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## **STUDYING AND LEARNING: THE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Just sitting for hours on end with one's books does not equal study, or does not result in good examination performance. That becomes possible, if and only if, studies are done according to certain strategies and following some patterns, and this is true for younger children as well higher education students. The present study provides a brief overview about these strategies.*

**KEY WORDS** - SMART goals, CREAM strategies model, SQ3R model.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Studying takes a major portion of all the growing up and formative years of many members of civilised society. The formal school education, certification and the concomitant life choices are all based heavily on academic performance which in turn, are dependant on study skills and habits. Not only do these become part and parcel of our existence during student life

in school and college, but they affect every facet of our life from professional choices, conduct and performance to personal well being, health and satisfaction. They have a huge impact in our self-esteem and psychological strength and balance. We may not always show it or even consciously know it, but failure to do well in school achievement leaves deep scars in

our psyche which have a bearing on all our life decisions and feelings of inadequacy in every sphere throughout our lives. Thus studying well and performing well are two inevitable goals that we do carry within ourselves throughout our lives, first at school, then at college, then at work and then even for our next generation.

### **STUDIES AS A GOAL ORIENTED ACTIVITY**

So how do we go about managing our studies efficiently and effectively and honing good study habits and skills for ourselves? The first and the foremost step would be to set up systematic objectives for ourselves. The **SMART** goals model helps students in setting of objectives that are

- **S - Specific** - lofty thoughts do not help, we need to spell out exactly what we need to read, learn or write in which subject
- **M - Measurable** - there has to be scope for testing what intends to be learnt at the very outset. It is great to study for pleasure, but good academic performance happens when we plan and study for that.

- **A - Agreed** - there has to be consensus amongst peers and teachers that the set goals, indeed will lead to better results.
- **R - Realistic** - it is wonderful to aim high, but a pragmatic approach to goal setting is the better way to genuine progress. Study goals, while always aiming for improvement, should take into account, the physical and intellectual capacity as well as time constraints of the individual
- **T - Timed** - goals and objectives without specified time frames are not useful at all, as good study habits and skills always involve doing the right thing at the right time, and while writing examinations, speed and accuracy work as two halves of a whole, one useless without the other.

### **STUDY HABITS AND SKILLS CHARACTERISTICS**

Once we have decided on the right goals, the next order of business would be to incorporate the right study habits and skills into the daily schedule of students. Though there is a certain amount of individuality in this regard as all students work according to their internal clocks, preferences,

motivations and interests, there are certain common factors that all students have to take into account while studying for better achievement scores. These can be summarised in the form of a model named as the **The C.R.E.A.M Strategies model** .

This model presents the five aspects which encompass all study skills and habits that students use. Particularly, this model provides valuable pointers for the organisation of time and space to study better. Developing each of these aspects strengthens all the others. The letters stand for :-

**C – Creative** – the students must have the confidence to use their individual styles and the various permutations and combinations which appeal to them to learn. They must always apply their imagination to their ways of learning. Also, the readiness of improvisation when it comes to learning environments and materials makes for creative learners who can make the most out of the learning experience.

**R- resourceful** - this is particularly true in the present day and age context where a lot of information and learning resources are freely available, but the ability of knowing exactly where to look, and knowing what and how to pick and choose requires both

intelligence and analytical skills or the ability to distinguish between the relevant and the irrelevant.

**E - Effective** – Students can maximize their learning experience if they organize their

- a) Space - room or study area
- b) Time - subject division, hours and day or night study
- c) Priorities - extensive or intensive
- d) State of mind - calm, excited or worried
- e) Resources - ( Text books, reference books, IT or computers, smartphones, CDs, library, notes, documents, study and guidance contacts etc.)

**A – Active** – Students have to be personally involved in the learning process, by constantly doing things **physically** (note – taking, looking for information, writing out answers and ideas etc.) and **mentally** (revision, analysis, categorization, reflection etc.) in order to make sense of what they learn. It is being realised in education more and more, that as long as students are kept passive recipients of lectures, which they rote-

memorise and reproduce, good study habits and skills are not developed and learning is just transient at best.

**M – Motivated** – Students need to create short-term and long – term goals for themselves, as that provides them with the best motivation to keep them on track regarding their studies. We have already talked about objectives, but it is also very important for students to be aware of their own desired outcomes for examinations and for life instead of playing to somebody else's expectation, so that they can design their learning and study schedule accordingly.

### **READING AS CENTRAL TO STUDY SKILLS AND HABITS**

The most important aspect of study skills and habits is an organised way of reading as all other aspects hinge on doing this particular activity well . In this regard, **the SQ3R method, developed by Francis P. Robinson, an American education philosopher in his 1946 book "Effective Study"**, to help read with purpose and understand complex information is vital for all students . The name comes from the first letters of the activities the student is asked to do in this method - Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. It is particularly helpful to get students through

their weekly set readings. Let us discuss the components one by one:

- **Survey** - this refers to skimming the title , headings, sub-headings, captions, charts, graphs, diagrams and other visual materials for a proper preview, as well as going through introductory and concluding paragraphs and chapter summaries for focussing attention.
- **Question** - turning the titles, headings and sub-headings into questions, writing them out and relating them to previous knowledge for better focus and concentration.
- **Read** - breaking the subject matter into small sections, and paying attention to any underlined, italicized bold words or phrases, reading through difficult passages slowly so as to constantly trying to find answers to the questions raised at the beginning.
- **Recite** - underlining or highlighting important points, talking notes in one's own words and most importantly, trying to formulate questions on what one has just read and trying to answer them, so as to bring together all

ends to form a knowledge structure.

- **Review** - an ongoing process of re-reading or revising notes and text at regular intervals, making summaries at the end of each section and use concept maps or flash cards to remember what has been read.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, in discussing these 3 very relevant formulae for developing and using good study habits and skills, we provide a viable blueprint for future success in academics and professions for all students, irrespective of streams, cultures and institutions. These establish the viability of

structured instruction systems as well as open and distance learning systems for upcoming generations. Students of the Information Age need not be provided information but ways and means of processing it for best retention, understanding and application.

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