, easy and comprehensible. Students should not remain passive listeners in the class. This principle has been applied in the socialized recitation method and other practical methods. Even discussion during class teaching is a part of educational process. Therefore, now discussion or conversation in the class is considered to be an inevitable and democratic element of teaching. Discussing the topic is not a waste of time, rather it makes the subject substantial and understandable. Due preparation has to be made for discussion, the content has to be selected and organised, it has to be thought about, some new things will have to be thought about, some ideas will have to be explained, and

finally, some conclusion will have to be arrived at. Thus, conclusion in a planned discussion is very important. Therefore, the class should apply different types of discussions.

Before analyzing the discussion method, it is necessary to explain its meaning and form. In common parlance, by discussion is meant the exchange of views logically and widely. Generally, important views, problems etc. are taken up in a discussion. A discussion is not collection of meaningless facts. It is polite, logical and knowledgeable discussion or conversation, and not questions-answers.

In the words of **Clark and Starr** : *"A discussion is not a place for one person to treat his ego by dominating the conversation, nor is it a place for one person to sell his own point of view. Discussion is not another name for lecture or recitation."*

Scientific discussion is that conversation in which all participants take part on an equal basis, though it is necessary for them all to speak in it. In the same way, a discussion is not a display of ego by certain people, nor is it to impose one's views on another. In fact, a discussion is neither lecture, nor social expression. It is different from all these.

In the words of **Yoakam and Simpson** : *"Discussion is a special form of conversation. It is an exchange of ideas of a more reasoned detailed kind, than that found in ordinary conversation and generally involves the conversation of important ideas and issues."*

Preparation for Discussion

Making an effort to undertake some activity without due planning or preparation can lead to failure. For attaining success in any project, it is necessary to make a plan. Preparation is necessary so that no unnecessary impediments are faced in its execution. In the same way, making planning and preparation for discussion leads to success. Therefore, a teacher should arrange for all necessary elements or things in advance together with due planning.

Before discussion is commenced, a teacher should make the class environment adequate for free flow of ideas. The more pleasant a discussion is, the better will be the outcome. Special arrangement should be made for students. The most suitable arrangement would be the one in which students are able to see one another. For it, crescent position can be made. A teacher should occupy a place from where he can keep an eye on everybody.

It is necessary for beginning a discussion that the topic is made clear to student. A teacher can present the topic through an introductory lecture.

A problem should be formulated in connection with a certain activity. If a problem is related with some activity, students will take more interest in it.

As it is necessary for a teacher to prepare for a discussion, it is also necessary for students to prepare for it. If students have not studied a problem in advance, they will not be able to take part in it well. Therefore, a problem should be assigned to student well in advance, so that they can prepare for it. How students should prepare for a discussion, in this regard, **Wesley and Wronski** have recommended the following suggestions :

1. Keep the topic and problem in mind at all times.
2. Gather the most suitable data from every resource.

3. Read monthly journals and pamphlets.
4. Study newspapers.
5. Read the important parts of the lesson.
6. Read meaningfully, leave alone meaningless facts.
7. Read critically.
8. Read objectively.
9. Distinguish between facts and views.
10. Read patiently in order to understand an author's views.
11. Expand your data of information.
12. Infer and generalize.
13. Draw inferences at the end.
14. Explain the main points logically.
15. Prepare carefully.

Organisation of Discussion

A discussion can be initiated by a teacher or a student. It can be started with some story, problem, picture, object or event etc. How a discussion should be begun, depends on its objectives. After a discussion has been begun, it is necessary to deliver it to its logical conclusion in order to realize its goals. Therefore, the discussion should be managed ably. It should be managed such that all participant students get opportunity to express themselves freely and adequately. A teacher should always keep the objectives of the discussion in view at all times. He can take the help of suitable questions in order to carry the discussion towards its goal. Also, certain facts can be analysed or explained, some points can be discussed in greater detail, and in the end, inference can be drawn from the whole exercise. Thus, a discussion comprises of the following four points :

1. Orientation.
2. Analysis.
3. Elaboration.
4. Summary.

As far as the system of discussion is concerned, the whole class can be involved in it, or it can be divided into groups for this purpose. If it is divided into groups, then there should not be more than four-five students in each group or panel. Each of these groups or panels will discuss and arrive at a conclusion, and then present its report to the whole class. When different groups have presented their reports, the final discussion will take place on the report as a whole.

Evaluation

The chief objective of a discussion is to bring about desirable change in students. If a discussion does not lead to a conclusion or behavioural change, it would be as good as meaningless. If it results in change, it would be necessary to find out how much change it has caused. Desirable change can be evaluated by student or teachers. For this purpose, the questionnaire or interview can be used, and thus find out how much change has occurred in which field. For example, how

much knowledge has expanded, how much intellectual development has taken place, how much intellectual ability has expanded, what change has occurred in aptitudes and interests, and what change has occurred in values etc.

After evaluation of desirable change, we can evaluate the discussion too to find out how successful and fruitful it was and how can be it be improved upon further. A discussion can be criticized on the following bases :

1. How far has a discussion succeeded to achieve its objectives?
2. What difficulties and shortcomings were faced in the discussion, and what were the causes behind them?
3. What was the extent of each student's participation in it?
4. Did some students dominate the discussion?

Merits of Method

The following merits are found in the discussion method :

1. It is based on the principle of individual differences.
2. It lays stress on independent study.
3. It cultivates logical ability in students.
4. It is based on the principle of activity.
5. It cultivates the habit of self-study.
6. It teaches to study in a purposeful way.
7. It teaches to select and organize data relating to a topic.
8. It cultivates the sense of cooperative competition.

Demerits of Method

This method has certain shortcomings too, as follows :

1. Time can be wasted in meaningless discussion.
2. The entire range of content cannot be taught using this method.
3. All teachers cannot run a discussion well.
4. This is a time-consuming method.
5. Some students dominate the discussion and don't allow other students to speak.
6. Students do not derive optimum benefit from it.

Some Suggestions

1. The problem or topic for a discussion should be properly constructed.
2. A discussion should be prepared for and initiated well.
3. A discussion should be held as per rules.
4. Evaluation should be done without any bias.
5. Meaningless and irrelevant discussion should be checked cleverly.
5. All students should be given an equal opportunity to speak.