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NES-103: Guiding Children's Learning
Guess Paper-1

Q1. Give a background about the elementary school.
Ans.

The Background

Saraswatinagar is a small city in the Jnanaganga district. This small city has witnessed a rapid growth due to the government decision to finance and set up electronic industries in the area under the Electronic Industries Development Board. As a result, the city dwellers are a mixed population of socio-economic groups ranging from the poor daily wage earners to the well-to-do industrialists.

Chandrakant	:	Aged about 35 years is a physical education teacher. He is also teaches the regional language. He is well known for his social work related activities. He has a strange combination of humour and discipline.
Suresh	:	Aged about 28, has joined the school only two years ago. As a mathematics teacher, he has always been logical in thought and work.
Nazeer Ahmed	:	Aged about 30, is a localite. Befitting his job as the teacher of environmental studies, he occasionally conducts nature study camps for the benefit of the students of Janata Vidyalaya.
Vibha	:	Aged about 38 years is the drawing teacher of the school, she also is a localite and is given the additional charge of organising activities of the Parent Teacher Association of the school. As a result, she is quite well versed with a large number of parents.

Janata Vidyalaya is one among the eighteen elementary schools in the city. The school has classes from Kindergarten to Standard VII. The academic staff of the school consists of the Head Master, the Assistant Head Master and a total of fourteen teachers.

It is due to the professional approach of the teachers under the dedicated leadership of the Head Master that the school has made a name in the city as ' the best school' Instead of pursuing a selective approach to admission of students, the school has been admitting students on a random basis. Thus, the student population of this school provides a true representation of the diverse socio-economic conditions prevalent in Saraswatinagar.

One day after the classes had begun, the following four teachers who were free, were present in the staff room:

Q2. Give a classification of factors that influence learning
Ans.

Any one of several internal, external or unknown factors can influence learning. In this section, a classification of the factors influencing learning has been made under the broad headings physiological, psychological, socio-emotional and educational factors.

Physiological Factors

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Among the organic factors considered to cause learning problems are genetics, brain injury. biochemical imbalances, intake of toxic substances like lead, oxygen deprivation, infectious diseases, drug intoxication, malnutrition and cogenital defects. While considering these as factors influencing learning, it may be mentioned that attempts to correlate specific physiological factors with learning problems are not successful.

Ability to see printed words is obviously a prerequisite to reading, especially when the children are taught by 'look-and-say' method. Auditory defects influence learning more seriously when the phonetic method is used. Even a small degree of farsightedness or aniseikonia (a difference in size or shape between the images formed by the two eyes) may cause discomfort and increased difficulty in reading. Such a child, if not attended to, may withdraw from the learning situation.

Another important factor that affects learning is maturation. Unless the body is physiologically mature and ready, academic learning cannot take place. To quote a simple example, a newborn can't be expected to take in the details of an object for his vision is unfocussed. Further, physiological maturation is one of the major factors affecting memory span of a human being. The ability to remember thing of course a pre-requisite to any learning.

Psychological Factors

Several psychological factors such as intelligence, personality, attitude, interest, and aptitude have considerable influence on the learning of a child. Apart from these, motivation, self-concept, readiness is a necessity, often learns to read with little instruction. Whereas, seriously retarded readers tend to be aggressive or to withdraw, to feel insecure and apprehensive. A child's learning is influenced by his/her concept of himself/ herself. If he/she puts no value on himself/ herself or thinks of himself/ herself as a failure, he/she is generally not interested in learning. Ability to pay attention is also basic to learning. Children learn the habit of sustained attention by persisting at things that interest them. A child's attention cannot be demanded. It is said to be a by-product of interest and maturity.

Socio-emotional Factors

The family the child belongs to has a considerable influence on the learning. Family factors such as child-rearing practices, reward and punishment, scope for freedom and independence in activities, play and study facilities, ambitiousness of the parents, disorganization and discord among members, degree of maturity expected of the boy or the girl child, birth position such as eldest, youngest or single child have their definite influence on learning.

Regardless of basic motivation, the anxiety aroused by disturbed family background shows itself in thinking difficulties, viz, day dreaming, inattentiveness and difficulty in concentration.

Working mothers who also experience marital discord are not only physically absent from their children, they are also emotionally absent. Learner from such a home is usually found self absorbed and inattentive.

Parental ambition, especially that of the mother, of acquiring status and upward mobility brings with it's a resistance on the part of the child to learn. Children in such families if unable to cope with the pressure for excellence, may show a passive resistance and may be excessively slow about things at home.

A subtle but powerful influence on the growing child arises from his/her position among the children in the family. The parents of the first-born expect the child to act like miniature adults and hence the first-born are found to encounter a variety of

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expectation and stress. Whereas, parents tend to be more relaxed in their "dos" and "don'ts" with the last-born. Factors like traumatic events at home, separation or death can also precipitate learning problems in an otherwise normal child.

A child who comes from a very poor family and never had any intellectual stimulation at home remains dull and unresponsive in the class. In some cultures, there is a strong sex role bias. Girls are directly or indirectly told that education is not meant for them. In a similar way, some caste groups in our country have hidden messages like 'education is not meant for us' or 'our children cannot study'. This apathy to education may pose problems for the child in learning. The middle class depends for its survival on jobs, they value education highly, and frequently give their children a valued concept of education. The motivation to study is more for the child.

Educational Factors

Learning problems may occur because of inadequate or inappropriate teaching. The child may have difficulty in learning because the teacher does not provide adequate or appropriate instruction. Aspects such as repetition and their frequency, continuity and rest in learning, complexity and meaningfulness of the material being learnt also influence learning. If the teacher is a poor communicator or uses monotonous and uninteresting methods, the children are put at a disadvantage.

Overcrowding classrooms is another contributing factor. In some big cities, houses are converted into English medium schools. In small rooms, sixty to seventy children are made to sit and are unable to benefit from a highly verbal instruction. In rural areas, the problem is one of the adequate facilities such as classrooms, blackboards, and sometimes even teachers. Bilingualism and multi-lingualism is also a factor influencing learning.

Environmental Factors

The condition of the setting where the learning process takes place, can also enhance or interfere in intake of information. If the rooms are not well ventilated, the lighting poor, the space cramped , the environment excessively noisy or surroundings polluted (e.g., due to smoke from a nearby factory), then there will be interference in the childs learning, for the body will be more concerned with protecting itself then procuring more knowledge.

Apart from these general factors, there are certain other elements of the learning task that determine how soon and for how long a task is learnt. These may be termed as the **Laws of Learning.**

Q3. What is the nature of learning

Ans.

Let us consider the following day-to-day examples of learning:

1. Sunita was a student of grade four. She experienced considerable difficulty with a series of homework assignments in mathematics, particularly in subtraction. She was not able to solve two and three-digit subtraction problems correctly. One day, after her typical half an hour tantrum about "these stupid problems", her father explained that subtraction is nothing more than reversed addition. Something must have clicked in Sunita's head, because her father has not been subjected to any more tantrums about substraction.
2. A three-year-old boy is overly affectionate with a neighbourhood dog, and the dog responds by bitting the boy's hand. After that, the boy cries and runs to his mother whenever he sees the dog.

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3. The mother of a nine-year-old boy, Sohan, insists that her son should bring milk daily from the milk booth. In turn, mother gives him some money. The money, when saved for two or three weeks, enables the boy to purchase things of his own choice. As a result, he develops an appreciation for the value of money.

On the basis of above example, can you describe the nature of learning? One thing is clear that learning refers to the change in behaviour. There was an observable change in Sunita's behaviour as she did not disturb her parents for solving subtraction problems afterwards. It is also clear from the above examples that the change in behaviour due to learning is relatively permanent. That is, the change in behaviour is neither for the time-being (shorter duration) nor it is necessary that it will be forever. The change will last for some period of time. It is also possible that the change in behaviour may not be reflected immediately after learning.

In the third example, the mother wanted to inculcate some household responsibilities in the child. For this, she rewarded each time the milk bringing behaviour of the child. It means that change in behaviour is due to practice. Furthermore, in order to bring the desired change in behaviour it is essential that reinforcement is given each time the child exhibits the desired change in behaviour.

In behavioural terms, **learning can be described as establishing association between stimulus and response**. For example, the teacher shows the picture of an apple to the child and asks what is this? The child does not know the answer.

The teacher says... ... This is an apple. After the repeated presentation of the picture (the stimulus) and word 'apple' (response), the child learns to associate picture with the word. Each time the child is able to associate picture with the words, the teacher gives him reinforcement, such as, praise, toffee, etc.

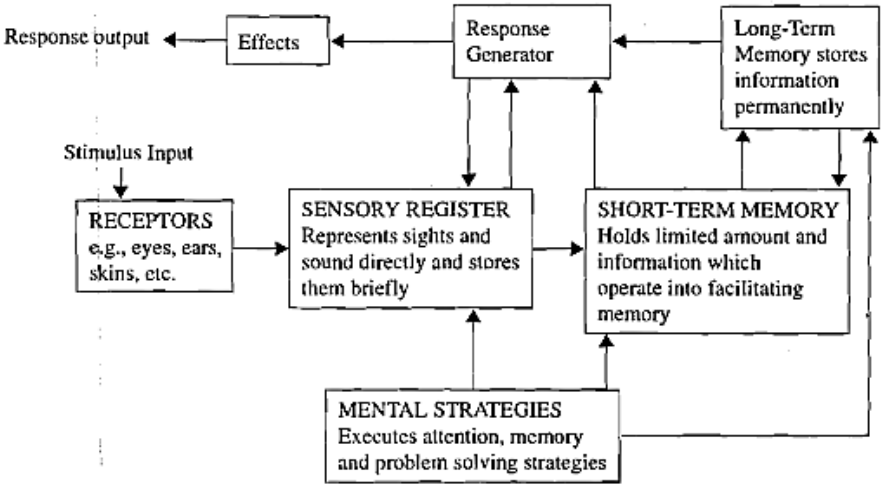
Q4. Explain what do you understand by the term cognitive view of learning with the help of a diagram

Ans.

[redacted] the major differences between behaviouristic and cognitive views of learning. While behaviourists give more emphasis on environmental conditions and over behaviours in learning, cognitive psychologists look more at how individuals process the stimuli they encounter — that is, how individuals perceive, interpret and mentally store the information they receive from the environment. Thus, the focus of cognitive theorists is the individual's active effort and input that is a more important factor in learning as compared to the environment stimuli, which however are also important.

One major thinker in cognitive psychology has been Jean Piaget who proposed learning to be the result of exploration and insight of the individual. Another theorist, Vygotsky, however, viewed learning as a product of interaction between the child and the other, in the process of problem solving.

A more recent development has been the information processing perspective which views the human mind and its learning process to be operating like a computer. This can be better understood with the help of following diagram:



From the environment, the learner receives stimulation which activates his/her receptors and is transformed to neural information. When the teacher writes on the blackboard (stimuli in the environment), it is received by the **sensory receptors** (eye) and the message is sent to the brain through nerve cells. Initially, this information enters a structure (or structures) called the **sensory register**, where it persists for a very brief interval. It has been found that attention of human beings is very selective, that is, we do not attend (register) all the informations impinging upon our sensory receptors, rather we attend to those information which are satisfying our needs. It is estimated that only 1/70th information enters into short-term memory. Other information die out.

The information in the short-term memory persist for a limited period, generally thought to be up to twenty seconds. The capacity of short-term memory is also limited. You can retain only few items at a time in this storage. An interesting property of short-term memory is its ability to carry out silent, mental repetition of the information, a process called **rehersal**. Rehersal extends the capacity of the short-term memory to store items for longer intervals.

From the standpoint of learning, the most critical transformation occurs when it leaves short-term memory and enters the long-term memory. This process is called **encoding**. At this juncture, the individual tries to relate the new information to his/ her already existing knowledge reservoir. A clerk after receiving a letter tries to put it in the relevant file. Whenever the teacher explains few addition problems in the class, the child attempts to relate it to his/ her already existing knowledge about number.

Note: Decay and intelligence account for major losses of information from short term memory (STM). In long term memory (LTM), the items and importance and rehearsal affect the retention and recall.

The encoded information is stored in the memory for a considerable time period. What is stored in memory may become inaccessible due to various reasons, for example, the information may decay due to time, interference between newer and older memories, etc. For example, a child learns mathematics and then learns English. The new information would interfere on the previous information, if the memory traces of the earlier information have not been consolidated properly. Further, the item's importance and rehearsal also affect the retention and recall. In order to be verified as learned, entities must be retrieved from long-term memory. This involves recall of what has been learned (decoding).

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