



Thematic Cum Illustration Approach: A Multidisciplinary Pedagogical Strategy For Meaningful Learning Experiences

Sanjay Das^{1*}, Prof. K.C. Kapoor²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, Assam, India
(Assistant Professor, Ambedkar College, Fatikroy, Unakoti, Tripura, India)

²Research Supervisor, Department of Education, Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, Assam, India

***Corresponding Author:** Sanjay Das

Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, Assam, India E-mail: sanjay281105@gmail.com

Article History	Abstract
Received on: 05/06/2023 Revised on: 12/08/2023 Published on: 16/10/2023	<p>The Thematic cum Illustration Approach includes connecting disciplines around a topic, discovering related concepts, devising educational activities, and choosing subject matter to apply them. This is a student-centred approach that allows students to pick their selected topics within a topic to make learning more engaging. The thematic cum illustrative approach integrates material from diverse fields with instructional methods to increase learning. The strategy aligns with the educational transition towards a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary teaching method, intending to give pupils a greater profound and interrelated comprehension of the curriculum. The teacher may use contemporary technology, namely Information and Communication Technology (ICT) etc., to enhance their teaching methods, which would result in a teaching approach that is more student-friendly and child-centric. The present research paper focuses on the Thematic cum Illustration Approach, outlining its processes and discussing the pros and cons of utilising it in the classroom.</p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	<p>Keywords: <i>Thematic cum Illustration approach, thematic organisation, integrated learning, interdisciplinary approach.</i></p>

Introduction:

Braun and Clarke (2021) define thematic analysis as a “family of methods”. Thematic analysis may be employed alone or in conjunction with other approaches (e.g. grounded theory) to identify patterns in data and present conclusions as themes to complicate matters. According to Dolan (2021), the thematic approach to education provides a more well-rounded education by bringing together different subjects around a common theme, which helps pupils understand the interconnectedness of different fields. This approach, which originates in a more pragmatic understanding of education, has gained support for its ability to broaden our understanding of the field, foster closer relationships among students, and improve the effectiveness of our teaching methods (Dolan, 2021). In the same spirit, Orleans & Montebon (2021) delve into the application of theme instruction in the Philippine K–12 Science Programme, showcasing how it effectively tackles curriculum design obstacles and accomplishes intended educational results through thematic models. Although the given

context does not provide specific details, we can deduce that the illustration technique is an educational strategy that utilises visual aspects to aid learning. The employment of visual components to encourage computational thinking in early schooling, as described by Kesler et al. (2022), may have a connection to this. Both the constructivist and instructivist educational stances of educators significantly influence the methods they use in the classroom and the results their students achieve (Kesler et al., 2022).

The Illustrative teaching approach emphasises real-life examples and abstract concepts to help pupils understand and retain information (Lhendup, 2023). Research has demonstrated that visual tools can be effective in various classroom contexts. For instance, while teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), audiovisual technologies have improved student communication and made learning more enjoyable and simple (Waad & Younus, 2022). Furthermore, in geography classes, teachers who prefer visual aids such as Screens and wall charts utilise them frequently, implying that these aids are a significant element of how teachers communicate (Omungo, 2022).

As shown by the growing digitalisation of education by Jurčević & Horvat (2023) and the necessity for creative pedagogy to cultivate imagination and problem-solving abilities mentioned by Adom et al. (2021), thematic and illustration approaches are both components of a more significant trend towards innovative and integrated pedagogies that address the changing educational environment. Ultimately, the ultimate objective of the thematic cum illustration approach is to make learning more engaging, applicable, and efficient. These methods take on added significance to equip pupils with the information and abilities demanded by today's globally interdependent society.

Thematic cum Illustration Approach:

The thematic cum Illustration Approach in teaching is a pedagogical strategy that combines many disciplines and ideas under a unified theme, offering students meaningful learning experiences. This strategy entails establishing connections across several disciplines based on a particular topic, identifying relevant ideas, designing educational tasks, and selecting subject content to facilitate the implementation of these tasks. The method is multidisciplinary, with teachers presenting distinct topics examined from many interconnected areas. The objective is to provide pupils with a comprehensive and interrelated comprehension of the taught subjects. The strategy also prioritises using illustrations, examples, and demonstrations to augment the clarity and understanding of specific ideas or concepts. K.C. Kapoor (2020), in his book “Teaching of Geography for Secondary School Teachers,” coined the term “Thematic cum Illustration Approach.”

The Thematic cum Illustration Approach helps foster proficient communication and cohesive learning experiences for pupils. The approach is oriented toward the student and seeks to enhance the appeal and significance of learning by giving students the autonomy to choose their preferred subjects within the framework of a particular topic. The use of the theme cum illustration method is not a novel notion and has garnered popularity in the field of education for several decades. The theme cum illustrative approach may be seen as a content-cum-methodology in teaching, where content information from different areas is integrated with teaching approaches to improve the efficacy of learning. The strategy aligns with the educational transition towards a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary teaching method, intending to give pupils a more profound and interrelated comprehension of the curriculum. The thematic cum illustration approach is an educational style that prioritises student involvement, incorporates several disciplines, and fosters a comprehensive and purposeful learning experience. The approach prioritises using themes, ideas, and learning activities across different courses to facilitate effective communication and integrated learning experiences for students.

While it is true that effective methods such as the observational method, project method, laboratory method, etc., have great promise for improving the quality of science and social science education instruction, it is also true that not every class or topic can benefit from these approaches on a daily basis. At this point, the issue arises regarding what pedagogical approach a science, social science, or geography teacher should use to be effective across all subjects and classroom settings. Any educator in science, social studies, or geography may address this issue using the thematic-cum-illustration approach to teach concepts across all subjects and units of study. Thematic-cum Illustration Approach is a powerful tool for teachers at all levels, from elementary school to college, to teach a wide range of subjects, including science, social science, geography, etc. Kapoor (2020) states this approach rests on philosophical, psychological, and social foundations. The main aspects of this approach are instructional goals, themes, illustrations, and conversations to guarantee student engagement. This instruction approach focuses on making the transfer of course material as easy and natural as possible for the students in the classroom. With some honesty and dedication, any teacher may use this method to teach the material. Thematic, illustration, and coordination are the three main parts of this technique. Examining these parts, the most crucial part of this strategy is the part of the course material that deals with the subject. The

teacher is responsible for developing a set of learning outcomes appropriate to the subject matter. Methodically, the teacher covers these goals in the classroom. Here, it's important to note that the teacher should prioritise the cognitive goals following Bloom's Taxonomy of learning outcomes. It is possible to group the following six types of educational goals into the list: first, knowledge; second, Comprehension or Understanding; third, application; fourth, Analysis; fifth, Synthesis; and finally, Evaluation. The teaching-learning process will also become more objective-based as a result of this. The teacher structures the delivery of the intended content thematically, following the characteristics of these learning outcomes. The use of visual aids such as thematic maps, graphs, and charts is what the word "thematic" alludes to. To get their subject lesson across, the teachers must use various visual aids, such as maps, photos, and diagrams. Depending on the source, for a subject like Geography, the teacher uses images that might depict mountains, plains, plateaus, or even smaller landforms created by wind, water, ice, and underground water.

Steps to apply the Thematic cum Illustration Approach in the classroom:

The Thematic cum Illustration approach contains two terms in it. The first is the "Thematic Representation of the concept", and the second is the "Illustration of the concept". Let us discuss the steps of the approach that can be implemented or applied in a classroom situation.

Step-1: Selecting a topic: Themes often include a comprehensive, interconnected structure (such as a metropolis, a natural environment, etc.) or a wide-ranging idea (such as governance, meteorology, etc.). Teachers often try to establish a connection between the topic and the student's daily experiences. Occasionally, students are involved in the selection of the topics.

Step-2: Designing the integrated curriculum: When developing the integrated curriculum, participating teachers should centre the learning outcomes of their subject area and process courses on the overarching topic. For example, when we study a river basin, mathematical teachers may determine the volume and flow of water, social scientists may analyse river communities, meteorologists may study weather and floods, and literary scholars may examine works by Rabindranath Tagore and others. Teachers must do a lot of legwork on the first design. The students are involved in the curriculum creation process on occasion.

Step-3: Identifying Instructional Objectives: The necessary instructional objectives will be framed after selecting the topic. It is important to note that the thematic material will be as per the requirements of pre-decided instructional objectives.

Step-4: Preparing themes: Let's analyse the process using Geography as an illustrative subject. The cartographic representations, visual depictions of the topographical features, and the necessary tabular data must be prepared for the study of Geography. If these things are unavailable, the teacher should depict an outline map of the world/continent/country/state on the blackboard and illustrate the location and distribution of any data. The pre-existing diagrams and charts may occasionally be absent, prompting the teacher to manually sketch such diagrams, figures, and tables on the board to elucidate their significance to the pupils. Thus, the teacher must be proficient in drawing and using the chalkboard. The students acquire the proficiency of sketching, which is crucial for enhancing their aptitude in studying Geography. The teacher may use contemporary technology, namely Information and Communication Technology (ICT), to improve their teaching methods. This can include PowerPoint presentations, simulated experiments, visual aids such as pictures and videos, and other similar resources.

Step-5: Presentation to students: This is the interactive step of the Thematic phase. The teacher presents the subject to be discussed in the classroom using various visual aids such as charts, blackboard writing, concept maps, flow charts, graphical representations, PowerPoint presentations, simulation videos, real videos, etc. This approach fosters student engagement and guarantees active involvement and participation in teaching-learning. The theme content will align with the intended instructional objectives. Consequently, it should be structured and used sequentially.

Step-6: Illustration of the theme: Guiding students to comprehend or understand using specific examples and explanations is what the word "illustration" means. Students form a lasting mental model of the subject matter when the teacher employs thematic teaching materials to provide a real-life scenario for them to view and experience via their senses during explanations and examples. The teacher uses figures, diagrams, maps,

graphs, models, etc., to help students understand the subject once they have analysed it. After the analysis, the teacher will synthesise the material and provide a conclusion or generalisation.

Step-7: Evaluation and reinforcement: The teacher provides plenty of opportunities for students to share their thoughts and ideas on the many topics. Teachers validate students' emotions and offer suitable justifications for their assessments. The teacher verifies that the students have mastered each teaching objective before moving on to the next one. He also provides the appropriate reinforcement and feedback if that becomes needed.

In the process of thematic-cum-illustration, the whole presentation is completed successfully with the coverage of all the instructional objectives. The teacher must coordinate the instructional objectives, thematic presentation, and illustration logically to create a maximum understanding of the content.

Merits of Thematic-cum-Illustration Approach:

Kapoor (2020) describes some merits of TIA, and those are:

- **Applicable for any situation:** The TIA integrates theme material with visual representations to communicate information or concepts efficiently. This strategy may be employed in any situation to increase comprehension of mathematics, science, social science, geography, etc., subject teachers.
- **Easy and Interesting:** When students find a theme interesting and important, it simply makes them more interested and involved. Students who are more interested in something usually learn more about it. This makes TIA quite easy and interesting.
- **Varieties of learning experiences:** TIA helps students grasp how topics relate by providing context. It helps establish a comprehensive grasp of topics. It stimulates critical thinking and problem-solving by investigating a subject from several aspects. It provides a variety of learning experiences.
- **Active participation of students:** Themes are often picked because they have something to do with daily life. This helps students see how what they are learning applies to their lives and society. It ensures the active participation of students.
- **Feedback:** The teacher has to maintain coordination among the instructional objectives, thematic presentation, and illustration in a logical order to create the maximum amount of understanding. For that, he requires feedback and reinforcement from time to time in a logical order to create the maximum amount of understanding about the topic.
- **Use of Taxonomy:** Thematic cum Illustration Approach uses Bloom's Taxonomy's hierarchical stages of cognitive skills—knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This lets teachers create tasks of varying difficulty to ensure topic knowledge. By using a variety of cognitive exercises, teachers may accommodate different learning styles and knowledge levels, helping students go beyond simple memory to creative application and better comprehend the theme.
- **Alternative of Lecture Method:** In a certain sense, the TIA might be considered the most advanced form of the lecture method. A teacher cannot get the essential circumstances for teaching in every situation, such as an appropriate laboratory, necessary teaching-learning materials, an accurate learning environment, sufficient reference books, etc. Even though students find the lecture method boring, it continues to be a common method for teaching till today. TIA has the potential to replace the lecture method, which would result in a teaching approach that is more student-friendly and child-centric.
- **Pragmatic Approach:** Themes are frequently selected based on their practicality, allowing students to comprehend better. The pragmatic method emphasises education that applies to the actual world. Emphasis is placed on preparing students to use what they have learned in real-world contexts. Activities that are both multidisciplinary and grounded in real-world relevance can be crafted using the pragmatic method within the TIA curriculum. This approach is pragmatic in nature.

De-merits of Thematic-cum-Illustration Approach:

This approach of teaching does not have severe kind of de-merits still then Kapoor (2020) describes some de-merits of TIA and those the teacher needs to take some preventive measures, and those are as follows:

- **Self-made Instructional materials:** The teacher cannot use this approach without having thematic instructional material the teacher needs to design/procure. The teacher has to plan before the class, prepare the themes for presentations, and he has to make them available during the class.

- **Extra effort and involvement:** Most content may be converted into themes. Therefore, the teacher must put in some extra effort. If necessary, A group of subject teachers or experts may be involved in preparing the thematic content. Continuous upgrades of the material may be required as necessary for the achievement of learning outcomes.
- **Skill:** The teacher and students need to be active, especially the teacher, who needs to be good at illustrative skills by using simple and effective language to make the process effective and productive. Along with linguistic ability, the teacher must possess the skills of using thematic instructional materials and drawing work.
- **Coordination with objectives and materials:** The teacher must carefully coordinate the instructional objectives, thematic material, and illustrations. A shortage of thematic material may lead the class to lecture methods.
- **Teacher dominance:** In TIA, teachers generally dominate by selecting and organising subject information and themes that support their teaching aims. The teacher can keep students' attention and reinforce crucial themes by blending captivating graphics with thematic elements. The teacher's active participation in debates and leading students' grasp of theme material can establish their dominance in the learning process.

Conclusion:

The Thematic cum Illustration Approach is a pedagogical strategy that combines multiple disciplines and ideas under a unified theme, providing students with meaningful learning experiences. This approach involves establishing connections across several disciplines based on a particular topic, identifying relevant ideas, designing educational tasks, and selecting subject content to facilitate the implementation of these tasks. The method is multidisciplinary, with teachers presenting distinct topics examined from many interconnected areas. The objective is to provide pupils with a comprehensive and interrelated comprehension of the taught subjects. The strategy also prioritises using illustrations, examples, and demonstrations to augment the clarity and understanding of specific ideas or concepts. The approach is helpful for teachers to teach a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, science, social science, geography, etc. The approach consists of three main parts: thematic representation of the concept, illustration of the concept, and coordination of the two. The teacher is responsible for developing a set of learning outcomes appropriate to the subject matter and prioritising cognitive goals following Bloom's Taxonomy of learning outcomes. The teaching-learning process will become more objective-based as a result of this. Therefore, the Thematic cum Illustration Approach represents a contemporary pedagogical methodology that has the potential to substitute for conventional teaching methods.

Reference

1. Adom, Dickson & Sharma, Ekta & Sharma, Sandeep & Agyei, Isaac. (2021). Teaching Strategies, School Environment, and Culture: Drivers of Creative Pedagogy in Ghanaian Schools. *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, 2, 12-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46627/silet.v2i2.68>.
2. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77- 101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
3. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21, 37-47.
4. Bruner, J. (1960). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
5. Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Methods: Teaching thematic analysis. *The Psychologist*, 26, 120-123.
6. Dolan, Anne M. (2021). *Teaching Climate Change in Primary Schools: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003112389>
7. Finlay, Linda. (2021). Thematic analysis: The 'Good', the 'Bad' and the 'Ugly', *European Journal Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 11, 103-116.
8. Jurčević, R., Horvat, Z. (2023). Digital pedagogy as a response to the challenges of contemporary education, *Školski Vjesnik: Journal of Pedagogic Theory and Practice*, 72(2), 143-161. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38003/sv.72.2.11>
9. Kapoor, Khem Chand. (2020). *Teaching of Geography for Secondary School Teachers*, Guwahati: DVS Publishers.

10. Kesler, A., Shamir-Inbal, T., & Blau, I. (2022). Active Learning by Visual Programming: Pedagogical Perspectives of Instructivist and Constructivist Code Teachers and Their Implications on Actual Teaching Strategies and Students' Programming Artifacts. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 60(1), 28-55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/073563312111017793>
11. Lhendup, S. (2023). Teachers' Perception of Visual Aids in Students Learning. *Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*, 36(1), 1–29. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2023/v36i11198>
12. Omungo, Patrick Abuya. (2022). Determinants of Use of Audio Visual Aids in Teaching Geography to Secondary School Students In Madiany Division. (2022). *Journal of Education and Practice*. 13(18), 164-176. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7176/jep/13-18-17>
13. Orleans, Antriman, & Montebon, Darryl Roy. (2021). The Philippine K to 12 Junior Science Program in Thematic Instruction, *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 9(1), 107-121. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj2109.01.10>
14. Piaget, J. (1969). *The theory of stages in cognitive structure*. New York: McGraw Hill.
15. Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language* (E. Hanfmann and G. Vakar, eds. and trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
16. Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman, eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
17. Waad, M. A., & Younus, R. Z. (2022). The role of audio visual aids in teaching English. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S5), 10616–10622. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS5.10840>
18. Websites: <https://funderstanding.com/educators/thematic-instruction/>