

TEACHING PRIMARY CHILDREN

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ENTERING A CLASSROOM

The first step to the school

The entry of a child to a school is as exciting as an entry into an alien land. The child is haunted by the fear of the unknown, exposure to unfamiliar situations, a move from a world of spontaneity to a world of order. The child is forced into a routine – a process that conditions the types of responses he or she should exhibit for every stimulus. The child looks at the environment with a sense of suspicion, a sense of wonder and awe.

The environment is quite new, and the management of this change appears quite difficult for the child initially. Hence the classrooms for the preparatory classes provide not only a heterogeneity of responses to the same stimuli, but the learning experiences are also varied and heterogeneous. Therefore, the role of the teachers in the preparatory classes assumes a great significance. Apart from imparting the basic knowledge which they are called upon to do, they need to understand the child psychology with its finest nuances and act as counselors, facilitators and change managers.

Facilitating change

The strategies to be adopted by the teachers handling the nursery classes need careful scrutiny and attention. The strategies adopted by the teachers should help in: -

- **Eliminating of fear**

Fear is the most fundamental feeling of human species. In the early childhood the child gets into this emotion quite quickly. Fear for a new environment, fear from new people, fear of the unknown and fear from new ventures are quite common the children. Hence concerted efforts should be made to eliminate the fear so that children can adapt to a new environment and a new set of people.

- **Providing a sense of reassurance**

The entry into a new environment including school calls for a sense of reassurance for the child. The child was to know and feel that everything around is safe and alright. There is no cause for anxiety. The child wants a hand to hold on to step into a new role. The child looks for assured support. The parents and teachers provide this support.

- **Giving a sense of comfort**

Physical as well as emotional blocks create a sense of discomfort to the child. In a school environment the ambience of the classroom, the seating arrangement, access to facilities,

peer interactions, teacher-child relationships, learning processes and many other things are possible instruments of discomfort. They can create a mental block for the learners. It is important to ensure that all stakeholders take steps to eliminate the roadblocks, if any, to enhance the level of comfort of the learners.

- **Providing an atmosphere of homeliness**

The child has been spending the former years of life at home. The child has been enjoying the company of the near and dear. The child has been showered with all love and affection of the family members. The requirements of the child have been met from time to time without any constraints. The pranks and disorderly behaviour of the child have been tolerated and sometimes enjoyed. The change of environment from home to school creates a threat to this freedom. The child is called upon to fit into an orderly behaviour. The child is required to follow certain rules and regulations. The child faces the threat of punishment to every act of omission and commission. The teachers need to understand this change of order and hence create a homely atmosphere as far as possible, so that the change management is possible and easy.

- **Developing a feeling of ownership**

The child has been quite possessive about the people and materials at home. Freedom for mobility within the environment of home was not inhibited. The child had the opportunity to touch, feel and communicate without any reservation. The child created a sense of ownership with all immediate environments. The change projects a set of new things where the child is required to identify with things differently. The concept of school property, the idea of sharing materials and properties, the concept of co-existence, caring for others, are the new concepts introduced in the classroom. Hence the child must develop the idea of joint ownership or social living. Teachers need to develop this idea in an acceptable manner.

- **Motivating for participation**

As the child is entering a new world of functions and interactions, the child comes with a set of inhibitions born out of fear and other instruments of anxiety. The child must open up to this new environment. The child must recognize the people and events around it as normal causations. The child should learn to interact with them in a free and effective manner.

This calls for substantial amount of motivation on the part of the learner. Teacher, parents and the curriculum must provide the required motivation to the learner to break the barriers. Motivation will also help the children with slow adoptability to move faster towards the process of integration. The inputs of motivation must be examined case wise as there are some which are general and others trainable.

This calls for a strategic planning in handling the entire ambience of the classroom. The teachers shall use such skills of pedagogy that would help in addressing the above issues.

Causes for fear: -

Why do the children develop a fear about the school?

1. They move to an unfamiliar place
2. They are introduced to a group of unknown people.
3. They feel a threat to their privacy.
4. They feel an interference with their time and space.
5. They are afraid of the loss of relationship that has existed all along.
6. They feel difficulty in developing a new set of relationships
7. They feel their freedom challenged.
8. They are afraid of being called upon to do things which they have not been exposed to.
9. They are expected to cope with the emotions and feelings of others.
10. They are expected to maintain an order that they had never kept.
11. They feel unnerved to think the way they are taught to think
12. They are exposed to visuals and auditory exercises in which either they have no aptitude or have not yet developed an attitude.

Therefore, it is the primary duty of the school and the concerned teachers to appreciate the above concerns and take steps that would help in addressing these issues.

Reassuring a child

This can be done by installing a sense of belongingness, a sense of confidence and reassuring them of their privacy and freedom.

How can this be done? How do we reassure a child that “All is well and that they should feel comfortable?”

The following points must be kept in mind: -

1. The classroom and the school environment must be child friendly.

It is important that the ergonomic design of the classroom takes note of all the basic requirements of the child. Some issues which need attention are: -

- The location
- Access to the classroom
- The position of the blackboard

Sometimes the students have to: -

- Walk long distances to reach the classroom
- Walk through dusty ground to reach the classroom
- Cross the school bus traffic or cycle traffic inside the campus
- Get through many staircases to reach the floor or the room

These could be avoided to prevent the students becoming tired mentally before they enter the classroom.

2. The formative classes may be kept at a distance from the classroom of the senior students.

In some schools the students must cross through classrooms where the senior students are to attend. Groups of adolescent students standing on the way and talking, gossiping and interacting could have an impact on the minds of the students. Sometimes senior students running around might collide against the youngsters. These could be avoided by keeping the classrooms of the senior students at farther places or in separate floors. Whenever difficulties in the interaction between the younger children and the senior students are observed, the teachers should bring.

3. The classroom must be airy and should have sufficient light.

The students in the primary/nursery classes are likely to become physically tired quickly and fall asleep or become drowsy. Absence of adequate light or air catalyzes this process and hence the students may lose their attention, motivation or interest in the learning. It is important to take care of these minimal requirements.

4. The furniture should be specifically designed to suit to the needs of the students.

All types of furniture would not suit the comfort level of the young students. It is important to design furniture which would specifically (taking the ergonomic requirements in view) suit these students. The material, the size, the height, the seating space, leg room and several other issues need to be considered while planning. The comfort level of the furniture has a significant role to play in enhancing the attention, the quality of learning, the quality of peer as well as teacher-child interactions.

5. Arrangements of furniture should be done in a way that does not threaten the privacy and personal freedom of the learner.

Very often furniture is arranged in a linear fashion as is done in lecture rooms. In the formative classes, the learning is multifold and highly interactive. Hence arrangement of furniture must facilitate the process. Furniture ill organized tend to affect the personal freedom of the learner in terms of mobility, sitting postures, writing postures, visibility, audibility and interaction with peers. Round table arrangements, distributive participation models and other differential patterns could be adopted as per the nature of the subject and time.

6. Prototype of classical classrooms exhibiting the authority of the teacher must be dispensed with.

The position of the teacher in the classroom conveys a lot of meaning. While the position of the teacher should indicate the access, approach, equity, visibility and audibility, any position that would show a sense of militant authority should be avoided. The position and posture of the teacher may create mental blocks on the young minds and feelings of fear, suspicion and threat may be felt by the child. Hence the teacher should be mobile, show flexible postures exhibiting reasonable intimacy and ownership to the child.

7. The classrooms should have easy access to washrooms.

The young children are often tempted to use the washrooms. On many occasions they tend to rush in the last minute without lack of control. Sometimes indigestion due to the food brought and consumed by them leads to stomach disorders compelling them to use the washrooms. Teachers often tend to silence them and do not let them move instantaneously sometimes leading to avoidable discomfort. It is therefore important if the classrooms are in the same floor and reasonably close to the washrooms. Elevations to the washrooms, access to the relief basins and wash taps should be designed taking into consideration their requirements.

8. The classrooms could be preferably designed in such a way that either the playground or an amphitheatre is accessible.

Some schools tend to have a mini-playground or an amphitheatre attached to the primary classrooms. That helps the students to organize themselves in proximity and move from the classrooms without any hindrance. Further they could be saved from injuries and dust.

The role of the teacher

To summarize, the teachers should keep the following points in their mind while entering a classroom for effective transaction: -

1. The teachers should avoid militant or aggressive postures.

Both verbal and non-verbal communication has a great impact on the young minds. They tend to set attitudes and emotional structures in the minds of the learners. Hence adoption of aggressive and non-militant postures and use of such body language has an impact on the learning pattern. Sometimes they tend to set at naught the interests of the learners in as these postures are highly inhibitive.

2. The teachers should be mobile and exhibit good inter-personnel relationship.

As intensive learning takes place more at the zone of intimacy or proximate zone at the formative level teachers need to exhibit a good inter-personal relationship. The following points are worthy of consideration: -

- a. A pleasing smile
- b. A word of appreciation
- c. An act of motivation
- d. Helping to improve self-image
- e. A sense of justice and equity

That apart, teachers should be reasonably mobile. Mobility facilitates freedom, a greater universe for approach and participation, an access and flexibility.

3. The teachers should be communicative.

Communication does not necessarily refer to the use and practice of language and vocabulary. Communication is complete only when the message reaches the listener in the same way it is conceived. Distortion of communication takes place either due to excessive thrust or inadequate thrust on the required fields of communication. Adoption of role play, songs, and other histrionic skills as effective tools for expression are important.

4. The verbal language should be soft, personal and persuasive.

Students are likely to fall into emotional inadequacies if treated in a rude or an indifferent manner. They fall into an identity crisis on developing a sense of inferiority. Hence, they must be handled carefully through soft, personal and persuasive language. The language used by the teacher should be supportive, healing and encouraging. Verbal admonitions with contemptuous language must be avoided as they are likely to cause not only emotional trauma on the learner, but sometimes the consequent shame or remorse, may lead to avoidable suicides or other social problems.

5. Discouraging, suspicious and comparative statements must be avoided.

Statements that would discourage a learner like “Stupid, incorrigible fellow, useless guy” must be avoided. Maligning a child in the presence of others, comments which are not warranted for a situation should not be used. Comparison of any two children in the class on two non-comparable can be a serious misadventure. Special care must be taken especially while dealing with children who are differentially abled or partial challenges.

6. Statements and actions that would generate stress, anxiety and isolation should be avoided.

Sometimes verbal statements of teachers do generate stress and anxiety among the students. Some of these statements may be intended to speed up the activities of the learners; some of

them are of comparative nature with others; some of the statements could be on the habits and mannerisms of the child. These do have a direct or indirect impact on the psyche of the learners. Teachers should consciously avoid such statements.

7. Students should not be stopped or curtailed from speaking or curtailing their emotions.

The learners of the formative stage often tend to speak or act in a spontaneous manner. Their words or emotions come without any inhibition and in the natural order. Any attempt to curb or curtail these responses of the learner may have a negative value. While it is important that we should help them to follow some order, outright rejection of these statements or asking them to remain quiet while they want to give some responses may be demotivating to the learners.

8. Punitive statements and actions must be avoided.

Statements and actions which are exclusively punitive in nature must be dispensed with. Such statements have a retrograde effect on the growth pattern of the learners. Sometimes they induce negative emotions like fear, anxiety, regret, jealousy, enmity etc., They may also lead to withdrawal symptoms on the part of the learners leading to denial of enterprise, risk-taking, adventure and kill the imaginative faculties.

9. Statements that would reflect on the physical stature, inadequacies, behavioural patterns, mannerisms and family traits shall not be made.

Personal statements relating to the physical stature, body features, health inadequacies, family traits and other mannerisms must be totally avoided. These to development of inferiority, aggressive responses, and misadventures. These may also lead to development of low esteem and kill the creative faculties. Sometimes they lead to violent responses and assault on the teachers or other fellow students. They also may lead to development of set attitudes. Very often the inhibitive mind set of certain students is borne out of such statements.

10. Teachers should avoid generalizations.

There is a tendency on the part of most teachers to “generalize” issues and making a comment or a holistic observation. Statements like “Suresh is incompetent” are too much a generalized statement. This observation might come from a mathematics teacher who finds Suresh inadequate in her subject. Suresh’s lack of interest in the subject may be due to several reasons. However, he may be too good in painting, a good composer, a good sportsman or may have several other latent talents which a student good enough in Mathematics doesn’t have. A generalized statement might have a serious and long-term impact on the profile of the learner. Teachers need to understand that the learner has to be assessed in context and any generalized statement is neither valid nor does make a meaning.

11. Do not Brand students.

Branding of students based on caste, community, language, family background creates jealousy and ill-will among the students especially with their peers. They have an impact on the content and methods of their learning.

12. The learners should be encouraged to exhibit ownership with the class, the peers and the teacher.

The accomplishment of any task becomes effective when the individual becomes possessive about it. It gives a sense of belongingness and ownership. Every task becomes personal and it enhances the commitment of the learner towards the task. Teachers should take all possible efforts to create an ambience in the classrooms which would enhance the level of ownership of the students towards the classroom and the school. Concepts of neatness, order, adherence to rules and regulations would all be possible once the ownership for the organization is built.

13. Students who feel insecure and lost must be quickly and effectively rehabilitated to the mainstream through appropriate strategies and should not be allowed to hang on with insecurity for long.

It is quite possible that some students may feel lost or out of suit in the new environment. It is also possible that some students might get into some minor psychological depressions in the formative stage due to the following reasons: -

- Initial formal separation from the family
- Inability to cope with the new physical environment
- Inability to cope with the new peers
- Inability to cope with changing food timings/food patterns
- Inability to cope with the noise level in the school
- Inability to cope with the personality and methods of the teacher
- Inability to cope with learning process

It is important that the school and the teachers should take all possible initiatives to de-stress the child from all the above possible psychological issues and rehabilitate them. The longer is the duration for rehabilitation the lesser is the ability of the child to cope. It would be advisable to look into the individual cases, consult the members of the family and take their assistance. It may also be advisable to seek the help of the child psychologists wherever found necessary.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF THE CHILD

There are several issues which relate to the privacy of the learners in the school environment which needs to be understood and handled.

Some of these are: -

1. The child is uncomfortable with the uniform, tie, shoes or other personal ware and they are unable to communicate.

In many cases the students who have been trained to live with casual dresses at home, are now required to wear tailor-made formal dresses. They are required to follow a dress code. Some of features dress codes are quite often not conducive to the local climate or geo-cultural features. However, the schools tend to prescribe them to project an image of the school. Some causes for the discomfort are: -

- The fittings are tight
- The colour of the uniform is not liked by the child
- The tie is not comfortable
- The student has to sit for long hours with the shoes
- There is a lot of sweating inside the socks
- Some schools tend to insist wearing a coat, a blazer or additional wear

There could be several other reasons too which the child is unable to communicate.

2. The child is hungry and is unable to tell the teacher.

Very often, parents tend to hurry up with the breakfast of the child in the morning. Sometimes the school sessions are so early that the child has no inclination for an early breakfast and takes the same under the compulsion of the parents. It may cause indigestion. Sometimes they tend to overeat under compulsion leading to stomach discomfort. There are cases where the child does not eat adequately in the morning and feels hungry quite early. Change of timings of food from home to school is another issue with which the child tends to cope. A hungry child as well as a child is thus unable to communicate with the teacher for the following reasons: -

- Feeling of shame
- Fear of the self-image being affected
- Fear of being reprimanded publicly
- Fear of being ridiculed in the presence of others

Teachers need to understand the above critical issues which are quite personal for each child and help them to overcome these problems.

3. The child wants to use the washrooms and is inhibited from expressing.

In the early childhood, the children find it difficult to control the call of nature. In many cases fear, stress, anxiety and several psychological issues lead to a requirement of releasing the body waste products at unscheduled times. There are cases when children tend to urinate in the classroom out of fear. Generally, children also have a tendency to go to a washroom when some other child opts to go. Teachers often find that such demands are bogus, concocted and tend to ignore them or silence them. Such refusals are incorrect. Teachers shall appreciate the needs of children – both psychological and physiological and help them to sort out the issues.

4. The child is having some sickness and is unable to understand

Many young children suffer from diseases and health disorders which have not been identified or they are not able to communicate. Some simple disorders include: -

- Dust allergy
- Bronchitis
- Tooth disorders
- Stomach upsets
- Skin allergies
- Stammering
- Poor visibility
- Colour blindness
- Hearing disorders
- Epilepsy
- Psychological depression

Teachers should be able to understand the limitations arising out of such inconveniences in the process of learning. This calls for a continuous dialogue with the parents, sometimes with the assistance of the school counselor. Quite often parents tend to hide some of these problems from the school authorities and inform only when the child faces a crisis in the school premises.

5. The child is feeling sleepy and is unable to do so.

In many cases when the child enters the premises of the school, the scheduled sleep hours of the children at home may be different. They might have the practice of sleeping during the daytime. Suddenly when they enter the school and are required to keep awake and show their attention and concentration, they may not be in a position to cope. Teachers may find the child sleeping during the course of an active class or unable to bestow any attention feeling drowsy.

Teachers should know that these are normal problems of a change management process in the formative years of schooling. Such children should be taken separate care of and helped to get into the mainstream slowly through attitudinal change.

6. The child is disturbed psychologically by some events at home and lives with it.

Verbal and physical abuses of the child at home are a matter of great concern. Many times, the children are unable to speak it out openly and brood over them when alone. They carry the pain, or the emotional trauma associated with such experiences even to the classroom. It is very difficult to understand the background or the context of such events. Sometimes even parents do not come to know of such abuses as child associates such things with a personal shame and assault on their ego.

7. The child is obsessed with parental conflicts and the mind is preoccupied emotionally.

Quite often conflicts and quarrels between parents and other family members might have a serious impact on the behavioural pattern, lifestyle and the learning process of the students. The “speed syndrome” of the morning hours in most families is associated with a patterned tension and the child is trained to carry such a tension alongside to the school. The inability of the parents to adjust to their own timings as well as to that of the child, deprives of both what they are due during those stages of growth.

The children understand the parental conflicts easily: -

- Through their verbal exchanges
- Through their body language
- Through the drama of activities
- Through the emotional outbursts
- Through the responses received for the questions
- Through the support system available at a point of time

The child compares oneself with peers and feels inferior or defeated.

8. The child is prejudiced with the love and care exhibited to a peer by the parents in the absence of a similar treatment.

A common thing among school going children is their observation of the comfort level and the utilities available to their neighbours and peers. Quite often this may lead to a sense of inadequacy, low self-esteem, jealousy and possibly violent outburst too.

Some reasons for such prejudices could be: -

- There is a visible economic disparity in the family background of any two students

- There is a social disparity between the peers
- The support systems available for a pair of students are different
- The learning style and behaviour are different
- There is a greater exposure to one child as against the other
- The love and care for a particular child is unavailable to the other child
- The parents of one child come from an educated background while other is not
- The child believes another to have greater personal attention in the classroom or a preferred status
- The health status of one child could be superior to another child
- The child feels insecure in the company of the other due to bullying or other reasons
- There is an inferiority in one because of the food items brought and consumed by another
- A particular child has an extrovert personality while the other is an introvert

There could be several other reasons for the prejudices. While it may not be possible for the teacher and the school to seek remedies for all the above, nevertheless it is very important that teachers tend to observe and locate the causes of such issues so that they can be appropriately responded either by the teacher or through any other intervention.

9. The child is unable to establish a rapport with the neighbor in the classroom.

The inability of a child to establish a rapport with the neighbour may be borne out of any of the prejudices listed above. But there could be several other reasons for the inability of one child to establish rapport with the other.

Some of the broad considerations for such a situation are: -

- The understanding and competency of the languages of both the students are different.
- The vocabulary and style of speech of one learner is not compatible to another learner
- A child exhibits withdrawal symptoms because of any of the above issues
- A child is stammering and hence would like to have a few contacts only
- The aggressive nature of one child is not liked by the others
- A mental model or belief about another child is set in the mind of one child and he/she is unable to change that mental model
- A child doesn't want to expose one's own inadequacies

10. The child is unable to establish a rapport with the teacher.

- The profile of the teacher is unimpressive to the child
- The child feels the teacher is highly authoritative and hence keeps away
- The child believes that teacher has certain preferences and hence is disillusioned with the teacher.

- The language used by the teacher is not understood by the child adequately and hence there is an intellectual barrier
- The teacher appears haughty and spreading negative vibrations and hence there is an emotional barrier
- The teacher threatens of taking the child to task by informing the parents and hence the child fears of being misjudged and misinformed to the parents
- The body language and the posture of the teacher are child-friendly
- The teacher is always conceived as a judging or evaluating persona and hence the child wants to keep a distance

There could be several other reasons too. Therefore, it is important that teachers do carry with them a positive disposition and a friendly aura so that they are always liked by the students in the classroom.

11. The child is being abused and is unable to understand or communicate.

There are some cases where the child is being abused at home.

- Physical abuse of the child by engaging him/her in hard labour
- Snatching away their time of study for employment in domestic chorus, babysitting etc., for meeting economic needs,
- Engaging a child into wedlock at early years or discussion involving the marriage of a girl or a boy at a later period within the chosen members of the family,
- Ill-treatment of a child against their own brother or sister or any other member of the family,
- Denial of basic rights to one child as against another
- Discrimination due to gender
- Discrimination due to poor health or physical stature
- Discrimination due to physical handicap or emotional inadequacies

are some of the generally known reasons. In these circumstances, the child feels abused, humiliated, exploited and marginalized. The child is unable to communicate the feelings with anyone else, as in many cases it is the closest family members who are the people involved in such abuses.

Such children need adequate care and attention, counseling and help to get back to normalcy. These might have an impact on the learning process, performance profile and development of attitudes.

12. The child is unhappy with the quality or the quantity of the food being given and cannot help eating.

Malnutrition and under-nutrition are two vital causes which have impact on the learning process and growth. Staple food, fast food, food without nutrients, lead to lack of energy, lack of attention, grasp and concentration of the child. Schools and teachers need to take note of such cases and bring them to the attention of parents for appropriate remedies. It is important that parents should be advised to give children: -

- fresh food
- combination of vegetables
- fruits
- easily digestible food
- less oily/spicy food
- balanced food

Sometimes the food is not tasty or less digestible to the children. Parents need to be counselled.

13. The child is haunted by some fantasy or fear of the unknown.

Sometimes the children have some fantasies or fear in their mind. Stories of ghosts, angels, adventures, travelogues, suspense stories etc., create sometimes fantasies in the minds of the children. They try to identify with the characters, events, dreams and places. Sometimes this leads to development of some mental models and resultant behavioural patterns. Similarly, the fear of the unknown environment, people, events etc., could possibly haunt the minds of the children. These have impact on the learning process of the children. Teachers need to handle the specific cases of such students and handle them with care.

14. The child is having a learning difficulty and is unable to understand or communicate.

Some students in the primary classes might have certain types of learning difficulties. The child may not be in a position to understand the cause of the learning difficulties and communicate it appropriately.

The reasons for the learning difficulties could be many.

- There is a fixed mental model for learning in the child, which does not facilitate learning.
- There is a psychological block that inhibits learning
- The child has no aptitude for a particular subject
- The child is unable to negotiate with the curriculum
- There is a physiological co-ordination difficulty.
- There is an external input which causes a mental conflict while initiating to do a work.
- There is a physiological problem which is not evident
- The child has a preference for certain other methods of learning than what is prescribed
- The child is unable to cope with the speed of inputs

- The child feels negated, marginalized in a group of learners and hence exhibits withdrawal symptoms.

There could be several other reasons including Dyslexia, ADHD and other problems which need a psychological or clinical attention. Teachers would do well to understand, appreciate these problems and suggest appropriate remedies in consultation with the school counselor, principal and the parents.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHILD

Effective communication with the child is important for enhancement of the quality of learning. Teachers need to adopt appropriate strategies to ensure effective communication. The strategy has to be holistic and multi-faceted. Some of the methods they could follow are as under: -

1. Develop appropriate body language

The disposition of the teacher is critical in the classroom environment at the formative level. The following non-verbal communication of the teacher has a retrograde effect on the development of rapport with the child.

- A frowning face,
- A grin
- A taunting posture
- An aggressive look
- A sarcasm on face
- A slapping or hitting posture
- An unkind touch
- An indifferent outlook

The children tend to closely watch the expressions of the teacher and respond psychologically either through positive relationship or through symptoms of withdrawal. The teachers should train themselves to understand the implications of their non-verbal communication and then resort to such modes of non-verbal communication that would help in positive relationships and reassurance.

2. Understand the significance of Intimate Zone

In the formative years of learning, the children tend to appreciate persons or things which are proximate, reachable and accessible, and build a rapport. Learning is effective and facilitated in the proximate or intimate zone. Hence teachers should tend to be close, adopt more kinesthetic postures.

Some suggestions are: -

- Stand close to the learner
- Bend the body to exhibit flexibility in approach
- Look into the eyes of the learner
- Give a soft touch on the upper arm or shoulder to exhibit your concern
- Favour with a smile
- Acknowledge and praise the completion of a task

- Give public recognition for an excellent performance
- Support and help the child when feeling inadequate and lost

3. Facilitate communication

Communication is very vital to holistic growth. Effective communication facilitates the following: -

- Elimination of fear
- Verbal skills
- Non-verbal skills
- Self-confidence
- Self-concept and image
- Thinking skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Intrapersonal skills

Facilitating communication at the formative level is important. This helps in developing right attitudes towards people and events.

A child facilitated with the communication skills would be able to: -

- Convey personal needs
- Speak fearlessly
- Speak assertively
- Develop vocabulary
- Develop language skills
- Give an expression to imagination
- Express creatively

4. Enable thinking skills

Educational psychologists believe that it is important to facilitate neuron networking in the brain. The greater the networking of neurons the greater is the ability to think. Therefore, the teachers should facilitate development of thinking skills. Some of the strategies by which teachers could enable the same are: -

- Facilitate play
- Facilitate questioning
- Facilitate divergent thinking
- Facilitate lateral thinking
- Facilitate observation
- Facilitate listening
- Facilitate conversation

- Facilitate reading
- Facilitate creative arts, poetry and theatre skills

Very often the “right answer syndrome” of the teachers inhibits the thinking process of the students.

The development of thinking skills among students would help in development of: -

- Rational thinking
- Objective outlook
- Analytical approach
- Flowcharting of ideas
- Development of thought structures and frames
- Ability to restructure and reorganize thoughts
- Critical review of concepts and statements

5. Provide Motivation

Providing motivation at the formative levels of learning is very important. In the absence of support and motivation, the child is unable to develop, express or perform to the fullest level.

In the absence of motivation, the child is: -

- Unsure of one’s competencies
- Unwilling to experiment
- Inadequate in communication
- Poor in enterprise
- Unwilling to risk

Further, the child: -

- Suffers from a sense of insecurity
- Doubts the latent creative talents
- Exhibits withdrawal symptoms
- Compromises with mediocrity
- Sometimes becomes self-defeating
- Yields to self-pity

The teacher needs to provide adequate motivational inputs to the learner through: -

- Creation of an appropriate environment
- Designing the content suitably
- Planning the delivery mode
- Selecting suitable techniques

- Using of words, structures of language
- Expression of inspirational body language
- Infusing a sense of confidence
- Facilitating self-image
- Providing opportunities
- Recognizing talents
- Rewarding performance

How does motivation help the child?

Provision of motivational inputs helps the child in the following manner: -

- Provides self-confidence
- Empowers enterprise
- Sets in achievement syndrome
- Catalyzes action
- Increases speed of performance
- Enables differential thinking
- Helps in goal setting
- Breaks the barriers for creativity
- Encourages risk-taking
- Enables effective communication
- Facilitates search for opportunities
- Helps in perseverance
- Supports early recovery from failures

In the formative years, motivation is very critical to set in right attitudes, aptitudes and in bringing out the latent talents of the child. Motivation helps the child in opening up the mental pabulum and expands the horizons of activity and opportunities. In many cases, motivation is instrumental to the process of self-actualization.

6. Create environment for building Emotional Intelligence

The initial few years of schooling are very important in developing many powerful domains of emotional intelligence. The development of brain is fast during these years and hence the child makes meaning, forms opinions, builds emotional connectivity and develops attitudes. Emotions are often expressions of the intra-personal dialogues or with the immediate environment. The events, the feelings, the results get embedded in the mind in the form of certain impressions or meanings. They often come to play at the call of a situation or an event. History is evidence to the fact many of the behavioural patterns of the individuals are outcome of minor emotional inputs or trauma experienced at the formative years.

There are evidences to show that some children suffer from the following: -

- Emotional blandness
- Truncated emotions
- Curtailed emotions
- Emotional conflicts
- Emotional tantrums

Emotions can be effectively used by the teachers to help children to understand their own behaviour, the context of their expressions and the changes required in behavioural patterns. Teachers should help the children to express their emotions in an effective and balanced manner so that they are helpful and yield the desired results. Volatile expressions, aggressive postures, uncontrolled outbursts which are negative and harmful must be moderated so that they manifest into positive expressions and show the beauty of the personality.

In the formative years, emotions are natural, untamed and holistic. The children do not tend to mask themselves as far as possible. They are born out of inner feelings and hence reflect the truth of their feelings. Teachers need to understand the same and help in building a balanced emotional structure.

7. Facilitate developing mental models

Learning is quite often associated with the development of mental models. The learner tends to structure the concept, the logic, the skill or any other related learning domain in the form of a convenient, easily accessible mental model. Whenever called for, the learner recalls and structures that model for use, for reconstruction and re-engineering. Howard Gardner observes “Mental models determine not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action.” Similarly Chris Argyris of Harvard university puts it “ Although people do not (always) behave congruently with their espoused theories (what they say), they do behave congruently with their theories-in-use (mental models)” Hence teachers should help in development of appropriate mental models during learning. These models often decide: -

- The parameters of learning
- The quality of learning
- The preferred domains of learning
- Memory building and retention
- Development of logic and sequencing
- Sequencing action
- Ability to analyze and concentrate
- Development of personality traits
- Facilitation of role-play
- Ability to be enterprising

There are many other impacts of the mental models developed by the learners as a part of their learning process. It is important that schools and teachers should facilitate the learners in developing appropriate and effective mental models which would help them to grow in tandem with their environment.

8. Help in developing personal mastery

Defining personal mastery Peter M. Senge defines in his book “The Fifth Discipline” – “It means approaching one’s life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to a reactive viewpoint.” He adds “For such a person, vision is a calling than simply a good idea.” It is important to know that every child is able to envision a life of one’s own, based on aptitudes, interests, capabilities, possibilities and opportunities. Teachers need to help children realize this vision, this calling of the soul. It is facilitating creativity. It is empowering a new human resource. It is adding a new dimension to the world. Even this function of the teacher is an exhibition of his or her professional expertise.

In the pursuit of personal mastery, one must identify the intrinsic desires and follow them. They need to be highly focused. Peter M Senge again observes “The ability to focus on the ultimate intrinsic desires, not only on secondary goals, is a cornerstone of personal mastery.” Given the opportunities to acquire personal mastery, the learner tends to have the following attributes: -

- Has a high level of motivation
- Is self-actualized
- Has a high level of commitment
- Develops self-concept and self-esteem
- Follows constructivist pattern of learning
- Becomes highly imaginative and innovative
- Exhibits a sense of enterprise
- Pursues excellence

It should be understood that personal mastery is not necessarily an attribute of a gifted child or a genius. It is not exhibition of an outstanding academic profile alone. It goes more with a specific field of interest the learner has, which is unique to him or her and is exhibitivie of the inner calling of the individual.

9. Empower the creative urge

There is a latent creative urge in every child. There is a desire, a dream, a call for an action, an urge to perform. The child wants to unfold oneself through a thought, an action and a creation. This urge expresses in manifold forms. It cannot be conditioned. It cannot be trained. It cannot be curbed. It must be facilitated. It has to be empowered. It finds its way through one form or the other. It manifests itself into every possible action. Robert Fritz states: -

“Throughout history almost every culture has had art, music, dance, architecture, poetry, storytelling pottery and sculpture. The desire to create is not limited by beliefs, nationality, creed, educational background, or era. The urge resides in all of us. It is not limited to the arts, but can encompass all of life, from the mundane to the profound.”

Teachers need to realize the essence of this urge in every child seeking to unfold and manifest itself. Every possible opportunity must be given to the child to develop, to power and to express this creative urge.

How can we achieve this? Some possible steps teachers could adopt are: -

- Enable communication and expression
- Help in building positive attitudes
- Facilitate extended learning
- Infuse a sense of optimism
- Help build a vision
- Facilitate pursuit of excellence
- Avoid judgments

Children who tend to be creative are quite often non-compromising. They do not worry what others would think. They do not wait for applause or a word of praise. They remain engaged in their pursuits. It is the inner satisfaction and the joy of performing that really matters to them.

In a normal classroom, however, teachers expect the children to fall into set orders of behaviour and any aberration is viewed as an erroneous behaviour. Any attempt to mainstream the learners into certain expected social or cultural norms should not be an impediment to the urge of creativity.

10. Facilitate value addition

Learning is most often perceptual. The perception of an individual learner modifies or impacts the content and the process of learning. In this process of individualized learning, the child tends to add one's own value to the content and the processes. This is borne out the uniqueness and the individuality of the child. It is important that the teachers should help in this value addition. This helps in developing a kind of ownership to the learning context, content and subject. This also helps in development of a shared vision in a concept.

Enabling value addition to the content of learning helps the learner in the following ways: -

- Flexibility in learning
- Individualizing learning
- Contextualizing learning
- Development of new perspectives

- Relieving stress in learning
- Emotional attachment to learning
- Transfer of learning
- Power for continuous learning

The formative years of learning are very critical to future trends in learning. Teachers should be able to adopt/adapt some of the suggestions listed above to make their classrooms vibrant, active and meaningful.

TEACHING NURSERY CLASSES

We had been looking into various issues related to the behavioural styles of the learners who enter a school for the first time. We also observed that the students who enter a school premises normally come along with one or several of the following feelings: -

- Doubt
- Suspense
- Surprise
- Fear
- Curiosity
- Insecurity

They do not have a clear idea about the objectives of their presence in the school situation for some time. To them learning is not a calling, not a commitment, not a product, but just a process. Slowly, they discover the thrills of the journey, the roadmap for their journey, the goals to be set in, the objectives of the process and the dreams to be realized.

The role of the teacher, as has been emphasized, is to facilitate realizing these goals. The facilitation and empowerment process is designed in such a way that it is unique to the physical, mental and emotional state of the child. Moreover, at the formative stage, the process should be child friendly and is fine-tuned to the emotional state of the learner. The normal mode of delivery of the contents of learning at this stage consists of: -

- Rhymes
- Story telling
- Music
- Dance
- Drama
- Role-play
- Drawing and painting
- Games

Teachers need to understand the specific role of each of the above modes of delivery, the styles and the implications of the process of delivery, the objectives of each of the above processes.

Why Teach Rhymes?

One of the most established modes of content delivery at the formative stage is rhymes. The rhymes normally consist of a caricature of words articulated in a manner that they convey one or more simple meanings which fulfill one of the following objectives: -

- Adds value to a learner’s physical, mental or emotional stature
- Enables building a belief system
- Brings about an awareness related to a thing, an event, a place or a process
- Encourages fantasy and imagination,
- Familiarizes the learner to certain courses of actions or events in the life process.
- Explains the structure of relationships between people, events, systems or structures

The objectives are realized through a delivery system which contains a combination of the following: -

- Design
- Meter
- Rhythm
- Actions
- Expression

Each of the above tools has a very significant impact on the learning process. Teachers need to apply their mind in understanding the role of each of the above tools in teaching of the nursery rhymes.

Design

The word design in each of the nursery rhymes is intended to convey a specific meaning to the learner. They help in shaping, nurturing and facilitating a structure, a thought or a mental frame. Sometimes they aim at providing a motivation, a curiosity and propose an action. Sometimes they are aimed at integrating the cognitive, the affective and the psycho-motor domains of the learning process.

Let us analyze a few situations: -

If one would examine the design of the rhyme “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star; how I wonder what you are.....” one would realize the two major implications of the above line – one the child is exposed to a process of curiosity, a process of wondering.

The sense of wonder is very significant to human thought process. It kindles a sense of curiosity, motivation to understand the unknown, a sense of appreciation, and a spirit of inquiry.

Similarly, if one would analyze the rhyme “Mary had a little lamb” one would see the following objectives being conveyed: -

- Caring of the animals
- The process of growth
- The relevance of wool

- The need and capacity to share
- The significance of animals in the biosphere

Teachers who understand the above and similar designs of the words in the rhymes would be able to contextualize the rhymes and convey the objectives in an impressionable manner. Teacher need to understand the life and spirit of the words and should be able to convey them in a suitable manner. For achieving this, they take help of several other tools like music, dance, role-play, dramatization etc.

Meter

Meter in nursery rhymes have a significant role in developing the mental skills of the children. Meters in rhymes do not simply indicate an organization of a poem, but they facilitate the child in the following: -

- Logic
- Order
- Sequence
- Measurement
- Voice modulation

The children would be in a position to apply these skills in other situations, link the skills in other contexts and can use these for extended imagination. Quite often these are also linked to certain psycho-motor behaviour of the learners. They help in strengthening Stimulus-Response bonds.

Understanding and appreciation of meters at the foundation level will help them to write poetry, to play music and emerge as good composers.

Teachers should use the concept of meters effectively in the classroom to facilitate the children to be creative and innovative. The students can be asked to write their own rhymes using meters and sing or play.

Rhythm

Rhythm in the rhymes provides an excellent bridge between cognitive, affective and psycho-motor skills. For example, rhythm in words can be linked to rhythm in feelings or emotions and rhythm in actions and body language. Rhythm helps in understanding order, logic, modulations in words and actions, differences in styles of communication, management of change, management of patterns etc.,

While teaching the rhymes, teachers should focus on the following: -

- Whether the children use rhythms in an appropriate manner so that there is effective bridging between the three domains
- Whether they are repeating the rhymes in a mechanical manner without understanding or applying the effects of the rhythm

Teachers should pause wherever necessary and provide adequate body language expressions so that the learners are able to observe and use the body language patterns to convert verbal systems to emotional expressions in tune with the body language.

One may be aware that rhythms are often used in physical exercises. Teachers of nursery units can use similar techniques in classrooms and play fields to provide appropriate experiences.

Actions

In almost all cases, a nursery rhyme is taught along with actions. Actions include: -

- Movement of hands
- Movement of body
- Movement of eyes
- Movement of legs

Such movements are always done to convey a meaning, cause an experience and transfer the meaning of words into body language. This helps in cognition, understanding, knowledge transfer, mind-body synergy, left-brain/right brain coordination and essentially in an effective brain-based learning.

Actions help children in enhancing their: -

- Alertness
- Response level
- Timing sense
- Periodicity
- Coordination
- Teamwork (when done in a group)
- Transfer of mental models to physical movements

Teachers should ensure the following whenever they use actions for conveying meanings: -

- Actions convey correct meanings
- Actions generate positive responses
- Actions do not convey negative feelings/emotions
- Actions do not condemn/ ridicule any person/matter/event
- Actions are simple and can be easily followed

- Actions are learner friendly.
- Actions are relevant for the appropriate age group
- Actions are place and space sensitive

Emotions

The formative years are very significant in building the emotional intelligence of the child. The learning styles in classrooms should not only help in building an effective emotional intelligence of the child, but should support in understanding, appreciating and managing emotions.

Normally the nursery rhymes generate only positive emotions. There are no major evidences to indicate the contrary. The following emotions are usually on display through nursery rhymes: -

- Sense of wonder
- Sense of humor
- Sense of appreciation
- Sense of fear
- Sense of doubt
- Sense of compassion

Development of goodwill to the fellow-beings, pets and nature are often indicated through the nursery rhymes.

Teachers should use these emotional inputs to enhance the emotional intelligence of the learners. This will help not only in building a positive profile of the learner but would help in shaping and consolidating values among them.

Opportunities should be found for the following: -

- Building confidence and trust among the peers
- Enhancing the level of tolerance
- Show concern for others needs and feelings
- Resist violent expressions
- Respect for traditions and values
- Concept of co-existence and family, community values

It is important that teachers of nursery classes understand that the rhymes are not merely words trapped in a lyrical pattern but have a larger meaning and purpose. They have a very significant impact in building the profile of the young learners.

THE ART OF STORY TELLING

Story telling is an essential learning style in the formative years of schooling. As such, even in the pre-school stage the concept of storytelling is used by the parents or the grand parents at home. The stories have a significant impact on the knowledge domain of the learner and have a long-lasting effect on the psyche and the mental framework of the learner.

The stories have the following advantage: -

- It invokes curiosity
- It provides motivation
- It fires the imagination
- It helps in building mental models
- It increases vocabulary
- It familiarizes with communication skills
- It helps in establishing linkages with communities
- It facilitates in building concepts and values
- It helps in passing on a heritage
- It enlarges vision
- It gives a meaning and reference to several social actions and systems

Features of storytelling: -

1. Story telling is basically an interactive process. There is a direct interaction between the teacher and the child when the event takes place. The learner responds both to the verbal as well as non-verbal communication of the teacher. The responses of the child on this occasion is generally: -
 - Emotional
 - Immediate
 - Spontaneous

The following aspects of the storyteller have an impact on the listener: -

- Words
- Tone
- Speed
- Position
- Eye movements
- Body movements

2. Story telling is not a passive process. On almost all occasion, the listener receives the story in an active manner and formulates mental images, visions and stages the play in his mind's screen. In this process the following things happen: -

- The learner creates his own images
- The learner formulates his own actions
- The learner directs the story in the way that is unique to him or her.
- The learner makes his own environment for the events
- The learner develops his own costumes.

All these happen according to the belief systems of the learner, psychological profile and environment of the learner and in a manner that is most desirable and appealing to him or her. Thus, the learner becomes a co-creator of the entire story.

3. Story telling is most often personal and subjective. The storyteller articulates the story in a manner that is more appropriate to him. In this process he adds value that is unique to him. It almost becomes his or her own communication rather than that of the author of the story. He or she tends to internalize the story, add personal experiences and depict it in a more human form than is envisaged.

4. Story telling is often a spontaneous process. The storyteller, when motivated to tell a story becomes emotionally committed to the content and process of the story and intends to communicate the essence of the story in its emotive form. He tends to add value, structure the process and design a delivery mode that would be very special. In this process, he seeks to relate to the listener and seek his full attention.

There could be many types of stories told to the students: -

Some of them are: -

At the pre- school stage, parents and grandparents normally details stories which are related to: -

- Birds, animals and pets
- Kings and kingdoms
- Fairy tales
- Epical stories
- Comics and humors
- Adventure stories

In most cases the objective of such stories focusses on: -

- Showcasing belief systems
- Passing on a tradition or a heritage
- Communicating a moral, ethics or values
- Explaining conflicts and their management

- Developing a sense of compassion
- Staying away from a wrong path and choosing righteous path
- Success of Truth over Falsehood

Children listen to stories very attentively as it endears their curiosity and provides food for thought. Children tend to develop mental imageries and models of the experiences provided in the story and often personalize these imageries. The knowledge provided through story inputs gets easily transferred to the affective domain and is converted into experiences. Such experiences could have a highly positive or a negative impact on the psyche of the learners. Hence it is important that the process of storytelling is articulated in such a manner so that the objectives of the story are correctly communicated to the learner.

The stories can provide the following inputs in the minds of the children: -

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Hatred
- Sympathy
- Animosity
- Violence
- Adventurism

There could be many other emotions too. It is important for us to analyze some of these emotions – their cause and effect.

Fear

There are many case studies which indicate that children develop a sense of fear on hearing a story narrated by the parents, grandparents, peers or teachers. In certain cases, the context and content of the stories may not be for the appropriate age group. Especially if some senior children are narrating stories of adventurism and when they are heard by the younger children, they tend to develop a sense of fear. This may be born out of unknown, fear of unfamiliar things or threat.

In certain cases, this fear leads to: -

- Loss of sleep
- Bad dreams
- Screaming in the night
- Bed wetting
- Psychological trauma
- Sense of withdrawal
- Unintended violence

Some of the inputs of stories which may lead to fear could be: -

- Description of giants or negative characters
- Description of dastardly weapons
- Description of imaginary animals/beasts
- Description of violence
- Description of separation, hunger or poverty
- Description of death
- Narration of mystical lands
- Narration of places or scenes unfamiliar to the listener

There could be several other inputs which may lead to emotional disturbances.

One may say that several of the stories communicated at the primary level do have one or several of the components as essential part of their content. It cannot be denied. What appears to be more important how the content is described or conveyed?

The following points needs to be kept in mind in story telling: -

- Stories should be appropriate to the age group.
- Their design should be simple and effective
- There should be no over-emphasis on characters or events to enhance their emotional content
- The delivery should be emotionally moderated if not neutral.
- The emotional participation of the learner has to be gauged periodically whenever possible.
- The objective has to be clarified to show its positive intent.
- Story should not be focused at one individual or select few in a group.
- They should not personalize the events or the content on any single child which could disturb the holistic emotional balance of the class.
- Negative connotations of the story should not be overplayed.

Sometimes students tend to project threat or an unpleasant situation on their self and suffer. Hence teachers should adopt such facial expressions and body language which would not kindle fear in the minds of the students.

Anxiety

Many children become victims of one or the other kind of anxiety syndromes. Stories invoke the curiosity of the listeners and sometimes induce anxiety in the process of development of the story and its progress. This is quite a natural feeling. This cannot be considered as a negative feeling.

However certain events, occurrences or narrations lead to a sense of anxiety. This could be due to some of the following reasons: -

- There are threats to a popular character in the story to which the child is fascinated.
- The popular character is in deep trouble and facing a crisis. The child empathizes with the character.
- There are narrations of natural calamity or accidents. The child personalizes such events
- One or the other character is penury and facing death. The child either empathies or personalizes with the character.
- There is an acute chaos in the place of narration and the child becomes tense.
- There are description of violence and attack on men and materials. The child is disturbed by the negative environment.
- The child character in a story is orphaned or is in misery. Again, the child may empathize or personalize the character

There could be several other modes by which a sense of anxiety may be imported into the minds of the children

What should the teachers do in order to ensure that the children do not suffer anxiety resultant to the mental models they have developed on hearing a story?

Teachers need to keep the following in mind while articulating a story: -

- While it is important that a variety of emotions need to be displayed in the pedagogy involved in storytelling, such of those inputs that would infuse a sense of anxiety could be moderated and modulated.
- Over-stressing negative sentiments like those of calamities, disasters, pestilence and penury should be avoided. While a realistic picture has to be projected, there could be a shift towards a database rather than emotions to nullify the buildup of negative emotions.
- The feeling of anxiety in the minds of most children gets easily expressed through the following: -
 - Restlessness
 - Inability to hold to a seat
 - Visual expressions
 - Facial expressions
 - Sweating
 - Need for physical relief
 - Lack of concentration
 - Lack of balance in emotions
 - Aggressiveness

Teachers should be able to identify in a group one or a select group of children who yield to symptoms of anxiety and handle them appropriately.

Some of the following methods could help in building relief systems in the minds of children: -

- Questioning children on the characters that fascinate them and the reasons, therefore.
- Questioning children on the events/characters/parts of the story that has been disliked by them and finding the reasons.
- Initiating a peer discussion about the story in the classroom
- Allowing children to play different roles to correct distorted mental models if any
- Enacting such parts of story in the classroom by a group of children which would have promoted anxiety so that they are related to certain realities.

Some of the above might help in dislodging misconceptions about persons, characters or events and to understand them in their right perspective.

Hatred

Hatred could usually be borne out of fear, non-compatibility, annoyance, differential value systems or due to extreme violent provocations. Evidences do exist when children develop a sense of hatred against certain things.

Some normal situations are: -

- Hatred against certain characters
- Hatred against certain events/practices
- Hatred against classmates
- Hatred against teachers
- Hatred against subjects
- Hatred against places
- Hatred against neighbours / relatives

Statements of the following kind are not uncommon among children: -

“I hate this character because he always fights”

“I hate his killing animals”

“I hate Shyam because he always tells ghost stories”

“I hate this teacher because her stories are not interesting”

“I hate this book for it contains only stories which describe killing”

Some of these statements of the students are quite genuine and are borne out of certain emotional experiences. Quite possibly, the way a story is narrated or presented might create a positive or a negative relationship with the storyteller.

Teachers should take care that during presentation of the story: -

- They do not give excessive focus on issues that could promote hatred against individuals/communities /places
- They offer necessary explanation to justify the role or action of the characters in the context of the story
- They should present the story value rather than extending it to real time situations or personalizing them.
- They should present a balanced picture rather than being judgmental, avoiding value judgments.
- Stories with themes that promote communal hatred, parochial interests should be avoided.

Animosity

Many children pick up qualities of envy, jealousy and other negative feelings either from the content or the theme of the story or may be due other allied reasons. Teachers need to ensure that rivalry of one kind or the other should not develop among children.

Quite often such feelings are developed in the minds of children affected by some complexes. Children suffering from some challenges or inadequacies also become victims to such feelings. Children having disturbed family backgrounds or exposed to certain psychological trauma also develop such feelings.

A few reasons for these could be: -

- Children identify themselves with some affected characters and tend to take revenge as detailed in the story
- Children associate certain events in the story with their personal life events and follow similar actions as in the story
- Children project certain conflicts in the story with their own conflicts
- Children do not bear injustice done in the story and develop animosity against any of the peers who justify it.

Animosity is exhibited by the students through several ways: -

- Use of abusive language
- Use of aggressive postures
- Isolating oneself from the company of select people
- Bullying and nagging
- Physical assault

Teachers should adopt strategies in story telling that would not promote animosity. The following strategies can be thought of: -

- Discouraging children from personalizing characters/events
- Adopting role-play technique to provide correct projection of characters/events
- Highlighting the negative effects of feelings like anger, jealousy etc., leading to fights among people
- The reward for patience
- The impact of negative feelings on mind and health

Violence

There is increasing evidence to show that stories based on violence do leave an impact on the minds of the children. Films, T.V serials etc., depicting violence have an immediate impact on the psychic status of the child and they tend to follow some wrong examples of characters depicted in the films. In so far as stories are concerned, there is lesser evidence. Nevertheless, it is important that teacher should avoid narrating such stories which would kindle a sense of violence in the young minds. It is often stated that “Wars start in human minds”. Hence it is important that the mental health of the students have to be taken care of.

In most cases violent tendencies are seen due to the following reasons: -

- Inability to tolerate
- Absence of patience
- Unhealthy comparisons
- Greed and excessive possessiveness
- Jealousy
- Manifestation of ego
- Inadequate and improper communication

Thus, one may find that story telling is a unique art and calls for employing a lot of thoughtfulness, understanding and appreciation of the psyche of the learners. Teachers need to plan adequately and use the pedagogy effectively to get the desired results.

UNDERSTANDING HOW LEARNING TAKES PLACE

Several theories are in place to explain how learning takes place. Each of the theories has something to contribute to explain the process of learning to a large extent, if not holistically. Pavlov's theory of conditioning tried to explain only certain domains of the learning process. Bloom tried to explain the learning from a taxonomical point of view. As one throws more light into the process of learning, more and more mysteries are getting unraveled.

The psychologists and neurologists have been vying with each other to get into the intricacies of the process of learning to offer an explanation that is closer as well as comprehensive to explain the phenomenon.

The studies on the structure and behaviour of the brains seem to offer very striking inputs to understand the process. Unfortunately, much of these do find a place in the curriculum of teacher education to provide them an insight into the entire gamut of research, discoveries and outputs available, which could help them to understand the process of learning from a better and finer perspective.

Theories related to brain-based learning detail the anatomy of the brain and try to show how the various parts of the brain play a vital role in the learning process, memory and its retention, emotions and intelligence, and the idea of multiple intelligences.

To understand the current scenario from a panoramic point of view, one needs to understand the structure of the brain. The brain appears to be a storehouse of billions of neurons! These are the nerve cells where the information interchange takes place. Each neuron has a cell body and is connected to tens of thousands of fibre like structures called dendrites. Dendrites receive information from other neurons.

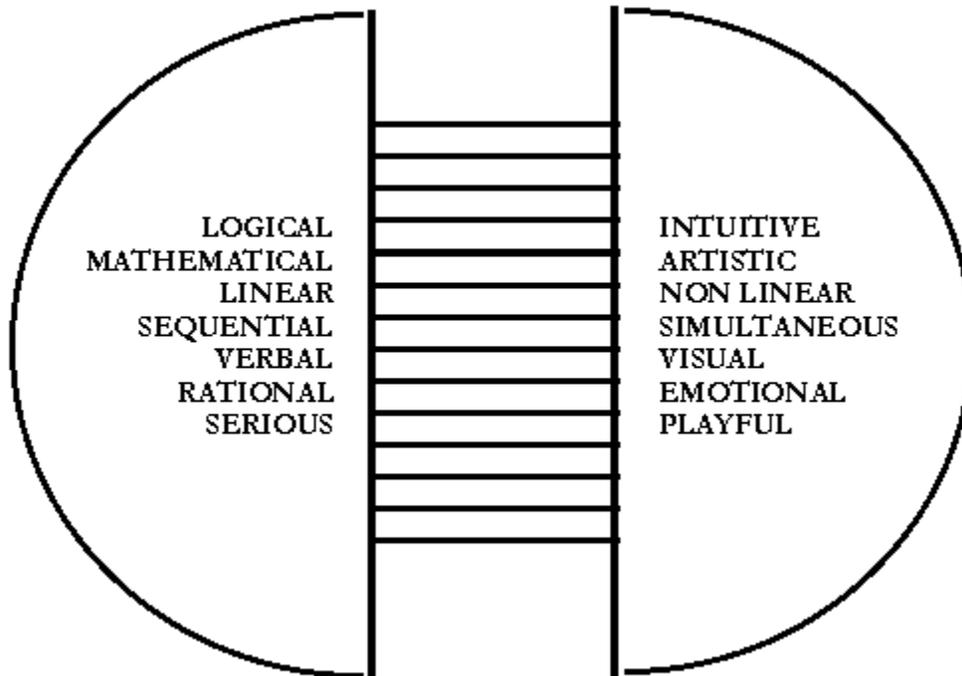
Neurons are also linked to structures called primary axons (long projections traveling inside the brain) and axon terminals from where messages are sent. It is said "A piece of your brain the size of a grain of sand would contain one hundred thousand neurons, two million axons, and one billion synapses all 'talking to' each other." Based on this, it has been observed that the number of possible brain states could be more than the number of elementary particles in the universe! Such is the potential of the brain.

There is also a strong view that the functions executed by the brain are unique to certain places in the brain. Accordingly, neurologists and psychologists claim the differential functions of the brain centres – certain functions characteristic to the left side of the brain and certain other functions characteristic to the right side of the brain.

The functions of the left and right side of the brain identified are as under: -

Left brain

Right brain



Accordingly, a set of psychologists believe that all subjects like Mathematics, computing, engineering, science and which involve rational and analytical thinking are nurtured by the left brain; and all abilities like linguistic skills, communicative skills, artistic skills and the like are nurtured by the right brain.

It is also noted that there are certain specific parts of the left brain and the right brain respectively where some of the activities are centered. Accordingly, if there is any injury to any of these specific parts or damage caused the related faculties are badly affected. Experiments and case studies have provided ample evidence to the above arguments.

It is also seen that the two hemispheres of the brain are connected by a band of fibres called the corpus callosum. It is also argued that this provides a link between both the hemispheres and facilitates in synchronizing the activities of both sides. Some neurologists argue that as the brain has the capacity for multiple tasking, it is incorrect to view the functions on a modular approach and the activities must be in a "holistic manner." Experiments and case studies have also indicated evidences to prove their point.

Eminent neurologist Dr. V.S. Ramachandran who specializes in the field of cognition says in his book "Phantoms in the brain": -

"As it now stands, a wealth of empirical evidence supports the idea there are indeed specialized parts or modules of the brain for various mental capabilities. But the real secret of understanding the brain lies not only in unraveling the structure and function of each module but in discovering how they interact with each other to generate the whole spectrum of abilities, what we call human nature."

It is important for the curriculum developers and pedagogues to understand the implications of the outcome of the multidimensional research being carried out in the field of brain functions and their impact on cognition and other learning behaviours. This assumes much greater significance in the context of the fact that much of the brain development takes place at the formative years. Various mental abilities and competencies are built during these years. Teachers need to understand that they need to design their pedagogy appropriately to meet the exact requirements of the learners.

It is also important for the teachers to understand various dimensions of the multiple intelligences and work out strategies of designing the curricular inputs and pedagogy to nurture their development. We would see in the next few chapters how we can address some of these issues at the primary level.

USING THEATRE IN CLASSROOMS

Increasingly Theatre is considered as a powerful medium of enhancing the quality of pedagogy and making communication effective. Considered most appropriate method for meaningful and contextual learning, theatre can be used by an innovative teacher in a classroom to transact lessons.

What are the advantages of theatre in classrooms?

- It provides visual, auditory and kinesthetic inputs
- It provides a meaning and context to learning
- It makes a direct impact and a virtual learning experience
- It is interactive
- It upholds and facilitates emotional communication
- It gives a sense of time, place and dynamics
- It gives an understanding to social and cultural contexts
- It helps in portraying values, value conflicts and resolving conflicts.
- It keeps learning highly motivated.
- It facilitates teamwork and thus learning to live together.

There are several other direct and indirect benefits of a theatre in the classroom.

When do we start?

The idea of a theatre can be started right from the Kindergarten classes. A lot of stories can be enacted in the form of plays.

The enactment of stories in the form of a play has several impacts on the minds of children.

- The children portray the pictures of animals and people in their minds
- They try to understand the behavioural patterns of the characters enacted.
- They try to understand the environmental issues related to the characters
- They appreciate the strength and limitations of the characters
- They live the characters in the play and hence develop empathy
- They tend to develop several stimuli-response patterns which help in developing their personal psycho-social profile

The theatre helps in developing several dimensions of emotional intelligence in the minds of the learners. They include: -

- Self-awareness
- Self-confidence

- Agility
- Self-regulation
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Sharing and caring
- Sense of responsibility and ownership
- Empathy
- Reflection and correction

How can teachers effectively use this methodology?

A classroom can be converted into a mini theatre. The teacher can select a story and initiate the following process: -

- Discussion with children how they would enact the play
- What are the various roles?
- Why and how each role is important to the success of the play
- Who will play which character and why?
- What are the expectations of the character?
- What are the emotional ingredients with the character?
- How each role has to synchronise with each other in term time and place?
- What are the skills involved in playing the role?
- How body language can be effectively used for appropriate communication

Several important messages can be communicated to the students through theatre. They include:

-

- ❖ Value statements
- ❖ Morals
- ❖ Environmental concerns
- ❖ Constitutional rights and obligations
- ❖ Fundamental duties
- ❖ Human dignity
- ❖ Issues related to child labour
- ❖ Cultural diversities and their appreciation
- ❖ Religious tolerance and co-existence
- ❖ Relevance of Family and social institutions

How should teachers select stories for the theatre?

- The stories should be simple and have a strong value component
- The stories should be motivational to the appropriate age group
- The stories should provide opportunities for characterization
- The stories should provide opportunities for communication
- The stories should facilitate positive stimuli-response systems

- The stories should be culturally sensitive and contextual
- The stories shall not promote intolerance and aggressive behaviour
- The message of the story should have an impact on the audience

How can teachers effectively use the theatre for the holistic development of the learners?

Teachers should use the concept of theatre for strengthening the affective domain of the learners and to enhance the multiple intelligences of the learners.

Some tips to the teachers are: -

- Pick out the words – nouns, verbs and adjectives for enhancing their vocabulary and promoting the linguistic skills
- Facilitate the learner to use the words to construct their own sentences, stories and events
- Use the body language in the theatre to make them understand the meaning, relevance and importance of body language as a powerful medium of inter-personnel communication
- Use the speed, tone and expression of verbal communication – to help them understand the phonetics and other inputs in verbal communication
- Use the musical inputs in the play – to develop appropriate skills of musical intelligences – Allow them to compose, sing in similar tunes as in the play
- Use the movement of characters in the theatre – to develop appropriate skills of spatial intelligence – concepts of anchoring and territoriality can be explained and trained
- Give them opportunity to review the play and make their own reviews and commentaries – so that develop the competencies of observation, comprehension, assessment and reporting

Using Theatre for creativity

Theatre can be used by the teachers for enhancing the creative genius in the child. The teacher has to sit with children and invite their suggestions in the design and execution of the play.

The following areas may be great interest to the children: -

- Organization of the stage
- Decoration of the stage
- Costumes for the characters
- Characterization of roles
- Verbal communication skills
- Body language skills
- Anchoring and positioning

Teachers should not think that the children do not have adequate maturity for participation in such things. Even a small suggestion or contribution of a child has to be acknowledged to motivate him to participate in such events with enthusiasm.

During such interactions, children tend to: -

- Fire their imagination
- Come out with fanciful ideas
- Think laterally
- Start dreaming
- Come out of their shell
- Communicate with peers
- Participate in decision making

As theatre provides a synergy between visual, auditory and kinesthetic inputs, it facilitates all children to participate without any hesitation or reservation. They derive a sense of satisfaction, a sense of equity and feel an arousal in their self-esteem.

What kinds of subjects could be taken by the teachers?

For the primary class teachers should take subjects that relate to: -

- Epics and classics that deliver a message
- Historical episodes that provide an insight into the history, promote world peace and universal brotherhood
- Environmental issues that would promote the concept of a healthy living
- Stories and events that would promote social and religious harmony
- Anecdotes that would enhance their emotional intelligence
- Biographies or case studies from lives of eminent people that would reduce aggressiveness and promote the inner strength
- Scientific and technological episodes that would develop scientific temper and scientific aptitude
- Stories from Panchatantra or similar child-oriented stories that would promote critical thinking and decision making

The role of theatres in the process of learning is significant and cannot be underrated as they: -

- Eliminate monotony in learning
- Facilitate multi-dimensional learning
- Make learning contextual
- Continually provide newer perspectives to concepts
- Provide inspiration and sustain motivation

NURTURING LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCES

Linguistic intelligence is very vital component for human survival and human resource development. Language has played the most critical role in effective communication of thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is a medium of displaying the creative faculties of individual. It has acted as a platform for cultural expressions, sustenance and nurturing of diversities. Poetry, Music, literature, art, theatre, science and technology have all been nourished by the medium of language. Thus, the role of language in a societal and global context cannot be underrated.

It is an established fact that children tend to learn as many languages as possible in their formative years of life. In many countries the school curriculum provides opportunities for learning three or four languages. Most children do not find difficulties in acquiring the basic communicative skills in them. However, development of linguistic intelligence is not the same acquiring basic skills in a language.

The linguistic intelligence comprises of: -

- Knowing a language
- Envisioning through the language
- Thinking through the language
- Structuring constructs and meanings through the language
- Using and manipulating the language to desired ends
- Using language for functional skills
- Using language as a tool for creativity
- Using language for new linguistic constructs
- Using language as an integrating force with other disciplines of learning
- Using language for development of multiple intelligences
- Using language for development of emotional intelligence

A competent language teacher will use all his/her talents to nurture the linguistic intelligence of the child so that he becomes self-reliant and a successful instrument in social development.

It is believed that language skills are essentially right brain skills. Persons with a strong right brain activity tend to acquire competencies in language and related skills. This cannot be denied or debated.

It is also believed that cross functional activities of the right and left brain produce creative persons who tend to have inter-disciplinary thinking and can reengineer their thought patterns and processes to produce remarkable results! No wonder, therefore, the educational process tends to focus on whole brain development rather than selective faculties of the brain.

Linguistic intelligence calls for such cross-functional and inter-disciplinary thinking in language. The management of language vocabulary and skills are extended to other sectors of the brain so that the language evolves in new contexts and new situations. This also facilitates effective use of language in several functional domains of human operation and endeavor.

Strategies for developing linguistic intelligence

1. Linguistic skills go hand in hand with communicative skills

Though it is claimed that only 7 percent of communication is verbal, and the rest is non-verbal, even this small component of verbal communication is quite important in a socially vibrant world. In the instant context – the communicative skills essentially comprise of the four components – Reading, writing, listening and speaking. All these call for significant use of linguistic intelligence.

- Reading enhances linguistic intelligence considerably. It familiarizes the reader with the historical, social, cultural, political and other inputs that have shaped the author and provides an insight into the personality of the author. It empowers the reader to understand and appreciate the thought frame, aspirations, the feelings and the vision of the author. It also empowers the learner to make a contextual meaning in the environment in which he reads the piece of literature. It is said “Reading a book by someone you respect allows some of their brilliance to rub off on you.” Hence reading skills should help children to understand and acquire some of the brilliance of the authors.
- Writing skills triggers the imagination of the children and fires their fantasy. Creative writing opens unknown domains of latent skills in the children. It helps to bring out their ability to visualize, conceptualize, conceive, correlate, narrate, describe and illustrate. Creative writing of stories may help in developing logical intelligence. Writing poetry may help in developing musical and aesthetic intelligences. Writing plays may help in developing inter-personal and verbal intelligences. Drawing and painting may help in developing aesthetic and spatial intelligences.
- Listening skills help in developing patience, appreciation of different points of view, analytical thinking, critical appraisal and decision making. Listening skills empower peer interaction and understanding. Listening helps in effective enhancement of intra-personnel intelligence. Listening helps in mental modeling, mental mapping and thought re-engineering.
- Speaking skills help in developing control over vocabulary, effective use of language, structuring new ideas in verbal manifestations, correlating with appropriate body language. Various speaking skills like platform speaking skills, speech making, canvassing, conferencing, convincing, negotiating are essential life skills which could be learnt by the children while developing their language competencies. All these contribute to the development of linguistic intelligence.

2. Make language learning an enjoyable experience

It is important that the learner acquires an affinity for the language. He does not emerge as a storehouse of vocabulary and a dictionary, but enjoys the meaning, structure, aesthetics and the evolution of language in its multifaceted forms of existence. The teacher must provide various edutainment inputs to make the learner at home with the language and its constructs.

The following points may deserve attention: -

- Language learning should move from non-structures to structures
- Language learning should be made experiential
- Language learning should be related to real-time situations
- Language learning should non-linear
- Language could be learnt more through informal modes
- Language could be learnt through interactive methods
- Language learning through peer interactions could be effective
- Language games may be developed for enhancing motivation

3. Language teaching should be linked to creativity

Creativity and language are possibly first cousins! History is evidence to show that many persons who had a great linguistic intelligence made their way into the history of the world!

Teachers should train children in enhancing their creativity. Some simple exercises they could do are: -

➤ Identifying and using adjectives describing –

- Quality
- Features
- Values
- Events
- Persons
- Artifacts

The children should be asked to use the adjectives and construct their own sentences, stories, poems and narratives

➤ Write features or articles about places or events

- Detailing structures
- Describing places
- Narrating events
- Featuring people
- Featuring functions

-
- Describing festivals
 - Narrating habitats
- Write reviews, reports and commentaries
- Reviews of books
 - Reviews of meetings
 - Reports about school programs
 - Commentaries of sports events
 - Reports about annual days and other functions
- Organize and conduct interviews
- Interviews with parents
 - Interviews with teachers
 - Interviews with neighbours
 - Interviews with professionals
 - Interviews with businessmen
 - Interviews with peers

This would bring opportunities for integrating linguistic skills with inter-personnel skills

Teachers could find a large number of avenues and opportunities to motivate, inspire and guide children to engage themselves in activities that would promote their linguistic intelligence

4. Language skills for speaking have to be given adequate focus

In globally competitive environment oral communication is becoming increasingly important. Children need to empower on various dimensions of speaking

For example: -

- Adequate vocabulary
- Appropriate use of words
- Phonetics
- Intonation
- Toning
- Speed

Apart from the above, children need to be trained on differential approaches to speaking skills.

For example: -

- What are platform speaking skills?
- How do they participate in conferencing?
- How will they actively engage in brainstorming?
- What are convincing skills?
- What are negotiating skills?

Many of these skills are used in several managerial contexts. Sometimes teachers tend to feel that they can be taken care of at a higher level. But one must realize that many of these skills are acquired at the formative level itself. Hence it is better to familiarize the learners with these skills.

Listening

In a fast society, people are slowly losing the listening skills. Listening skills are very important to develop a holistic personality.

The following points need to be brought to the attention of the children: -

- Listening is different from hearing
- Listening calls for attention
- Listening needs concentration
- Listening is accompanied by understanding
- Listening is not indicative of an agreement to other's views
- Listening does not amount to submission to others
- Listening helps in appreciation of others point of view
- Listening enables critical review and judicious decision making
- Listening helps in eliminating misconceptions

Teachers should train the children in the art of listening.

Listening helps children in

- Developing mental models
- Drawing mental maps
- Thought articulation
- Thought navigation
- Enhancing the fertility of imagination
- Acquiring motivation
- Internalizing experiences

Linguistic intelligence is a very strong life skill resource and would help the learners in articulating and managing their life in a meaningful manner.

DEVELOPING LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE IN STUDENTS

Skills of logical thinking, a sense of rationale, analysis, correlation, continuity and a large number of other skills required for survival and development. Basically, a left-brain activity, it has its stakes in all other forms of intelligences, as the absence of logic defeats the features of all other forms of intelligences. Though brain has been bestowed with enormous capacity for logical thinking, it appears important that we nurture and nourish these skills. In the formative years of learning, students need to be trained to understand the logical skills and acquire necessary competencies in the same.

The formative years yield themselves to innumerable opportunities for learning and consolidation of logical intelligences. Teachers can identify a wide spectrum of curricular and co-curricular activities which would nurture and enrich the logical intelligences among the learners.

Usually in the pre-primary stages, the schools tend to provide opportunities for informal learning through participative and interactive games and learning situations. The focus is to make learning an enjoyable experience and to offer certain scope for experiential learning that would go to strengthen the emotional intelligences.

Though schools do not tend to formalize learning through structured textual materials, parents tend to provide textual support to their wards to familiarize with structured learning.

Teachers would do well to focus on some of the following areas which would help in nurturing and nourishing of the logical faculties among the children: -

- Skills of Numeracy
- Skills of sequencing
- Skills of correlation
- Skills of comparison
- Skills of organization
- Skills of rational thinking
- Skills of analysis
- Skills of lateral thinking
- Skills of parallel thinking
- Skills of differentiation
- Skills of geometry
- Skills of graphics

In order to facilitate acquiring the above skills, teachers should take such materials, objects and situations which are learner-friendly, and which do not threaten the process of learning.

They should normally use the following: -

- Toys and play way materials
- Games and physical exercises
- Objects detailing flowers, fruits and trees
- Objects detailing birds, insects and animals
- Objects that would establish relationships
- Objects that are used familiarly at home
- Understanding designs, structures and patterns

All subjects yield themselves to develop logical intelligences. Teachers need to plan out strategies to provide cross-functional and inter-disciplinary linkages to strengthen the concepts of logical intelligences.

For example, the language teacher may conveniently use the following tools for developing logical skills: -

- Using letters for construction of new words
- Using phonetics to identify similar words
- Bringing out the meaning of two words with similar phonetic designs
- Bringing out different meanings of the same word
- Building word puzzles
- Using words for developing different types of skills
- Relating words to habits, mannerisms and address relationships
- Using words to address protocols
- Using words to make requests, to issue orders and to make observations
- To use words and sentences to make correct and logical observations

Teachers should motor skills in the formative years of learning to bring home the logical perceptions.

It is important to use: -

- Fingers
- Palms
- Arms
- Legs

They help in establishing connectivity and relationship. In addition, they are following find immense use in developing logical patterns in the minds of young children: -

- Tunes
- Rhythms
- Patterns
- Structures

To promote logical thinking and establish concrete as well as abstract connectivity, teachers shall use different types of inputs to cater to the needs of different types of learners. The inputs can be classified as: -

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic

Teachers should help in developing relationships between concepts and visual inputs, concepts and auditory inputs and concepts and kinesthetic inputs. It is also important to facilitate integrated thinking by a combination of all the three types of inputs

Teachers of Mathematics would find enormous scope for developing logical intelligences among the students. It is better to move from visual to abstract concepts. This would help in easy recognition, identification, connectivity and analysis among the learners.

Pattern recognition is a basic input for developing logical thinking. This helps the mind as most thoughts and concepts are structured in mind in some mental models or patterns.

At the primary level, teachers should enable the learners to: -

- Identify different types of lines
- Differentiate between lines and curves
- Use the lines for simple structures like square, triangles and rectangles
- Understand the features of curved lines and draw circles and conical patterns
- Identify odd patterns or objects
- Do simple arithmetical calculations
- Establish correct relationships

In addition to the above, it is important to develop some basic graphical sense in the minds of young learners. Teachers could use numbers, patterns etc., to draw pictures of various types.

Measurement is an important dimension of mathematics. It helps in enhancing spatial intelligence. Spatial intelligence cannot be developed without adequate logical intelligence. They go hand in hand. Teachers can use a variety of means to develop these skills

For example, measurement of length can be done as follows: -

- Measurement using finger
- Measurement using palm
- Measurement using arms
- Measurement using footsteps

- Measurement using thread
- Measurement using scale

All these would help in establishing appropriate correlation between various measuring systems and spaces. Such measurement can be done in some common places: -

- To measure the size of a writing paper
- To measure the size of a newspaper
- To measure the different sizes of notebooks/books
- To measure the size of windows
- To measure the size of a door
- To measure the size of a classroom
- To measure the height of small plants
- To measure the size of a dining table/chair
- To measure the size of different envelopes

Relating certain skills to life-oriented objects and situations will help them to develop appropriate skills of spatial intelligences

Similarly, the concept of volumes can be developed using simple objects like: -

- Tablespoons
- Paper cups
- Steel tumblers
- Glasses
- Mugs
- Bottles
- Buckets

. Allowing children to transfer water from one object of small volume to an object of higher volume and establish relationships will enhance their capacity to visualize, to project, to think, to plan and to evaluate.

Simple exercises like filling water in a mug when water is flowing at a slow speed and calculating the time taken and repeating the exercise with a higher speed of water from the tap and taking account of the time taken will help in establishing relationship between time and space.

Concept of weight is very important to be learnt by the primary children. They must be facilitated with an experiential learning.

How could the teachers achieve this?

- Allow the children to feel small weights in their hand
- Allow the children to prepare simple balances and weigh objects

- Give children the same weight of light and heavy objects and feel
- Allow them to weigh small objects like a notebook, a textbook, a bird's feather, a rubber, a pencil
- Allow them to weigh small boxes of liquids (like soft drinks), small pouches of oil or milk

Such exercises can be used to moving objects with small wheels so that the learners have an experiential learning of the concept of speed, time and space.

Mock exercises on Post office, Bank and shops will help children understand the concept of money, trade, exchange and dispatch systems.

Exercises in approximation would help the children in extending their faculties of imagination and in projecting correct assessments.

Use of Mental Mathematics and Quiz in mathematical concepts strengthens the abilities of cognition, comprehension, calculation and connectivity. Such exercises could be based on non-routine problems to extend their abilities to visualize and solve problems.

DEVELOPING AESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE AMONG THE STUDENTS

Aesthetic intelligence is a very important domain in human existence. It adds the necessary charm and beauty to all pursuits in life. It adds value to all our thoughts and activities. It enhances our ownership to various sources and resources. It empowers our emotional rapport with materials and people. It facilitates synchronization of our inner nature with the external nature. It fires our imagination, powers our fantasy and opens the creative vistas of the mind. It acts as a great humanizing power.

Why should children be nurtured in aesthetic intelligence?

The formative period of our life is responsible for developing the right attitudes and aptitudes towards the world. Aesthetic intelligence helps in enabling the following in our children:

- Understanding the concept of beauty
- Appreciation of the flora and fauna
- Understanding organization and cohesion in nature
- Understanding diversity and its value
- Understanding behavioural patterns
- Sensitivity to structures, colours and patterns
- Appreciation of cleanliness, hygiene and civic sense
- Understanding finesse in intra-personal and inter-personnel communications

The above broad objectives of aesthetics can be further detailed into simple cognizable and adaptable components in the learning process. They go a long way in giving the necessary fine tuning to the human personality.

Teaching children the concept of beauty

The children need to understand the correct concept of beauty. Normally, there is a mistaken notion in the minds of young people that beauty is associated with some of the following: -

- Brightness
- Colour
- Organization
- Neatness
- Execution
- Richness

- High profile presentation
- Value

Though these and many other inputs do contribute to the concept of beauty, one must realize that neither individually nor collectively they define beauty of any object or material.

It is often stated that “Beauty is a state of mind”. It appears more perceptual than prescriptive. Some perceive beauty in homogeneity and others in heterogeneity. Some perceive beauty in external stimuli while others perceive it in internal stimuli. Some visualize it in concrete forms and others realize their value in abstract forms. Some pursue it more at a cognitive level while others pursue it at an affective level. Some consider beauty definable while others feel it experiential. Hence it would be difficult to impart any instructional module to learn about beauty. Nevertheless, it is important that schools should create an appropriate environment for conceptualizing beauty by the young minds.

Hence, the teachers should provide adequate opportunities in classrooms to provide those experiences which will help children to synergize all the above listed components which attribute to beauty.

The concept of beauty can be illustrated through: -

- Physical features of men and materials
- Organization in systems
- Coordination between systems
- Physical attires
- Body languages
- Cohesion and diversity in biological systems

Teachers should impress on the beauty of a human being as the beauty of their state of mind. The various attributes to the beauty of human personality can be expressed through: -

- Beauty in words
- Beauty in action
- Beauty in thoughts
- Beauty in character
- Beauty in heart

The aesthetics of human mind and personality is often reflected through the way one expresses himself through the words. It is a meaningful input in developing the aesthetic intelligence of the learners.

Teachers should impress on the young minds the power of words – words as sources of energy, words as constructs of meanings, words as rhythmic expression of human cognition, words as instruments of relationships and the power of words to destroy systems and structures.

Teachers should bring out clearly the difference between sound and noise; and how the same word can be a positive input or a negative input by the style of its communication.

To develop an aesthetic intelligence, children should be trained to: -

- Talk softly
- Talk politely
- Talk meaningfully
- Talk slowly
- Talk with a focus
- Talk with an objective
- Talk only when necessary
- Talk less

The beauty of an individual's character is revealed by the way one speaks. The articulation of words and its architecture should be aesthetic and profile the personality of the individual.

In a school environment, one often finds aberrations to this aesthetic requirement. There is increasing evidence of volatile expositions, display of arrogance, egotism, impatience, and restlessness among the students. This will lead to a society where people will be lost in external interactions and would not be able to take an inward journey. The ability to talk selectively with beautiful words help in developing the following: -

- An introspection of the self
- Communication between the mind and the body
- Self-concept
- Self-esteem
- Objective approach
- Power to listen
- Power to negotiate
- Power to canvass
- Power to assert

Teachers should also help in matching the verbal communication with the learner's non-verbal communication. If the body language is not in perfect harmony with the verbal communication, the mismatch might lead to hypocrisy, duplicity in behaviour, dishonesty in communication etc.,

Beauty in action

It is said: - "Actions speak for themselves. Actions portray the intent and honesty of purpose of the action."

The beauty of an action is always a treat to witness and rejoice. Most often the execution of an action outwits the result of the action and brings immense satisfaction to the performer rather than its outcomes. Teachers need to facilitate the students to: -

- Formulate the scheme of action in their mind
- Plan the format of the action
- Draw a blueprint of their action
- Analyze the implications of the action on themselves and others
- Understand the parameters/limitations of the action
- Articulate its execution with the necessary finesse
- Understand and apply the quality inputs to the action

At the formative level, one does not expect serious action patterns. But certainly, attitudes towards performance of actions are developed during these years. For example: -

- Focus
- Attention
- Exactitude
- Correlation
- System designs
- Setting priorities
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Impact analysis

Though these terminologies may sound highly technical while considering the primary school children, all these faculties certainly get engaged when small children carry out their tasks.

Most of these get reflected both in curricular and co-curricular activities. Some of them are: -

- Drawing
- Painting
- Handwriting
- Role play
- Theatre
- Compeering
- Elocution/Debates
- School organization
- Prefectorial activities
- Games & Sports
- Scouts & guides
- Social Service activities
- NCC and related activities

- Red Cross, Blue Cross and other club activities

A long list of such activities can be drawn where the beauty of action of the learner can be facilitated to grow and enrich.

The beauty of action of individuals display their: -

- Skill
- Approach to quality
- Appreciation of precision
- Honesty of purpose
- Understanding of people and situations
- Clarity of thinking
- Levels of tolerance
- Understanding of human consciousness and of bio-systems
- Ability to cooperate
- Team spirit

Several other faculties of human existence are reflected through the actions. It is important that school and teachers advocate adequately on the beauty of action of children in the formative years so that they get integrated into the personality of learners. Students need to be encouraged to do righteous actions and stay away from actions that would harm others or inflict pain on the mind and body of cohabitants of the universe.

Some initiatives schools could take in this direction are: -

- Environmental sensitivity
- Seeding and nurturing plants
- Kindness to animals
- Respect and care of elders
- Empathy towards challenged people
- Respect for law and order
- Concern for the distressed
- Refusal for unfair practices
- Advocacy for equality among people
- Respect and appreciation of religions and religious practices

Aesthetic intelligence does not merely relate to aesthetics in materials, but also reflect aesthetic feelings and aesthetic behaviour of people. It is a powerful component of the affective domain in the learning process and offers enormous opportunities in school systems for attention and action.

Beauty of Thoughts

Words and action emanate from the thoughts of people. The beauty of thoughts of an individual largely determines the beauty of words and actions. It is therefore necessary that we help the learners to develop both beautiful thoughts and beauty in their thoughts

How do we facilitate beauty in thoughts?

Beauty in thoughts can be facilitated by: -

- Objectivity in thinking
- Clarity in thinking
- Rationality in thinking
- Humaneness in thinking
- Creativity in thinking
- Tolerance in thinking

Mostly thinking patterns of young people are influenced by the following: -

- Thought patterns of parents
- Thought patterns of teachers/ schools
- Thought patterns of the society
- Impact of media

All the above lead to linearity in thinking, polarization in thinking, subjectivity in thinking and lead to self-centered thinking. The children in the formative years become victims of external influences and very often miss the ability to objective thinking. It is therefore important schools do develop exercises in the objectives listed above.

Emerging consumerist tendencies have a serious impact on the mind and psyche of the learners at the formative stage. They become easy victims to temptations and yield themselves to unwarranted social and peer pressures thereby landing themselves in avoidable problems and situations.

Consumerism has taken a new manifestation. It is not only consumption of materials but there appears to be consumption of life processes. This is leading to apparent pre-maturation of children. Consequently, the thought patterns of children seem to be much ahead of their biological age. Sometimes it leads to ugly manifestation of thoughts. Hence schools need to ensure that appropriate life skills are imparted to the children so that they are not unfortunate victims of consumerist tendencies.

Linearity in thinking often becomes prejudicial to the beauty of thinking. It restricts the beauty of divergent thinking and the panorama of exploring possibilities. Linearity of thinking is normally

promoted by structured syllabi, rote learning and normative evaluation. Schools should revisit the content and pedagogy of the curriculum at the formative level and open up to possibilities of divergent thinking.

Children at the formative level are quite capable of fantasizing, imagining, questioning and restructuring. Facilitating them to consolidate and develop these competencies will be a great boon to their growth process.

Constructivist approach to curriculum design and pedagogy will help children to shed linearity in thinking and opt for creativity.

Rationality in thinking offers another dimension to the beauty of thought. It goes hand in hand with objectivity. It enables a balanced scientific approach to thinking. Hence it is important that the children should be exposed to rational thinking.

Rational thinking competencies can be developed through: -

- Ability to distinguish
- Ability to differentiate
- Ability to discriminate
- Ability to analyze
- Ability to restructure
- Ability to redesign
- Ability to judge

Several other rational thinking skills can be brought to the attention of the children and the competencies developed through appropriate exercises.

Humane touch to thinking adds colour and sensitivity to the process of thinking. Humane thinking adds value to the personality of the individual. He learns to be a part of a larger family.

Humane thinking develops the following qualities in the learner: -

- Sensitivity to other feelings
- Appreciation of equity and justice
- Empathy
- Compassion
- Social consciousness
- Tolerance for divergent views and actions
- Moral uprightness
- Shared vision

Humane thinking infuses in the learners a sense of reach to the needy and the rejected. It empowers social leadership.

Humane thinking provides a powerful facet to the personality and is possibly one of the finest aesthetic dimensions of the human mind.

Humane thinking can be integrated into both the curricular and non-curricular inputs. At the formative level, the following modes of curricular transaction help in enhancing humane thinking among children

- Rhymes and poems
- Stories from classics
- Stories and anecdotes based on values
- Biographies of persons with exemplary life
- Discussion among peer group on life skills

The schools could organize visits to the following places and organize events

- Organize visit to the schools of challenged persons and allowing interactions
- Organizing visits to old age homes and allowing interactions
- Showing pictures/ films of hospitals/ orphanages and invoking empathy
- Pictures of children suffering from malnutrition/under nutrition
- Pictures of post-disaster managements

It is important that care should be taken to generate only positive feelings for reaching and helping the affected. Any negative input could be disastrous, as they may develop rejection instead of empathy.

Teaching of human rights, fundamental rights and the like will help in educating them with the need for social justice.

If children could develop such feelings of concern and care for all, it will be a great aesthetic input to their personality profile

Beauty of character

A person with a beautiful character is a great asset to a society. He becomes a role model for others. He has a lot of qualities for others to emulate. The beauty of character is developed right from the lowest classes.

While character profiles the inner nature of the individual, a beautiful character radiates positive energy all around. It has the power to transform others. It has the power to influence others. It has the power to provide a social leadership.

Character is the summum bonum of the thoughts, actions, words and the lifestyle of people. It shows the synergy of various facets of a holistic individual.

Positive thoughts, righteous actions, meaningful and soft words, simple unassuming lifestyles, honesty, orderliness and social cohesiveness indicate the beauty of one's character.

Ability to say NO against temptations, ability to stand up against wrong doings, upholding values, secular approach to life, spiritual outlook, scientific approach to problem solving and several other inputs add beauty to the character.

A person with beauty of character is: -

- Truthful
- Values time
- Simple in thought and action
- Courageous
- Upholds values
- Humane
- Radiates positive energy
- Universal in thought
- Action oriented
- Tolerant
- Peace-loving

The above values can be inculcated among the children either by direct curricular inputs or as a part of the invisible curriculum.

Schools could take a lot of initiatives in ensuring a deep understanding of the above concerns through: -

- School assembly lectures
- Short stories
- Songs
- Role play and drama
- Skits
- Celebration of important days

Apart from the above, inviting parents, grandparents to participate in the routine classes of schools occasionally for interaction would help in building an amiable atmosphere and rapport with the children.

Beauty of heart

Heart in a metaphorical sense is the abode of all feelings. Possibly that is the reason people who are curt, rough and crude are called heartless people. Metaphors like large heart, beautiful heart are therefore used to picture people who are benevolent and compassionate.

A person with a beautiful heart is aesthetically not only intelligent but is vibrant. A person with a beautiful heart has possibly the following characteristics: -

- Unconditional love
- Compassionate
- Empathetic
- Service-oriented
- Spiritual
- Out reaching
- Composed
- Passionate
- Inclusive

A person with a beautiful heart is

- Generous
- Courteous
- Accommodative
- Helpful
- A good listener
- Dependable
- Friendly
- Sensitive
- Full of positive energy
- Self-actualized

It is important that we generate these basic life skills among the students right at the formative stages.

Various exercises can be adopted in the classrooms to help the children to imbibe these qualities. However, the role and support of parents is very essential to develop these qualities.

It is often seen that many parents are biased over developing logical intelligence as preferred to other intelligences. This is possibly because of a mistaken feeling that science and mathematics subjects are more akin to the logical intelligences. This is not true. It must be understood that all subjects yield themselves adequately to developing all the known intelligences. In the entire spectrum of intelligences, aesthetic intelligence occupies a very pivotal role as it is in perfect tune with the finer sensitivities of human existence.

TEACHING INTER-PERSONNEL INTELLIGENCE

Every human being is a social animal. From birth to death, one goes on interacting with the people around and the environment. He or she is in constant communication with them. Such communication is both verbal and non-verbal. History is evidence to the fact that non-verbal communications were predominant in early days till the development of languages took place. Inter-personnel intelligence is a major contributor for developing patterns and perspectives of culture. It helps in cultural designs and their sustenance. At the individual level, it is a strong index of the culture of the individual.

Why is inter-personnel intelligence important?

Inter-personnel intelligence helps in the following: -

- Communication of needs
- Communication of desires
- Communication of ideas, fears and feelings
- Establishing and building a rapport
- Sharing of concerns
- Developing concepts of equity and social justice
- Dissemination of knowledge
- Developing social systems and their sustenance

At the formative level, development of inter-personnel intelligence is important for the following reasons: -

- It helps in developing attitudes
- It helps in appreciation of other strengths and limitations
- It helps providing time and space for everyone in a system
- It helps in building levels of tolerance
- It helps in effective communication
- It helps in developing appropriate body language
- It helps in building a shared vision
- It enhances the team spirit.
- It facilitates developing alertness, agility and acumen.

While some parameters of inter-personnel intelligence vary depending on the socio-economic, political, geographical and cultural differences between societies, the basics of inter-personnel intelligence remain common and universally applicable.

In the formative stage if the following aspects of inter-personnel intelligence are brought to the attention of the students, it will help in establishing right attitudes in their mind for their lifetime.

- Punctuality and time management
- Politeness in communication
- Brevity in communication
- Effectiveness in communication
- Appropriate body language
- Exercises in restraint
- Non-aggressive behaviour
- Modes of greeting
- Organization and discipline in large systems/groups
- Respect for others' feelings/abilities
- Co-operation as against competition
- Team spirit
