



aeced
ENGAGE

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1: 2018-19



Curriculum Matters

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From the Editor.....



Dear Readers,

Happy Monsoons!

It's raining new ideas to inspire action from our growing ECD Community.

In this issue of AECED engage, Suneeta Kulkarni gives an overview on Early Years curriculum bringing forth four interconnected cross cutting pointers: technology, learning to learn, learning to be human and content, which she holds as most important.

Vidhya Satish focuses on story- telling as a standalone and also integrated into every aspect of teaching and learning. I can only imagine the excitement of Boondi wanting to explore the far away clouds and distant mountains as the rain cycle gets deconstructed along with Boondi's experiences, as exemplified by Vidhya.

Guidance assures us of the right pathway and ideas to approach the same thing differently, Shobha Bharat takes care of this aspect for teachers in her review of the book – 'A practical guide to curriculum' by Claudia Eliason and Loa Jenkins (2012).

"In the distant - a travelogue of early childhood set ups" is being introduced as a new feature. Monisha Singh Diwan shares her visit to an early years programme in the panda province of Chengdu, China. She does so through a poem and extrapolates five magic mantras for quality in Early Years Programmes.

While we are on this journey of exploring aspects that matter in the early childhood curriculum, let us investigate, share experiences, argue to reject redundant practices, be guided by research and evidence to bring out best practices and not forget to always keep the child as the nucleus of all our reflections.

Happy Reading !

Regards

Rekha

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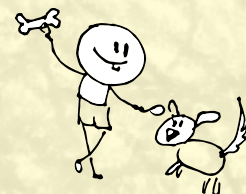
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'Curriculum Matters'

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Curriculum for Early Years Development

- Suneeta Kulkarni

Let's get straight to it. When discussing curriculum matters, there is much ground to be covered and many appealing curriculum frameworks one could choose from (High/Scope Curriculum, the Reggio Emilia Approach, Te Whariki, Experiential Education or the Swedish Curriculum for modern preschools - to mention just a few.). Each has its own strong logic and emerged in specific socio-cultural contexts. And along with the commonalities, they have much to offer other than learning contexts. And certainly there is also the possibility of weaving into any learning environment yet other strategies to further the goals seen as essential for that Framework or that specific approach (including The Granny cloud and SOLEs which have been the focus of my work in the past decade). But I was requested for my take on curriculum matters - sort of an overview. So despite the interest and work area of the first couple of decades of my professional career, I am going to stick to some very basic issues that I think cut across any Curriculum Framework you may choose to use. I am in any case, mortally scared when anyone 'picks one' approach to the exclusion of any other perspective. I think it shuts us off from possibilities. Not a good idea at any age, and most certainly not as the foundations of life are being laid!

So I want to make just 4 Points.



1. Technology:

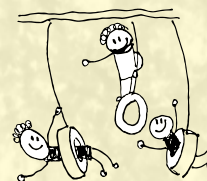
Paper and pencil and books. They are technology too. Among many other devices and inventions over the millennia. But we now have the Internet and the possibilities afforded by it and the pace at which these keep changing were unimaginable half a century (or even less) ago. To pretend it does not exist or that very young children are not impacted by it is to fool ourselves. Yet, this does not mean that you plonk a tablet or a mobile phone in the hands of a baby as soon as they exit the birth canal! What it does mean is that we should also consider using the resources of the internet and the opportunities created by it FOR children rather than only its use BY them when we think of technology.

2. Learning to learn:

An oldie, but a goodie! It implies Curiosity, and that implies 'Questioning' everything around us. We live in fast changing times. Every day is a new day. That implies that there are new skills to be learnt ALL the time, new ideas we need to acquaint ourselves with, and old ideas that we need to challenge. Our curriculum for young children needs to weave in this Questioning - this Search - this Curiosity - into its daily activities BIG TIME! We can no longer say with any surety which facts, which information will still be relevant a few years down the line, we don't know what new skills will be demanded of us. What we can be sure of is that we will always need to find out. We will always need to learn. So encouraging children to wonder - to be excited by the unknown (even if it is only unknown to them!) is critical. Figure : Going where my fancy takes me!

3. Learning to be human:

We have evolved this far. There is a lot that distinguishes us from animals. Though there is a thing or two that they could teach us! But if we question the concepts of development and progress, we will need to acknowledge that not every change automatically means development. Certainly, just 'knowing' or being able to find out stuff is not enough. It isn't worth much if it doesn't also involve caring, and concern - not just for ourselves or those around us but even the physical environment in which we live. Instead of touting 'Independence' with no consideration of what precedes or follows it, we would be better off creating an environment of warm interdependence, of respectful Collaboration to join the other C's (Comprehension and Critical thinking, Computation, Communication, Creation) that many educationists, and developmental psychologists refer to these days. I certainly hope no one is still stuck in the time warp of the three R's! Yet not everything, from the distant past, needs to be thrown out. Because learning to be human draws upon what used to be referred to as the three H's - head, hands and heart. We need the critical thinking - the 'head'. Yes, we do; but that ability emerges in the context of many multi-sensorial experiences [hands] and we can still be warm and caring [heart] while we disagree with ideas and lifestyles. And we need to start young...



4. Don't forget content!

One last parting comment: Because curriculum does not exist in a vacuum. Much of what we learn to believe in and what we value, depends on what we are exposed to, especially in the early years. In the process we become open to varied perspectives. We learn to see things from other angles, from another's view point. We learn to appreciate the Arts, not just the Sciences. So it becomes 'STEAM' rather than 'STEM'. A picture turned over makes one consider other points. And the 3 year old chatting with a Granny from oceans away considers the existence of a platypus or a melting iceberg even though they have never seen one in their vicinity. And that child begins to realise that the 'strange', different looking person at the other end of their internet connection is as human as they are themselves.

Start local - most certainly. But don't stop there. Not even with the little ones. The questioning and the openness to learning come easier if they see variations - (in language, customs, ideas, appearances, food - you name it!) early on.

These four considerations interconnect - one blends into the other, impacting and supporting the learning that happens when we create the appropriate environment. Ultimately, curriculum is enabling children to learn how to learn so they can go into their future with joy and wide open eyes. It is about learning to be human. The rest will follow...

Suneeta Kulkarni is the Hon. Director at the The Granny Cloud. She trained in Counselling and Psychology, and got her Masters at Texas A & M and Doctorate from Bombay University. The first several decades of her career focused on Parenting, and ECCD. Since 2008, she has led The Granny Cloud [www.thegrannycloud.org] as one strategy for reaching children with limited learning opportunities.

Once Upon a Time..



- Vidhya Satish

Boondi, the water drop loved to look up at Uncle Sun. Without the knowledge of his mother, he would slowly climb up to the surface. The little birdies, the far away boats and the occasional sight of the dancing dolphin thrilled Boondi. But very soon he would hear his mother say “Come down Boondi, the more you are exposed to the heat, there will be problems!!!” Imagine narrating this story to a bunch of excited pre-schoolers and asking them what the problem could be?

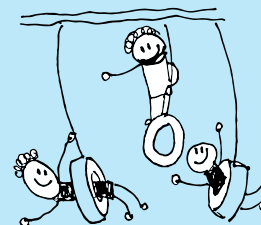
When you hear the word “story” a smile is drawn on your face. There is excitement and interest. Long narrations, happy endings, funny anecdotes, sounds and movements fill your mind. Stories are enchanting, enthusing, imaginative and transforming. From the young to the elderly everyone loves a good story. Storytelling is an art that is used not only for entertainment or engagement of children, but also as an effective means of teaching children various concepts in an enjoyable and easily understandable manner. Stories and storytelling have undergone changes in today's classrooms.

Stories can be defined as a series of events. A leads to B, B leads to C, C leads to D and so on. A good story telling session becomes a great one with effective communication where the story teller and the listener give instant and constant feedback to each other. Stories appeal to all because it is a projection and manifestation of our feelings, thoughts, ideas and interests. Often, empathy, imitation and imagination draw the listeners into the story.

What is special about stories?

Stories can

- Give meaning to life, express values, teach the young and convey culture.
- Connect elements in one's own self, experience and life.
- Connect one to one's (individual and group) past and to other cultures.
- Give one a sense of wholeness that the pieces of one's life fit together and add up to something.



Principles and guidelines of storytelling: Storytelling events can be made into enchanting, memorable and meaningful moments if the following principles and guidelines are adopted-

- **The Story teller is fully present** -He /She is physically present and takes responsibility of what is being presented. Effective voice modulation, facial expressions, gestures, body language, posture and movements make the story telling session interesting. The story teller can develop repeated conversational exchanges or sing songs.
- **Story telling is multi track**-It flows from the soul of the story teller to the souls of the listeners. It is accompanied by synesthetic activity- oral, visual, and/or touches. The story teller throws himself into the story speaking from the heart, integrating visuals, sounds, taste, touch and smell in vivid detail.
- **Visual accompaniment is never essential** - Body and movement is enough. A good story teller is one who can describe vividly, the visual the listener is supposed to see.

• **The Story teller has a unique relationship with each listener** - Each listener experiences the story differently. The Storyteller needs to bring out the characters, symbols and objects in the story naturally and not as though they have been memorized. Some key tips are:

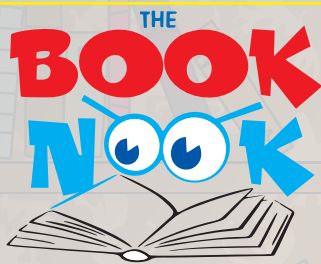
- **A story teller is always listening** – Listening not only to the physical expressions of the audience but also to the emotions that are being experienced.
- **A story teller instantaneously incorporates everything including interruptions in the ongoing event** – Nods, grunts, additions, and objections are integrated. He / She can see an interruption as an opportunity to incorporate another facet of the “real” world into the story.
- **Story telling is a reciprocal shared event** – An event when both the teller and the told are in equilibrium and seeking and receiving in earnest from each other.
- **Storytelling is interactive largely through listeners' empathy and enactment** – Stories are part memorized and part improvised. Responding to listener's inputs modifies performance. This helps in the right choice of stories.
- **Human bonding, the relationships are inseparable from the imparting of information**– When one intensely listens to a story, a special bonding occurs between the teller and the listeners and between listeners. This is expressed as children are often found sitting close to each other or leaning against each other.
- **Feature the possibility of spillover into real life** – This helps in bringing about a piece of reality into the story giving it a more realistic or near realistic perspective.
- **Stories tend to support the individual's struggle** – Stories are medium of the human. They reflect the triumphs of humans, display coping and survival instincts leading to demonstration of talents. They also reflect positive social behavior that leads to a life affirming activity. That is why everyone loves a happy ending.
- **Practice the story** – Go back to the story. Before narration take a deep breath. Take a look at the room and the children you are about to speak to. Let children settle and so will you. Remember to end the story so you recall where you are going. Begin as though you are telling someone how you walked to this place this morning/afternoon. After the end, let a moment pass before you speak and experience the feeling tone in the room. Look at your audience again and say “The story is ended”. Ask questions which does not focus on anything specific. “How did you feel? And listen to the responses.

Conclusion: Stories need not only be a stand-alone activity. They can be integrated into the lessons. Concepts then become a great revelation. The load of understanding the lesson is lessened to a large extent. The concept of the rain cycle is made easy when it is woven into a story about a water drop and its escapades that depict the various stages of the rain cycle. Concepts such as evaporation, condensation, precipitation will be understood easily by the children. Why should all the stories be only Jack and the Bean Stalk or the Three Little Pigs? Teachers can teach concepts like big and small, missing numbers or even healthy fruits by integrating them into stories. Let the teachers' imagination run riot. This can help bring in creativity in her lessons and activities.

As Shakespeare said “All the world's a stage and all men and women merely players!!” Let us all, as story tellers, unleash our creative spark and light up the world of stories.

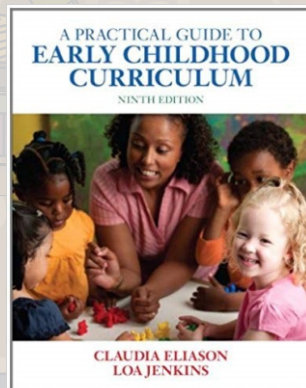
Vidhya Satish-

Director of SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education at Sion & Nerul, Mumbai. She is passionate about early childhood teacher education and conducts various workshops for teachers. Writing is another area of interest apart from training.



A Practical Guide To Early Childhood Curriculum

Shobha Bharat



This book is an exceptionally comprehensive resource for present as well as future early childhood educators. It has evolved from constant inquiry and search for meaningful teaching ideas for children across the age groups from 3 to 8 years. During many teacher education courses, emphasis is placed on understanding theories but very often student teachers and professionals find themselves confused about how to blend the learning theories and principles into practical applications in the classroom. The book emphasizes not only how to teach, but also provides a solid foundation for the theoretical basis for the concepts being applied. It takes a developmental approach to teaching where activities and experiences are planned in accordance to the holistic developmental needs of the children in Early Years Settings.

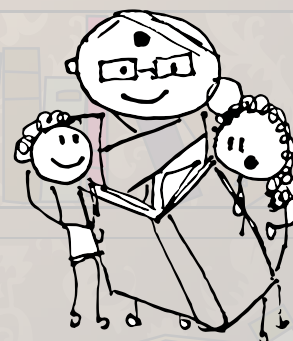
The contents reflect a unified pedagogy and a specific format for most chapters which include introductory comments, content information, approach to teaching, chapter summary, and student learning resources as well as suggested

resources. Important guidelines for essential components of early childhood education process and teachers' role are explained very well, along with numerous online resources.

My Feedback about the book

I have been referring to this book for a number of years and find it an excellent resource for students and experienced professionals alike. This well-presented resource book provides guidelines to teach different concepts and provides ideas and pedagogy to practically implement them in the classroom. The creative unit ideas on a variety of topics can be easily implemented in the classroom. The book is full of practical activities and experiences accompanied by suggested guidelines and variety of methodologies to present concepts. Well written and simply presented ideas, in the book, would truly motivate teachers to plan numerous stimulating and exciting classroom experiences for all children. I would highly recommend this book for all professionals in ECE for guidance into exciting teaching-learning interactions and discovery in the early childhood classrooms.

Eliason, C., & Jenkins, L.(2012) A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Curriculum,9th Edition, Pearson, New York.



I am a
CHILD
and this is My place, My space!
- Monisha Singh Diwan



This poem was written spontaneously onsite on my visit to a model government preschool in June of 2018, in Chengdu, China. The preschool, has a very well run child-centred, inquiry based Early Years Programme. The poem is an expression of what I saw, a symphony of good teaching and learning. It is followed by the five mantras I extrapolated from my observations. These mantras, though not exhaustive, stand true for any setting, anywhere in the world to bring in greater quality.

I, am a child and as I walk into my
school, what do I see?
I see green, colours, light, shapes,
and smiles,
My eyes dazzle as I smile and greet
those I meet, Happy to be here

I am a child, and as I walk in, what do
I hear?
I hear my own voice, my friends and
teachers, laughter, conversations,
expressions...
My ears perk up and I participate,
Happy to be here

I am a child, and as I walk in, what do
I touch?
I touch hearts, textures, what
catches my eye, friends who care,
My hands gently reach out to touch,
Happy to be here

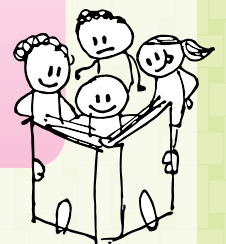
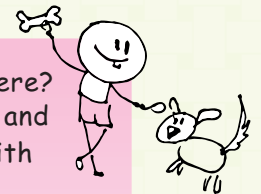
I am a child, what do I smell here?
I smell clean loos, sweat after
outdoor play, mud, food being
cooked, the aroma of the flowers and
herbs growing around that I tend to,
and the handwash I use to wash my
hands often, Happy to be here

I am a child, what do I taste here?
Yum healthy foods, from here and
also from lands afar, made with
abundant love and care,
Bitter and pungent, sweet and spicy,
Salty and icy,
Tongue tingles as I help make, taste
and share, Happy to be here

I am a child, what do I feel here?
I feel loved, cared for, valued and
respected,
I understand and express happy
emotions and big ones too,
mine and others too, Happy to be
here

I am a child, what do I think here?
I think of problems and how to solve
them, I think of conflicts and how to
resolve them,
I imagine in many ways, little am I
but think big, and that makes me so
happy to be here

I am a child and what do I do here?
I play today, tomorrow and
yesterday!
My teachers know behind that
"PLAY" is my universe of learning,
So let me tell you a secret,
I AM SO HAPPY TO BE HERE



So now that the poem gives you a gist of what I observed (Many of us would be happy to be there too), let's delve deeper into my top Five Magic Mantras extrapolated from a well-run Early Years Setting:

Mantra # 1- Good practices institutionalized

I could observe this in every nook and cranny and reverberating from every person, big and little. E.g., kindness and gratitude practiced, loads of literature on the same in the reading areas, thank you books for parents or teachers made by children, children lending helping hands for everything at school, right from cleaning to cooking to swabbing to learning.

Mantra # 2- Child led learning and sharing

The day I visited had, the “Growth Museum” theme on, which was helping the senior most kinder's transit to formal school while celebrating their journey of growth of the first 6 years. The exhibits, displays, sharings were totally child led and teachers were genuinely in the background observing unobtrusively with pride and joy.

Mantra # 3- Teachers as Inquirers and observers

The planning that goes into inquiry based learning is tremendous and requires teachers themselves to be inquirers and astute observers, most importantly of what children need, what interests them, and what they want to do and learn about. **It's a challenging journey, and one that they getting better at day by day due to their converging intentions and actions as shared by them.**

Mantra # 4- Ongoing group and individual need based professional development (PD) and leadership orientation

PD is mandated, supported and celebrated as is initiative. And collaboration and leadership in areas of ability and choice is scaffolded for greater and more effective outputs and outcomes as well as growth. Observed that Leadership practiced what they preached strongly and there was tiered leadership.

Mantra # 5- Excitement, Fun, choice, spontaneity (PLAY) for all learners

The teacher child ratio was 1:15/20 (quite doable) and the excitement and challenge of the learning journey was palpably as much for the adult as for the child. It is a physically and emotionally safe and happy place for all, and that was seen in a lot of flexibility and spontaneity in activities. The staff spaces were as exciting as the spaces for children and there were enough opportunities to enjoy learning and teaching through innovations, explorations AND loads of PLAY.

Monisha Singh Diwan is an ECD consultant with UNICEF East Asia Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok and an Executive Committee Member at AECED National and Mumbai.

AECED Updates

- Nalini Chhugani President: AECED Mumbai

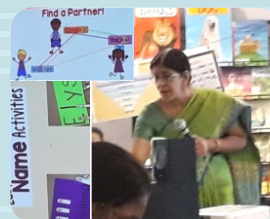
One of the objectives of AECED is “To promote quality Early Childhood Development programmes and practices through professional assistance and guidance.” Part of the challenge faced by early years' teachers is in transaction of the curriculum in the best possible way to respond to children's developmental needs. This year (2017-2018) we initiated the theme- 'Curriculum Matters' and planned workshops to address teachers' questions and provide opportunities to explore solutions together with experts in the field.

Science in Early Years by Purvi Vora and Sangita Kapadia, who introduced participants to the nature of science and developmentally appropriate activities to promote specific scientific skills such as classification, prediction, experimentation, observation and logical conclusion based on developmental stages of young children. Participants found the workshop exciting with “excellent experiences and lots of experiments”, and they “learnt to make science experiences child centric”.



Power of Documentation - making learning visible by Archana Jamdar. The resource person helped participants to understand the value and techniques of documentation through a series of well planned activities to empower teachers to use the information provided by objective observations when handling child behaviour. Participants' response “Documentation will help us to teach and assess child's progress”, “We can implement by clicking pictures, recording activities and writing small notes about each child.” “Very informative and demonstrative, simplified the concept”.

Emergent Literacy - developing lifelong readership by Dr. Suja Koshy. She explained the concept of emergent literacy, stages of language development and various approaches to promote reading readiness in children paving the way to lifelong love for readership. Participants appreciated the practical 'tips' and interesting active experiences given during the workshop session. “Will balance phonics and whole language approach through poems and stories”.



“Power of Art” in Practice by Oihika Chakrabarti. The resource person emphasized that art must be integrated in early years' curriculum as this can have positive effect on children's behaviour. The process of art therapy can help adults to move from being structured and biased to being creative and open to diverse views. Participants were encouraged to get in touch with their emotions through art activities and role plays. They learnt to integrate art based activities with daily program to stimulate thinking and listening skills.

Advocating Child Rights

AECED members were invited to participate in formation of “Regulatory guidelines for ECE centres in Maharashtra” by Maharashtra state commission for protection of child rights and UNICEF Maharashtra. Subsequently some of them were part of the core group which formed rules related to various aspects of preschool organization.

Upcoming Workshops

TITLE	RESOURCE PERSONS	DATES	VENUE
1. BRAIN DEVELOPMENT: ROOTS TO DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES	DR. VIBHA KRISHNAMURTHY & SHOBHA BHARAT	11/8/2018	SNDDT UNIVERSITY JUHU, MUMBAI
2. LET MY PLAYING BE MY LEARNING AND MY LEARNING BE MY PLAY - PEDAGOGY OF PLAY	DR. GAURI KIRTANE VANIKAR	22/9/2018	SNDDT UNIVERSITY JUHU, MUMBAI
3. MINDFULNESS + HEARTFULNESS: NURTURING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN CHILDREN	MONISHA SINGH DIWAN	19/01/2019	SNDDT UNIVERSITY JUHU, MUMBAI
4. MATHS IN EARLY YEARS	NILESH NIMKAR	23/02/2019	SNDDT UNIVERSITY JUHU, MUMBAI

For further details click www.mumbaiaeced.org

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The Annual Membership of AECED Mumbai (2017-2018) is open. Please do renew (if applicable) and pass the buzz to help the ECD network grow.

Individual Membership

- 1) 1 year – **Rs.500/-**
- 2) 3 years – **Rs.1,200/-**
- 3) 5 years – **Rs.2,000/-**

Institutional Membership

- 1) 1 year - **Rs.1,000/-**
- 2) 3 years - **Rs.2,500/-**
- 3) 5 years - **Rs.4,000/-**

Special offers on Membership

- All members will receive a unique Registration Number
- **1 year membership** will receive a curriculum book for ECE programs designed by the Chennai branch of AECED.
- **3 years membership** will receive the curriculum book plus Melody Times CD – a compilation of songs on different concepts by professionals from the field of ECCE from Mumbai – a tool for every teacher.
- **5 years membership** will receive the above two plus “Learning to Play” calendar by Hincks Dellcrest Centre, Toronto and BalaMandir Research Foundation, Chennai -a set of 3 books illustrates the different stages of the child from birth to 6 years and suitable activities for the child at each stage.

AECED Mumbai

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