



# Contextual learning

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Growing numbers of studies show that “most students' interest and achievement in math, science, and language improve dramatically when they are helped to make connections between new knowledge and experiences they have had, or with other knowledge they have already mastered .” Students' commitment in their schoolwork “increases significantly when they are taught why they are learning the concepts and how those concepts can be used in real-world contexts .

Contextualized learning is a proven concept that “incorporates the most recent research in cognitive science .” It is also a response to the “behaviorist theories” that have controlled American education for long time. The contextual approach distinguishes that “learning is a complex and multifaceted process that goes far beyond drill-oriented, stimulus-and-response methodologies .

## II. CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

Contextual Learning (CL) is a learning system that ties brain actions to creating patterns that have meaning. CL does it by connecting academic content to the context of real life. This is very important because it helps to store not only short-term memory, which students usually easily forget, but it also help to store long term memory which will help them to apply these memories to their job obligations later in their life.

CL-called contextual approach because it helps teachers connect content that students learn academically with realworld situations that usually students experience. This inspires students to make connections between the knowledge and their lives.

According to Hull “contextual learning theory says that learning occurs only when students process new information or knowledge in such a way that it makes sense in their frame of reference . He also says that this approach to “learning and teaching assumes that the mind naturally seeks meaning in context and does so by searching for relationships that make sense and appear useful .This approach accepts that the brain searches for the meaning of specific relationships with our surroundings .

Based on this CL activities not only can be done in the classroom, but also in laboratories, and in the future in the workplace. Educators have to be smart to design learning environments that can be easily related to real life. In this type of environment students can find connection between not realistic ideas and everyday submissions in realworld context.

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Curriculum and instruction based on contextual learning strategies should be structured to encourage five essential forms of learning: Relating, Experiencing, Applying, Cooperation, and Transfer (REACT).

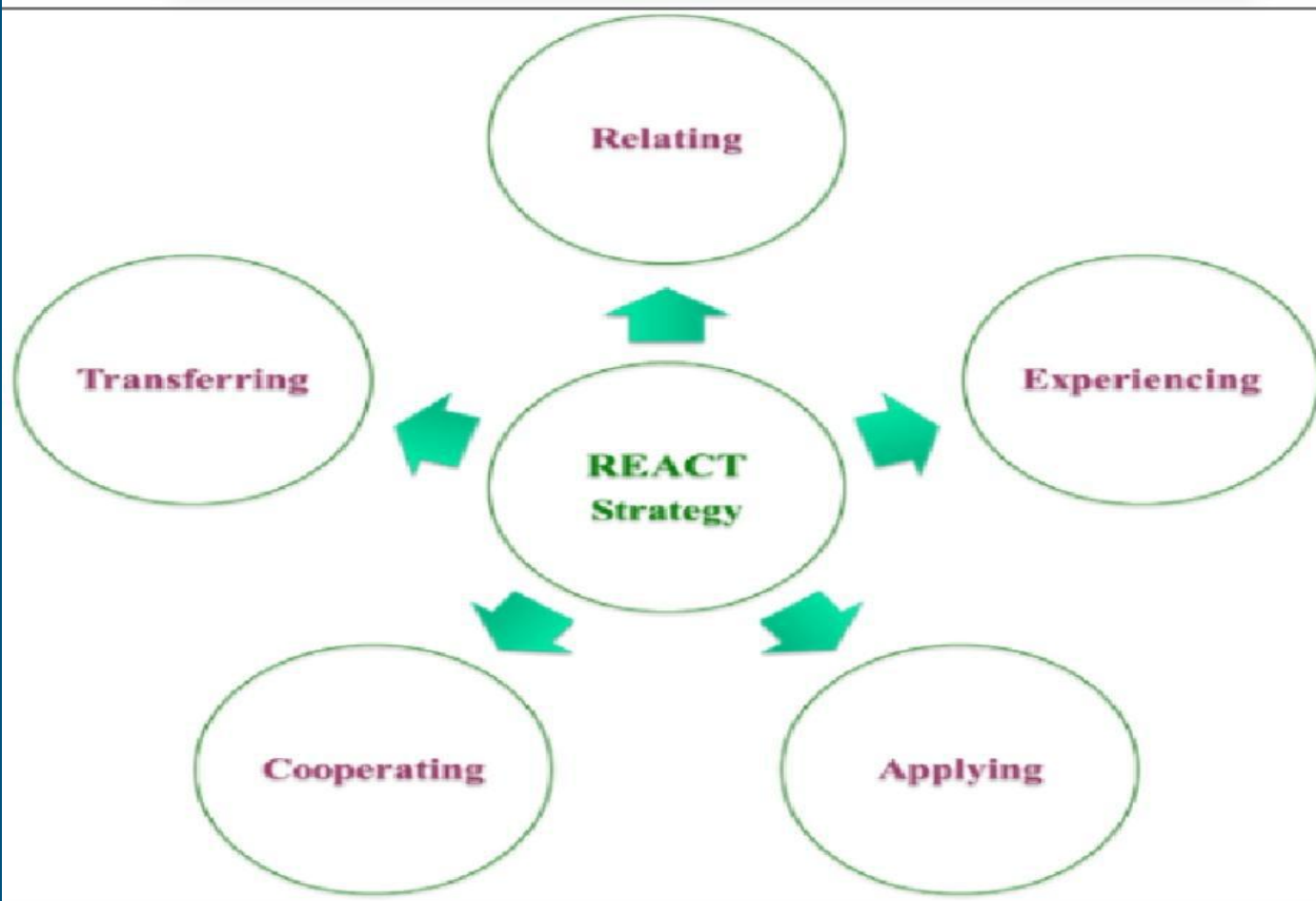


Figure 1. REACT strategy

## Relating

Relating is “learning in the context of life experience, or associate .” Teachers using this strategy must connect new perceptions with something familiar for students. “This helps students to link their knowledge with new information.

## B. Experiencing

Experiencing is a learning in the context of exploration, experience. Learning “happens” faster when students can use equipment and materials and do active research by themsel. This step is not design to educate students for exact jobs, but it helps them to practice actions that are straight connected to real-life work. These activities and skills can be used in labs and can be used in many professions .



## . C Applying

Applying is learning concepts and information in a useful situation. Students apply a concept when they can apply their real world experienced to their problem-solving activities. Teachers can motivate students by making problem realistic and relevant to students life

## D. Cooperating

Cooperating is learning in the context of sharing, responding, and communicating with other students. This is a very important strategy in teaching context. Students who “work by themselves usually do not progress as much as students who work in groups .” Working in groups helps students to solve complex problems with very little help. This practice helps students to understand and learn the concept and connect it with the real world. Later in their life this experience will help them in their work environment to “communicate effectively, share information well, and work comfortably in a team .

## E. Transferring

Transferring is “learning in the context of existing knowledge. It uses and builds on students’ prior knowledge.” In this stage the teacher makes help students to take what they have learned and apply it to new situations and contexts .

# IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

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Contextual Learning is very important because:

- It highlights problem-solving.
- It understands the need for teaching and learning in many contexts - home, community, and work sites.
- It teaches students take control over their learning helps them to become independent learners.
- It presents teaching in students' real world experience.
- It helps students to learn from each other and together in a team.