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# SIX THINKING HATS: AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING CREATIVE THINKING

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**Abstract**

**To provide opportunities to students to move beyond passive recipients of knowledge to knowledge builders, there is need to shift to new instructional strategy. Conventional methods of teaching aim at imparting dead material to the students without offering them opportunity to sharpen their minds. The power of reasoning, thinking, scientific attitude, understanding and retention are not developed among the students which is the need of digital age. Knowledge gained is useful only if it enhances reactive thinking so that the individuals can solve daily life problems. And one such instructional technique is the Six Thinking Hats technique that helps in the development of creative thinking and problem solving skills. This allow the students to look at a problem from a number of aspects. This technique not only helps the students to think but provides important outputs in ensuring discipline, acquiring desired learning outcomes and behaviors. It helps students to react in difficult situations**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario, the aim of education is to develop the students holistically. And the most important factor in achieving this goal is teaching personnel (teacher) who is considered as an architect. It is the teacher who shapes the destiny of future generation and plays a crucial role in the upliftment of society by inculcating values among the learners. Teacher functions as a guide and facilitator for acquisition of knowledge with the great challenge and responsibility of engaging students in teaching-learning process so that the knowledge, skills and competencies can be developed. It is the need of the digital age to provide opportunities to students to move beyond passive recipients of knowledge to knowledge builders. But the traditional instructional methods cannot keep pace with the changing needs of the society as these methods are effective only in transferring simple knowledge and may not be effective in constructing ideas, knowledge and inculcation of values and skills needed for the 21st century. In a teacher dominated classroom setting, teacher uses words and at the most charts and models and students learn by merely memorizing facts. These methods do not has the potential to develop high order skills like problem solving, decision making, independent thinking, reflective thinking and creative thinking among the students. Thus, there is need of some pedagogical approaches that can transform teacher-centered educational practice to student- centered which will allow the students to explore new areas of learning and thinking by using their senses. If students are to learn critical thinking skills, they must be explicitly taught these skills (Pohl, 1997).

Thinking skills play very crucial role in all fields. These skills include focusing skills, information gathering skills, remembering skills, organizing skills, analyzing skills, generating skills, integrating skills and evaluating skills. In view of Presseisen, 1986, basic premise in the current thinking skill movement is the notion that students CAN learn to think better if schools concentrate on teaching them HOW to do SO. Thinking skills are most effectively taught if they are taught directly and deliberately (De Bono, 1992). These skills help in finding the information needed by the students to solve their real life problems and develop fundamental methods of understanding about that information. As these skills form the foundation for teaching-learning process so to enable the students to solve dilemmas they may face in life, there is need to impart the teaching of thinking.

The inclusion of critical, pivotal and creative thinking processes into lessons will make the students knowledgeable and enable them to think. Creative thinking refers to generation of ideas, processes, experiences or objects. Creative thinking as a mental process is used to gain access to new ideas and visions, or which lead to a merger between the previous ideas and organized by the mind in a creative way enables access to all the new understanding or new production (Timmering, 2009). According to Cotton (1992), creative thinking is an innovative way of perceiving information as categorized by four components: fluency (creating multiple thoughts), flexibility (changing views quickly), speculating about new ideas, and elaboration of thoughts. In view of Edward de Bono (1992), creative thinking is not a talent; it is a skill that can be learnt. He has three diverse concepts of creativity- creativity means "bringing into being something that was not there before, The new thing must have, "value" and to these, he adds a third element namely that it must include the concepts of "unexpectedness and change and creativity, involved in generating idea, is a thinking skill that can be taught through the methods of lateral thinking.

As creative thinking is very important in new millennium so teachers should provide rich and varied contents to pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge and skills. Developing thinking skills has manifold benefits. By developing thinking skills, students can achieve better (Freseman, 1990), have ability to reason, enquire and evaluate (Costello, 2000) and develop independent learning skills (Adey, Robertson and Venville, 2001). Even the study of Zhang 2007 emphasized for cultivating creative intellectual styles among school students However, in some subjects there is no space for creativity. Students find curriculum as irrelevant, heavy, dull and without any correlation with the real life. So teachers should provide opportunities to students in which they may explore the moral and ethical implications of scientific and technological advancements. Direct teaching of thinking skills can produce better and more creative thinkers. (Ristow, 1988). Many researchers have recommended that teachers should use all aspects of thinking models in the educational setting so that creative thinking can be developed. One of these thinking model is the 'Six Thinking Hats (STH)' model, which was developed in 1985 by Edward de Bono.

## SIX THINKING HATS' MODEL

According to Edward, the most important factor that interferes with our thinking is complexity i.e. during thinking we do several things at the same time like feeling, getting information,

finding reason, dreaming etc. Thus, these processes combined, get mixed together and become inseparable when we are thinking. Edward compared this situation to throwing several balls in the air and trying to catch them. Edward recommends the six thinking hats model (also known as de Bono Hats system or Six Hats or Six Thinking Hats) to avoid this complexity while thinking. This model focuses an individual to think in a particular direction for a particular period of time. This model is not only a thinking tool for individual but it is also a mean for group discussion and group thinking. The Six Thinking Hats (STH) is a powerful technique that emphasizes on divergent thinking and allows the individual to look at problem from a different aspects beyond the normal thinking style. The Six Thinking Hats allows the individual to handle a specific issue from the six different points by directing attention in order from one point to another (De Bono, 2002; Erginer, 2000). This technique may require the person to think positive or negative, become creative or give an emotional reaction (Erginer, 2000).

Sarsani (2005) defines STH as six modes of thinking and are directions to think rather than labels for thinking.

In view of Edward, STH is a teaching technique that includes six coloured hats that represent a different point of view of thinking leading to the development of creativity. Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats are real or metaphorical six different coloured hats, in which each colour represents a different type of thinking and a large number of ways of thinking. The six coloured hats correspond to different thinking styles or behaviours (Bilton & Cummings, 2010). Each colour is printed separately, but in the end, they all come together. The hats serve as tools to help to focus thinking and examine people view points. The hats refer to physical symbols that elicit the students to play specific roles that will enable their thinking to break out of usual patterns. Putting on a hat is a deliberate process, because each hat activates a particular type of thinking (Jensen & Nickelsen, 2008). It is scientifically proven that perceiving various colors at the same time affects one's emotions through the hypothalamus. The selected color shows the characteristics of individuals and their unconscious desires and provides information about their life conditions (Sun, 1994). The technique is easy and enjoyable to apply, it is quickly adopted by people (Can, 2005, p. 43). Students do not always have to use all the hats, and they do not have to do them in any particular order (Rebecca, 2009).

Studies of Can and Semerci (2007), Saadi (2009), Altikulac and Akhan (2010), Kaya (2013), AL-Khataybeh and AL-Tarawneh (2015) and Eldeen and Maher (2016) indicated that six hats strategy is in favour of student achievement leading to higher increase in success, students show expressive performance and skills beyond knowledge, enhances creativity among students and a more positive impact in sustainable development of children compared to other techniques in the teaching program. The STH technique is a good way for fostering creativity to several forms of mind (Moon, Hoffman and Canas, 2011). De Bono asserted that only creative thinking skills should be taught in schools. This technique is also helpful in promoting quality of rational thinking and communication for students, teachers and educational leaders. It promotes creative thinking, collaborative thinking, sharpens focus, facilitates communication, reduces conflict, enables thorough evaluations, improves exploration, fosters creativity and innovation, saves time, and boosts productivity (Serrat, 2009).

**SIX THINKING HATS (STH):** The different hats are:

1. **The White Hat:** It contains facts, information and figures. The aim of this hat is to gather known and missing information and encourages the learner to differentiate between fact and interpretation. The key white hat questions are: What information do I know? What information is missing? What information do I require? and How can I get the information?
2. **The Red Hat:** This hat examines the given problem through emotions, feelings and intuitions without any explanation. The main key questions for red hat thinking are: What feelings are involved in my thinking? Should my emotions be included or excluded in thinking. If included then to what extent? Am I passionate, terrified, or hesitant about this thinking?
3. **The Black Hat**: It is most valuable hat as it identifies flaws, risks and negative aspects of the given problem. It denotes constructive criticism and investigates why a suggestion does not fit in available information/facts. Teacher must use this hat judiciously as finding faults is an easy task. The key questions of black hat are: What type of flaw this thinking involves? What are the limitations of this thinking process? What difficulties a learner will find in the thinking?
4. **The Yellow Hat**: It denotes optimistic and positive thinking. It works opposite to black hat as it identifies the benefits and qualities of the problem to be solved. It promotes problem solving skills and constructive and productive thinking. The questions asked with this hat are:

What is the best quality of problem/proposal? What are its advantages? How these advantages can be brought into action?

5. **The Green Hat**: This hat aims at exploring new possibilities for overcoming the risks involved in thinking. It denotes creative thinking. What are different ways of solving this problem? How these ideas are different from the ideas you have? What is the effect of these ideas when you put into action?

6. **The Blue Hat**: It focuses is the control hat as it controls the thinking process. It is responsible for metacognition (thinking about the thinking) summaries, overviews, and conclusions. The questions of this hat are: What is the result? Which is the best way to define the problem? How can we achieve more?

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SIX THINKING HATS STATEGY

In the age of digitization, nothing is important than learning to think and come up with creative ideas for the unexpected problems. But thinking as a mental process cannot take place in a vacuum. Medium in the form of visual or audio or tactile materials is needed to make different representations for a particular concept. Most of the educational institutions have not realized the importance of teaching higher order thinking skills. Abstract curriculum makes the learner only knowledgeable not creative thinkers. All individuals can be taught how to think creatively regardless of their levels of intelligence. The key to creative thinking is perception. Through the techniques of De Bono Six Thinking Hats, creative thinking can be developed. Once the students have become the creative thinker, they can excel in any field. They acquire creative thinking skills such as such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, finding relationships and summarizing so that they can solve daily life problems. Students become independent thinkers and confident. As hats are in different colour, visual image of the hats help to learn the content in an easy way. They can retain the subject matter for a longer period.

Six thinking hats strategy is not only beneficial to students but teachers and educational leaders also find this strategy valuable. As this strategy make the students to think in different perspectives so the teachers can also organize their views using different ways. Education leaders can analyze the whether the thinking process used by a teacher in teaching-learning process can facilitate the development of creative thinking among students. Educational leaders find the Six

Hats strategy valuable in two ways: A meeting facilitation tool and a teacher observation strategy (Kumari and Kumari, 2014).

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