



BALAK

The Quarterly Journal of The Indian Association for Preschool Education



**Third
Quarter
1998**

From the Editor's desk.....

A page from a child's diary

*Mom and dad talk about me a lot
To each other and to others
They even go for workshops
To learn how to bring me up*

To make me do all I should do.

*Teacher talks to other teachers
Once in a while she goes
To the principal's office
And to the counsellor's cabin*

Just to talk about me !

*At times my teacher
And the counsellor
And the principal
Talk to my mom and dad*

All because I don't want to write !

*Why don't they talk to me?
Of things I love to hear ?
Why don't they ask me
What I like to do ?
Why don't they remember
That I've a mind of my own !*

— Savithri Narayanan

Remembering Prof. Ram Joshi

He genuinely cared for young children

It was a great experience working with Prof. Ram Joshi. The more I worked with him, the more I noticed the great qualities in him. He did not demand but commanded respect. He was very clear thinking. Even though he was associated with adolescents during his career, his grasp of the issues of young children was commendable. He genuinely cared for them and loved them.

He will always be remembered for his sterling qualities and his commitment to preschool education.

Ms. Nalini Chhugani
President, IAPE, Mumbai branch



A guiding light is gone

With profound grief and sorrow we heard of the sudden and untimely death of Prof. Ram Joshi. He was an inspiring teacher, an effective administrator and a brilliant political scientist. His life and contributions are exemplary.

We were fortunate and privileged to be associated with him. He enthralled us with his ideas and provoked us into something more meaningful and effective. He was always accessible and reachable for guidance. He has made significant contributions in the field of preschool education and has brought it to the forefront. He will always be remembered as the crusader of enhancing the status and elevating the standards of preschool education.

Dr. Vijaya Murthy
Hon. secretary, IAPE

He touched many lives

Prof. Ram Joshi the Ex-Vice chancellor, Mumbai University has passed away. I remember him with great reverence. He was a unique person, a divine soul. I knew him as a vice chancellor, a chief guest at our school functions, a co-crusader for the young, voiceless children. At every one of these functions he addressed the audience and his inspiring words still ring in our ears. He was an intellectual, yet very humble. He touched the lives of all those who came in contact with him and helped each one to grow and bloom. He knew how to inspire others to take up a well-deserved task and work at it with zestful mission. His great contribution in bringing the pre-primary years, the foundation years, into focus will not be forgotten.

He will be missed by all of us who are concerned with education yet we pledge to carry on the task he set in motion.

Ms. Shirin Choksey
Principal
Udayachal Primary & Pre-primary schools, Mumbai

CONFERENCE NEWS

TWENTY NINTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

at
SNDT Campus, Churchgate, Mumbai

All of you must have received by now the brochures which were dispatched two months ago. This is a reminder for those of you who haven't registered yet. Rush ! Don't miss the opportunity to interact with educationists from all over the country !

Theme : STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Registration : Rs. 300/- (*Includes Tea, Lunch & Conference Materials*)

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HOW TO REACH THE VENUE ➔

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The SNDT campus is a short walk from Churchgate station on the eastern side.
Minimum Taxi Fare in Mumbai is Rs. 11.00

LAYING FOUNDATION OF WRITING IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Dr. (Ms.) Suman Prasad Maurya

Assistant Prof.

Dept. of Child Development

College of Home Science

N.D.U.A.T. Kumarganj

Faizabad (U.P.)

Writing is one of the 3 Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) that a child has to master to perform well in the school system and later to be able to express his/her ideas and thoughts through writing and print media. Individuals who are able to use language confidently, find themselves in a better position to excel in their field of interest. Pouring down ideas and feelings on paper just as they would in speech helps them to include all the relevant points with better clarity. Writing is also significant in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with people from different walks of life. Be it family members, friends and / or professionals, expressing feelings and thoughts through writing is one of the easy ways to communicate and make an impression.

Preschool years are critical in laying down the foundation for writing ability in children. Preschool as the word suggests, is the period before the child joins the school system. It is a preparatory period for the subsequent stage namely late childhood or the school years. A good physical and psychological readiness programme, before entering the formal system of education, is an asset for children to meet the challenges of the stage. It enables children to adjust to the new environment and cope up with demands of the system.

While writing, children have to cope with shapes and letters that corresponds various sounds and syllables in the language system. They must develop a good eye-hand coordination so that they can control their pencils or pen to write down what they are required to. It is often found that bright children who read and speak well, lag behind in their writing ability. To them, writing down their thoughts or matter seems such a slow, laborious task that they soon lose interest. This would naturally influence their performance at school. So opportunities must be provided to strengthen and promote faculties that are responsible for writing ability, enhance comprehension and general writing and later encourage them to compose their own writings.

Nursery schools and even enlighten and interested parents can play a vital role in laying down strong foundation for developing these faculties in children especially by allowing preschool children to engage in exercises and activities that can be considered pre-requisite to writing ability.

Requirements of writing and their development

Writing ability has certain pre-requirements that can be promoted in preschool years. These are :

1. **Good muscle control and eye-hand coordination** - writing involves controlled movement of fine muscles of hand (fingers & wrist) and eyes. Former is needed to hold the pen or pencil and make required movement and latter to focus on what is being written. This is basic to writing tasks.
2. **Comprehension of letters and syllables** - Recognizing letters, syllables and vowels, their combinations, respective pronunciation, and comprehending meaning and finally combining words into sentences are all important aspects of writing.
3. **Concept of shapes and lines** - Letters, words and sentences are combinations of vertical, horizontal, diagonal lines and curves (in different directions) and circles. Knowledge and practice of same makes it easier for children to write down first the letters and then the words.
4. **Brain-body coordination and alertness to act** - To be able to write what ones thinks or feels or hear needs a good coordination between brain and the body. But coordination is not enough. Alertness of body and brain to put thoughts into action ie. writing them down into comprehensible, meaningful and attractive presentation is essential if one wants to make an impact of their understanding and ideas.
5. **Longer attention span** - means ability to focus or concentrate on an activity for a period of time. Writing demands concentration on not only what is being written but also on what is being said or dictated or displayed or thought. Longer attention span permits children to have better coordination between the 3 M's (muscles, mind and manuscript) which are important aspects in writing ability.
6. **Imagination** - Children's ability to imagine and put thoughts into words is significant for creative writing at a later stage.

Foundation for sequence and harmony in imagining situations, dialogues and characters and their presentation can be laid as early as preschool years.

These requirements can be fulfilled through a number of activities and exercises.

Interesting activities

- a. **Clay modelling:** This exercises the fine muscles of the hand, especially fingers and also involves the use of wrist movements. Clay could be either plasticine or mud clay. One may also use flour dough but this should not much encouraged unless it is associated with doll's play as food is a valuable commodity scarcely available to people below poverty line.
- b. **Water play with sponge** - Squeezing the sponge of water allows children to exercise their fine muscles. Apart from free play, a variety of games can be organized to make play with sponge more fun yet inculcate concept and promote physical

development. For example, children can be asked to dip the sponge in water from a large bowl or common source and fill another smaller bowl or a glass by squeezing the sponge over it. To further enhance the activity, time watch or 'who does it earlier?' can be promoted.

- c. **Organized creative activities** - Creative activities like free painting, drawing, pasting, collage and printing allows good exercise to the fine muscles but specific organized activities enhance coordination between muscles and brain. It can be done on unruled (plain) paper or even old newspapers. To conduct organized creative activities (defined as creative activities that require children to follow a few rules), children can be encouraged to fill the various forms and shapes with coloured pencils or crayons.

Squared paper (used for arithmetic in primary schools), ruled and even four-lined papers can also be used for conducting organized creative activities. Children can be asked to :

- i) make dots or circles and later cross in each of the squares.
- ii) paste beads or seeds in each of the squares.
- iii) draw lines joining each corners of the square in different directions i.e. , vertical, horizontal and diagonal.
- iv) make lines of various length and directions on four-lined paper.
- v) draw curves in different directions in different rows of the four-lined paper.
- vi) draw circles touching the ruled lines or even allow them to draw any thing but in-between the ruled lines.

All such activities promote concentration and coordination required for writing.

- d) **Beading** - Children can be given coloured plastic or wooden beads or punched cardboard rings and string to thread them together. The involves both muscle control and eye-hand coordination.
- e) **Rhythmic movements** - Rhythmic movements can be in the form of Physical Training (PT) exercises and/or dance steps. Dancing and exercising do not just train the body and promote body control, coordination and at the same time requires children to be patient. Both dancing and PT exercise can be done by either counting or by Rhythmic music.
- i) **Physical Training (PT) exercises** - Although PT exercises are part of primary school education, early introduction during preschool years prepares the children for both writing and physical activities to follow in the subsequent stage (late childhood). Simultaneously, children get an opportunity to repeat counting number that enables them to memorize numbers better especially when the children are asked to count while they make movements.
 - ii) **Dancing** - India is a country of dances. Each culture has its own traditional

and folk dances. Dances are not just enjoying a festive mood but a system of disciplining the body and mind. Music beats play a critical role in training the body and mind. The slow music enhances patience and control movements while Faust ones activate the brain to be more alert, aware of their environment and exercises brain-body coordination. Opportunities should be given for both free dancing and learning specific dance steps. Simple dance steps may be introduced through counting and soon enhanced by the music beat.

- f) **Story telling** - Story telling inculcates imagination in children. When a story is told to children it exposes them to sequence of happenings around a theme that sparkles imagination in them. Such exposures enable them to further make their own stories. Given a picture or a situation, children in their last year of preschool are able to frame their own stories so opportunities should be provided to enhance this aspect of learning.

Thus writing can be made easy and fun for children and not laborious and boring. The above activities strengthen and promote various faculties that are involved in writing and provide children the confidence to face the challenges of school system in general and writing in particular.



HELP US TO HELP YOU

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Shanti Pazhanippal

AWAKE ! THE 83rd AMENDMENT IS COMING !

Dr. Vijaya Murthy, Director,
SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education,
Mumbai

There has been considerable attention in the media about the 83rd amendment and yet very many educationists in the field of ECCEd. are not aware of what exactly it is all about and how it is going to affect the ECCEd. scenario. The deliberations on it have surfaced and vanished like bubbles in a pond while the ECCEd. professionals go about their activities in blissful ignorance !

Article 45 in the constitution provides for free and compulsory education for children up to fourteen years of age. The National Policy on Education (NPE 1986/92) reiterated this constitutional directive stating that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality shall be provided to all the children up to the age of 14 years before we enter the 21st century. The subsequent governments also endorsed this. However the committee of education ministers which was set up to examine the implications of the above resolution have recommended that the constitution be amended to make the right to free and compulsory education from six to fourteen years a fundamental right thus in the process leaving out the children in the age group of 0 to 6 years. It also recommends deletion of directive principle of state policy under article 45 thus totally ignoring the development and learning needs of the young child under 6 years of age.

In the National Consultation Meet held in New Delhi, on 25th March 98, Dr. Venita Kaul brought up this issue very clearly. The experts agreed that the proposed 83rd constitutional amendment limits the right to free and compulsory education to the age group of 6 to 14 years. This raises a major concern - can the goals towards which the bill is directed pertaining to Universal Elementary Education (U E E) be realized, without addressing the under 6 age group ?

If the right of every Indian child to quality ECCEd. is not acknowledged alongside that of elementary education and appropriate provisions not be made to ensure its implementation, how far will the bill be really effective in realizing the goals of Universal Elementary Education ?

Also keeping in view the unprecedented allocation of resources envisaged for elementary education, a question that begs attention is this - will not ensuring appropriately timed interventions at the early childhood stage serve to proportionately reduce to some extent the need for investment at the elementary stage of education ?

ECCEd. is universally acknowledged as foundation for U E E since it facilitates enrollment, retention and achievement, including girls' participation. In fact, the group unanimously agreed that the constitutional amendment of Article 45 be made thus:

instead of "...the State shall provide free and compulsory education for children up to fourteen years", it should be "...the state shall ensure that every child up to the age of 14 years is provided free quality education, appropriate to his/her stage of development

which also includes ECCEd for children under the age of six years". This was substantiated by several action plans.

Folks, this calls for our serious concern towards the whole issue and urges us to take systematic, organized measures to combat this situation and spearhead emphatically the movement of creating awareness in the community / public. If this total lack of awareness of the crucial years of ECCE can exist with the committee of education ministers assisted by their expert IAS bureaucrats, the degree of apathy and ignorance among the general public can be imagined ! Friends, however effective and competent our services e it won't suffice unless we reach out, extend and expand our horizons of functioning. Creating an awareness of the tremendous significance of ECCEd. level and providing developmentally appropriate programme to the young child should be the mission of we IAPeites.

KINDERGARTEN IN GERMANY : THE SITUATION ORIENTED APPROACH

Dr. Reeta Sonawal

Reader in Human Development
Department of Postgraduate Studies
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Kindergarten work in Germany i.e. formal education for 3 to 6 years old children has changed dramatically, during the past of 10-15 years. These changes can best be seen in the development, implementation, and evaluation of curricula that have been widely accepted within the frame of kindergarten teaching. In fact the whole reform movement can be described primarily as a shift from function-oriented approaches in both kindergarten and preschool work.

A situation-oriented Classroom: Now let us go to the beginning of the 1980's. The picture in many kindergarten classrooms has changed. They are in a typical situation-oriented classroom. The teacher is working with a heterogeneous group of 3 to 6 years old children. Within the kindergarten are three heterogeneous subgroups of children, all with equal status. Every year, part of the group leaves to enter the first grade, and new children come to the group. There is contact among the groups, with interaction of varying levels according to interest. Each group develops its own program according to the needs and the situation that occur.

The kindergarten teacher thinks that enabling children to deal competently and autonomously within their life situations is the most important learning process in life and is therefore also the most effective preparation of school. Situations such as getting to know one another and one another's families, developing group life, explaining surroundings, dealing effectively with the time outside kindergarten, and solving

problems in the neighbourhood are considered of primary importance. Class-room work is a continuing process of social learning and criticism that the kindergarten should incorporate more direct preparation for reading, writing and counting is answered according to the situation - oriented, personality centered approach.

Today the kindergarten teacher observes a scene among the children. The youngsters are role-playing a situation between a security guard and children playing outside a house. Some hours later the kindergarten teachers sit together as a team. They discuss a new theme the situation "playing in the Neighbourhood".

General Aspects of the Situation - oriented Approach :

Although the situation - oriented approach includes different schools, these schools have certain common characteristics, among these are the following assumptions :

1. Learning especially in early childhood, is a matter of experience (of the "learning by doing" approach of John Dewey). The kindergarten should therefore be seen and structured primarily as a field of experience for building a way of life through projects, activities, field trips, etc.
2. Growth can best be achieved through everyday life situations involving habits, conflicts in interactions, and fundamental childhood problems. Exercise isolated from real life are ineffectual.
3. Learning in real-life situations means including the whole personality of the child and holistic striving for self-confidence, social competence, and mastery of facts (Roth, 1971). The child has to learn to handle situations more and more independently.
4. Intense participatory observation of the everyday life of the child and his or her activities in the group is essential if the teacher wants to use the situation - oriented approach.
5. Situation - oriented work depends on constant communication with the teaching team. Innovative experiences depends on cooperation.
6. Everyday life in a kindergarten is not made up of a series of isolated activities, instead, it is a total experience in which each activity is carefully planned to contribute to the overall goal of making the child able to act adequately in life situations. However, the situation-oriented approach requires flexibility on the part of the teacher to meet the needs and interests of the individual children involved.
7. Playing and learning can be regarded as intertwined rather than separate; the multifaceted situations of role interpreting stimulate identity formation in the child (Mead, 1968)
8. Free play and instruction are equally important opportunities for learning by experience. Experiences with themselves, other children, and adults, as well as with their natural and cultural surroundings, may help children learn to handle

their own situations.

9. A flexible response to the specific needs and interests of children is necessarily included in educational planning. Individual participation is never mandatory.
10. Social education (about forms of social contact, conflicts in the group, and social structures, especially in the immediate environment) is central to the situation-oriented approach, all work can be integrated into this general field (Oertel 1977a, 1977b)
11. Mixed-age groups in kindergarten facilitate social experience. Children in heterogeneous groups can meet with friends at different stages of development; they can learn (and are stimulated to do so by the situation itself) how strongly people vary because the variety is greater; they can help and care for one another, and finally, they can participate in the program as they feel comfortable. No child is forced to meet a standard set for his or her age group because standards, if they exist, are not made explicit.
12. A flexible arrangement of room structures and surroundings can enhance the opportunities of the children to provide their own experiences. In principle, every field of children's activity can be represented within the classroom.
13. Equipment, toys, books, etc. should always be selected according to the general theme, perhaps in cooperation with parents and children. Such themes may be "The Group Life" "Exploring the Surroundings", "Children of Foreign Workers," "Children Come to School," and so forth.
14. Instead of a fixed schedule (weekly, monthly, or yearly), an open clearly oriented to the need and interest of individual children is preferable.
15. Finally, the teacher is not the all-knowing expert but a partner of children and parents, ready to benefit from their knowledge, their ideas, and their abilities to open up opportunities for learning by experience and to ensure learning.

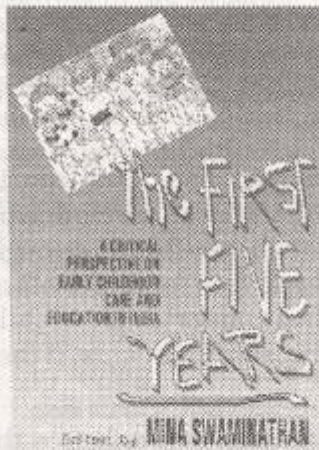
The situation-oriented approach cannot be planned only on a day-to-day basis. It is continuing process that starts as an idea but slowly comes to include all facets of the learning process. Step by step, through action and reflection, the whole educational institution undergoes an innovative process. This process can be explained in greater detail according to the different schools of the approach.

(A detailed case study of Dietrich - Bonhoeffer Kindergarten in Bremen, Germany could not be included due to limitations of space. Those who are interested may contact the editor or the author.)

BOOK REVIEW

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

Edited by **MINA SWAMINATHAN**



This pioneering volume brings together macro and micro perspectives on the Early Childhood Care and Education from distinguished specialists in the field and highlights some significant innovations in the last two decades.

The contributors explore a variety of issues including the historical framework and evolution of ECCE in India; training of concerned personnel, especially teachers; the complex interface between the intersecting needs of women and children; the vital area of costs and benefits; and the philosophical and cultural context of ECCE. The final essay explores the challenges and the issues confronting ECCE in India.

Overall, this important volume deals with a crucial but largely neglected area of vital concern to the nation's development in an up-to-date and refreshing manner. The unusual combination of case-studies and macro perspectives will make this book essential reading for all those involved with child development, education, women's issues, and development in its broadest sense.

Contributors : S. Anandalakshmy/Vrinda Datta/Vasudha Joshi/S.J.P. Karikalan/Venita Kaul/Margaret Khalakdina/Kashyap Mankodi/Anjali Mehta/Harshida Pandit/Adarsh Sharma/Jyoti Sharma/Frances Sinha/Rajalakshmi Sriram/Mina Swaminathan.

(Mina Swaminathan, President I A P E, is Honorary Director, Project ACCESS and GENDEAVOUR at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity !

A prestigious school in Mumbai is looking for a dynamic person to head its kindergarten school from next academic year. An interesting assignment for a committed ECCEd. professional. Good remuneration and growth opportunities. Write in confidence to Editor, Balak, St. John's Shishu Vihar, S.V.Road, Goregaon (W), Mumbai 104. Superscribe the envelope Bal.oct/HM

NEWS FLASH



CONGRATULATIONS

SANGEETA OHRI (IAPE Executive Vice President) has earned certification of biographical record in the 15th Edition 1998 of "The Marquis (U.S.A.) Who's Who In The World", inclusion in which is limited to those individuals who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their own fields of endeavour and who have, thereby, contributed significantly to the betterment of contemporary society.



STREAMLINING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

A meeting on Streamlining Early Childhood Education services was organized by National Institute of Public Co-operation & Child Development on 26th and 27th March 98 at its office in New Delhi.

The objectives of the meeting was to review the status of ECCEd. in the country, to discuss the minimum standards for ECCEd. and to discuss ways and means of ensuring quality by way of accreditation and licensing. The participants included experts in education, government officials, representatives of NGOs and women's groups, media personnel and social activists.

The emerging recommendations have been taken up by NIPCCD for documentation and implementation.



N.C.E.R.T. NATIONAL CONSULTATION MEET

A national level one day meeting of experts, activists and administrators in the areas related to ECCEd. to deliberate on specific issues emerging from the 83rd constitutional amendment bill of 1997 was held on 25th March, 98 in New Delhi. IAPE participated in a big way and contributed significantly. The specific issues emerging from the proposed bill in the context of making elementary education a fundamental right was deliberated upon.

In the discussion paper, Dr. Venita Kaul emphasized how ECCEd. programmes are aimed towards addressing health, nutritional well-being and psycho-social development of the young child. After considerable deliberations by the various experts it was resolved that the proposed 83rd constitutional amendment limits the right to free and compulsory education to the age group of 6 to 14 years which would be counterproductive as it ignores the developmental needs of 0 to 6 years.

BALAK

Third Quarter 1998

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