

## SIX THINKING HATS: AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS IN EDUCATION

---

Dr. Sushila Kumari\*

### ABSTRACT

*Thinking is essentially a cognitive ability and ultimate human resource, which can be improved through practice and attention. Time to time various educational commissions and policies realize the importance of development of thinking among students. The NEP 2020 also lays emphasis on developing of the “creative abilities” and “higher order thinking potentials” among students through education. The main purpose of this paper is to introduce a unique instructional strategy that helps students to enhance the higher order thinking skills like parallel thinking, lateral thinking, creative and critical thinking. Edward De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats strategy is a practical way to carry out various types of thinking skills in an easy, interesting and effective manner by using six colored metaphoric hats. The focal point of this strategy is to direct the thinking process into six separate areas, one at a time, which facilitates and enhanced focused thinking. It allows the thinker to look at problems, decisions, alternatives and opportunities systematically, clearly and objectively. Thus, Six Thinking Hats strategy is widely used in business and management sector as it resolves conflicts and helpful in finding best solutions. It has multi- dimensional values for students, teachers and educational leaders in promoting of quality of thinking, team work and communication. This paper highlights the comprehensive overview of Six Thinking Hats strategy and its benefits in educational perspective.*

**Keywords:** Six Thinking Hats, Thinking Skills, Parallel Thinking.

### Introduction

The main aim of education is to develop the students holistically according to need of the society. A teacher can play a major role to achieve this goal by using appropriate teaching-learning strategy in classroom. In present scenario teacher functions as a guide, observer, coordinator, counselor and facilitator for acquisition of knowledge with the great challenge and responsibility of engaging students in teaching-learning process so that the knowledge, abilities and skills can be developed. In present era it is the dire need to provide opportunities to students to move beyond passive recipients of knowledge-to-knowledge creators. Teacher centered methodology don’t fulfill this criterion. So, in present scenario there is need of such a tool, method or strategy which develops higher order thinking skills among students in an effective and interesting manner like Six Thinking Hats. Six Thinking Hats strategy was developed by Dr. Edward De Bono in the early 1980s. It is a framework for thinking.

In this strategy there are six metaphoric colored hats. It requires students and teachers to extend their way of thinking by wearing a range of different ‘Thinking Hats’ one at a time. It is helpful to obtain deep understanding about the topic with multiple viewpoints by focusing in particular direction. Six Thinking Hats strategy creates such a class environment in which each student involves actively and explores the way of thinking skills in an interesting manner.

### Thinking Skills

Gough (1991) - “Perhaps most importantly in today’s informative age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important to tomorrow’s workers and citizens as the ability to learn and make new sense of new information.”

---

\* Assistant Professor of Teaching of Mathematics, B.S.K. College of Education (For Women), Mandi Dabwali, Sirsa, Haryana, India.

Thinking skills are extremely important for all and in every aspect of life. Majority of educationists have come to believe that the teaching of thinking skills should be a vital goal in education. McGuinness (1999) reports that some key elements are important for the development of thinking skills such as:

- To realize the need of development of thinking skills through curriculum.
- To teach thinking skills through appropriate strategy.
- To develop habits of good and high order thinking among students.
- To study the impact of collaborative learning on the development of thinking skills.
- To construct thinking curricula, thinking classroom and thinking school.

Thinking skills are helpful in effective learning, better understanding, application of acquired knowledge, problem solving and decision making. These improve achievement level of students in any area. They can focus on 'what to know' and 'how to know' by using thinking skills. Thinking skills include information processing, reasoning, enquiry skills, remembering skills, organizing skills, analyzing skills, generating, integrating and evaluating skills. Thus, thinking skills play major roles in each aspect of life. As Beyer (2001) argues that primary cause of poor achievement of students is that most teachers don't teach thinking skills.

So, teaching of thinking skills should be the main aim of a teacher in education so that the child/student can acquire practical knowledge by using reasoning and logic in an innovative way for deep understanding of the concept. It is helpful in all round development of the students. Therefore, as a teacher it is required to use such an instructional strategy which fosters various types of thinking skills among students in educational setup in a deliberate way.

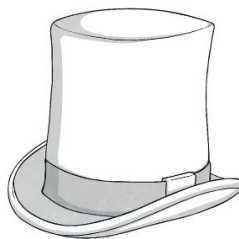
### **Six Thinking Hats**

Six Thinking hats is an internationally recognized technique to teach thinking in all content areas. This tool of Dr. Edward De Bono is widely used throughout the world in various sectors like business, management and education. Six Thinking hats is a simple and practical way of carrying out parallel thinking.

Parallel Thinking means thinking in the same direction at a time. It is defined as a thinking process where focus is split in specific directions. In parallel thinking each thinker puts his or her thoughts in parallel with the thoughts of others and without attacking the thoughts of others. The major benefit of parallel thinking comprises decision making productivity, greater degree of participation, generating innovative ideas and higher quality dialogue or decisions. Parallel Thinking guides thought processes in one direction at a time, so one can effectively analyze issues, produce new ideas, and make better decisions.

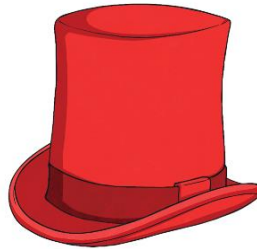
Six Thinking Hats instructional strategy allows students to observe topic from different angles by focusing on one direction at a time. There are six colored hats- white, red, yellow, black, green and blue, and each color indicates particular type of thinking. These are metaphoric hats, which is easy to put on or off. The Six Hats can be used individually or in group. According to Sarsani (2005), the Six Hats represent six modes of thinking and are directions to think rather than labels for thinking. De Bono (2009) states that the main purpose of Six Thinking Hats Strategy is to allow a switch in thinking. The descriptions of Six Hats are as:

#### **White Hat: Facts & Information**



The white hat covers facts, figures, information needs and gaps. It lays out the means for obtaining the needed information about the topic/subject matter.

**Red Hat: Feelings & Emotions**



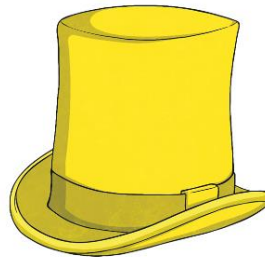
The red hat is for intuition, feelings, hunches and emotions. It considers emotions and feelings as an important part of thinking. The red hat provides a convenient method for a thinker to switch in and out of the 'feeling' mode in a way which is not possible without such a device.

**Black Hat: Caution**



The black hat is for careful, critical and cautious thinking. It must always be logical. Black Hat thinking is specifically concerned with negative assessment about any idea, suggestion, topic and concept etc.

**Yellow Hat: Positive & Optimistic**

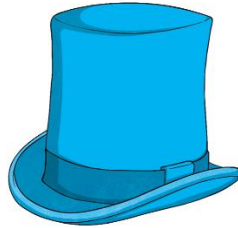


Yellow Hat is the logical positive and concerned with positive assessment. It can be used in looking forward to the positive results of proposed action, values, ideas and benefits. Thus, it develops value 'sensitivity' which is required for constructive thinking.

**Green Hat: Creativity**



The Green Hat is used for generating innovative ideas, alternatives and energy. The search for alternatives is a fundamental aspect of green hat thinking. Thus, green hat is important for creative and lateral thinking. Lateral Thinking means 'Thinking outside the Box.'

**Blue Hat: Decision Making**

Blue Hat is process control hat. This hat organizes the thinking. Blue hat thinking is concerned with summary, conclusion, overview, outcomes and solutions. It is helpful in decision making.

Thus, Six Thinking Hats strategy is helpful to collect information objectively, analyzing it properly, generating new ideas and solutions, see alternatives, better solutions and quality decision making about any issue/ idea or topic. De Bono (1999) states that this strategy is supposed to promote quality of thinking and communication skills for students, teachers and educational leaders. It is an alternate to adversarial thinking as by this technique they can consider the different points of view together at the same time, rather than arguing about them.

**Role of Six Thinking Hats Strategy in Education**

Six Thinking Hats represent different perspectives of thinking. Thinking Hats help the learners to think about a topic in a systematic, objective and creative manner. Ramalingam (2009) described the benefits of using Six Thinking Hats as a teaching strategy in development of higher order thinking skills among students. Ku, L. (2009) also stated that Six Thinking Hats strategy increased the creative thinking abilities of nursing students. Kumari, S. (2014) revealed through her study that Six Thinking Hats strategy is helpful in development of Parallel Thinking, Lateral Thinking, General Creativity and Argumentativeness among high school students. Dasar, P. (2019) reported that Six Thinking Hats method is very potential to assist students to think critically with a step-by-step development. Thus, this strategy has many benefits to students as well as teachers in education.

**Benefits to Students**

The metaphoric colored hats provide a visual image that is easy to learn, remember and use. In classroom situations students can be used 'Six Thinking Hats' to-

- Discuss Topics
- Generate New Ideas
- Explore Issues
- Compare the facts and Elements
- Solve Problems
- Combine the facts and Information
- Produce Alternatives
- Draw Conclusions
- Brain Storming
- Evaluate Ideas
- Decision Making
- Think Outside the Box
- Improve Communication Skill
- Develop Self Confidence and Independent Thinking
- Develop Leadership Qualities
- Effective Team Work
- Develop Self Esteem
- Develop Self Evaluation
- Resolve Conflicts
- Develop Higher Order Thinking Skills

### Benefits for the Teachers

- To organize the Ideas by using different perspectives.
- To become effective facilitator.
- To explore the subject knowledge.
- To communicate effectively.
- Effective and Interesting presentation of the topic.
- To improve teaching competency.
- To improve writing and research skills.
- To solve problems.
- To resolve conflicts
- To generate new ideas.
- To evaluate alternatives constructively.
- To organize effective Cooperative Teaching.
- To grade and evaluate students properly.

### Benefits for the Educational Leaders

- Six Thinking Hats can be used as a Meeting Facilitation Tool by leaders.
- As an Observation Strategy to explore the way of designing and do evaluation with multiple point of views.

Thus, Six Thinking Hats strategy has vital role in education from many scenarios.

### Conclusion

Six Thinking Hats strategy is a simple, interesting and effective thinking tool which helps people to be more productive, focused and mindfully involved. It can be applied to several situations in which problem solving, brain storming, creative, critical, constructive, lateral and parallel thinking are required. So, it can be used in each discipline to teach particular topic and foster thinking skills among students of each grade. The Hats facilitate the way of thinking. The metaphoric hats can be 'Put On' or 'Put Off' according to need. Therefore, Six Thinking Hats strategy is such a tool which has multi- dimensional values in educational field. NEP also focuses to adopt the ways of activating logical learning in children so that become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. Six Thinking Hats strategy fulfill all these requirements. This is the part of curriculum in some western countries like Venezuela. But now is a time to use this strategy in Indian Classrooms also to promote and foster thinking skills and provide quality education at each level of education.

### References

1. Beyer, B. (2001). *Teaching thinking skills: Defining the problem*. In A. L.Costa (Ed.), *Developing minds*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
2. Dasar,P. (2019). *Six Thinking Hats Method for Developing Critical Thinking Skills*. Journal of Educational Science and Technology, Volume 5(1), April 2019,82-91
3. De Bono. (1992). *Teach Your Child How to Think*. London: Penguin Books.
4. De Bono. (1994). *Parallel Thinking from Socratic to de Bono Thinking*. London: Penguin Books.
5. De Bono. (1995). *I am Right You are Wrong*. London: Penguin Books.
6. De Bono. (1999). *Six Thinking Hats*. New York: Back Bay Books.
7. De Bono. (2006). *Thinking course: Powerful tools to transform your thinking*. Harlow: Educational Publishers LLP.
8. De Bono. (2009). *Edward De Bono's Thinking Course: Powerful tools to transform your thinking*. London; British Broadcasting Corporation.
9. Dhanapal, S., Tabitha, K., & Ling, W. (2014). *Six Thinking Hats: A Study to Understand the Reasons and Extent of their Application in the English Language Classroom*. Journal of English Language and Literature (Vol. 1).
10. Education India Journal: *A Quarterly Refereed Journal of Dialogues on Education*, ISSN 2278-2435, Vol. 4, Issue-4, November-2015,73.
11. Fisher, A. (2011). *Critical thinking: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

12. Gough, D. (1991). *Thinking about Thinking*. Alexandria, V A: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
13. Gupta, T. (2015). *Fosters Thinking Skills through Six Thinking Hats in Education*. Education India Journal: A Quarterly Refereed Journal of Dialogues on Education, ISSN 2278- 2435, Vol. 4, Issue-4, November-2015,54-74.
14. Jensen, E. & Nickelsen, L. (2008). *Deeper Learning: 7 Powerful Strategies for in-Depth and Longer-Lasting Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
15. Karadag, M., Saritas, S., & Erginer, E. (2009). *Using the "Six Thinking Hats" model of learning in a surgical nursing class: sharing the experience and student opinions*. Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 26 (3), 59-69.
16. Kaur, M. (2017). *Six Thinking Hats: An Instructional Strategy for Developing Creative Thinking*. International Journal of Research of Social Sciences, 7(10), 520–528.
17. Ku, L. (2009). *Six Thinking Hats Applied in the Course of Clinical Case Study and Practicum III*.
18. Kumari, S. (2014). *Effectiveness of Six Thinking Hats Strategy on the Development of Parallel Thinking, Lateral Thinking and General Creativity in High School Students*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, K.U.K.
19. Li, C-S., Lin, Y-F., Nelson, J., & Eckstein, D. (2008). *Hats off to problem-solving with couples*. The Family Journal, 16(3), 254-257.
20. Marzano, R. J. (n.d.). (1998). *What Are the General Skills of Thinking and Reasoning and How Do You Teach Them?* The Clearing House, Vol. 71, pp. 268–273.
21. McGuinness, C. (1999). *From thinking skills to thinking classrooms: A review and evaluation of approaches for developing pupils' thinking*. Nottingham: DfEE.
22. Paul, R. W., & Elder, L. (2002). *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*. Retrieved from <http://www.bisenter.com>
23. Sarsani, M. R. (2005). *Creativity in Education*. New Delhi: UGC.
24. <https://www.twinkl.co.in/teaching-wiki/6-thinking-hats>
25. [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED\\_07.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm).

