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About the Journal

The Primary Teacher is a quarterly journal brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. It carries articles and research papers on educational policies and practices, and values material that is useful for practitioners in contemporary times. The journal also provides a forum to teachers to share their experiences and concerns about the schooling processes, curriculum, textbooks, teaching-learning and assessment practices. The papers for publication are selected on the basis of comments from two referees. The views expressed by individual authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the NCERT, or the views of the editor.

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Publisher

EDITORIAL

“Don’t limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in another time.”

– Rabindranath Tagore.

This quotation emphasises Tagore’s view that the learning of adults is motivated and therefore more focused, unlike the fuller, universal view that a child’s mind has. Tagore was a progressive thinker, who could foresee the growth of a global community. Hence, he envisioned a holistic education that was deeply rooted in indigenous culture, but also connected with a wider world.

The first article titled, ‘Right to Education and Out-of-School-Children: Development of Exemplar Bridge Course’ by Suniti Sanwal, gives an insight into the process of development of an exemplar bridge course, which is conducted for children who may have either never enrolled in school or may have dropped out of the school system. This paper highlights the gaps, and how they were taken into account while designing the bridge course based on the data collected from the visit to the Special Training Centers (STC) of two Indian states, Gujarat and Delhi.

The second paper titled, ‘Life Skills for Personal and Professional Development of the Teachers’ by Poonam Tiwari and Anjali Bajpayee, talks about the enhancement of life skills of teachers and how it is an empowering tool for the betterment of the teaching pedagogy. This paper explores the need for Life Skills for the teachers, its importance, and training programs and courses enhancing life skills for the professional and personal development of the teachers. Moreover, it also highlights examples showing how a teacher can integrate Life Skills Education into classroom teaching.

The next paper by Swati Maza is an attempt to develop an understanding of visual literacy through pictures in developing English reading comprehension for elementary students. The essay also mentions different ways of using pictures in order to improve learners’ English reading comprehension in an elementary classroom.

The fifth article titled, ‘Texts and Contexts: Into Pedagogy of Social Sciences in Primary Classes’ by Tripti Bassi is a content analysis of three textbooks of Social Studies introduced by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, Delhi, in 2004. These books across grades III, IV & V follow a distinct approach by introducing, children to concepts in a sequential and developmental manner. The author has done a qualitative content analysis

by recording and analysing classroom discussions and interactions between the teacher and the student when these books were used. The study was conducted in order to capture a holistic understanding of the written and unwritten concepts that the textbooks aim to deliver.

An action research by Neeraj Kumari is the basis for the article titled, 'Achieving Learning Outcomes Through Drama', is an attempt to explore the potential of Drama for achieving learning outcomes. The action research presented is regarding the achievement of learning outcomes of Hindi language by Class I students of a Delhi government school. The difficulty they face in this regard has been the root cause of this research. The research also tries to put forth a possible method to achieve the learning outcomes.

The next paper is research attempting to understand which/what living beings and objects are considered most important by children falling under the age of 7–19 years. A mixed methods approach has been used to analyse the data using the process of thematic coding, and subsequently applying descriptive statistics to find out prominent patterns, and to ascertain the influence of gender and the socio-economic background of the child in their responses. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire presented in the form of worksheets to 346 children studying in two selected private run schools and government-run schools in Delhi.

The journal also includes its regular features—'My Page', 'From the States', 'Did You Know', and 'Book Review'.

The next feature in the issue 'Book Review' is Ruskin Bond's 'Looking For the Rainbow'. This book talks about Ruskin's early life and his connection with his family. It takes a deep dive into his childhood and how he could connect nature with his personal relationship and vice versa. This can also be looked as an autobiographical account of Ruskin Bond and his relationship with his father.

The 'From the States' section from Arunachal Pradesh is an insight into the classroom engagement with Folktales of the several tribes that have been inhabiting the different parts of the state brought out in the form of a series titled Orchids. The oral narratives, transmitted from generation to generation, have survived for centuries. The illustrations used for the series are appropriate simple, with short dark lines that almost miraculously, create an ambience of sky, fields, houses and people enabling the children to interact with the story better.

The MHRD initiative on the promotion of reading and library grants is the topic for the feature 'Did You Know?' in the issue.

The feature 'My Page' is an experiential account of a young teacher engaging with children for the purpose of language teaching. In this account, the teacher takes various supplementary materials to the class in order to make the children perceive and understand English as a language. She puts an account of her experience with the children and the subsequent learning outcomes within the course of language learning.

— *Academic Editors*

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CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

A child is every person under the age of 18 years. Parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The State shall respect and ensure the rights of the child.

Dignity and Expression

- I have the right to know about my Rights. *(Article 42)*
- I have rights being a child and no matter who I am where I live, what my parents do, what language I speak, what religion I follow, whether I am a boy or a girl, what culture I belong to, whether I am disabled, whether I am rich or poor. I should not be treated unfairly on any basis. Everyone has the responsibility to know this. *(Article 2)*
- I have the Right to express my views freely which should be taken seriously, and everyone has the Responsibility to listen to others. *(Article 12,13)*
- I have the Right to make mistakes, and everyone has the Responsibility to accept we can learn from our mistakes. *(Article 28)*
- I have the Right to be included whatever my abilities, and everyone has the Responsibility to respect others for their differences. *(Article 23)*

Development

- I have the Right to a good education, and everyone has the Responsibility to encourage all children to go to school. *(Article 23, 28,29)*
- I have the Right to good health care, and everyone has the Responsibility to help others get basic health care and safe water. *(Article 24)*
- I have the Right to be well fed, and everyone has the Responsibility to prevent people from starving. *(Article 24)*
- I have the Right to a clean environment, and everyone has the Responsibility not to pollute it. *(Article 29)*
- I have the Right to play and rest. *(Article 31)*

Care and Protection

- I have the Right to be loved and protected from harm and abuse, and everyone has the Responsibility to love and care for others. *(Article 19)*
- I have the Right to a family and a safe and comfortable home, and everyone has the Responsibility to make sure all children have a family and home. *(Article 9,27)*
- I have the Right to be proud of my heritage and beliefs, and everyone has the Responsibility to respect the culture and belief of others. *(Article 29,30)*
- I have the Right to live without violence (verbal, physical, emotional), and everyone has the Responsibility not to be violent to others. *(Article 28,37)*
- I have the Right to be protected from economic exploitation and sexual exploitation, and everyone has the Responsibility to ensure that no child is forced to work and is given a free and secure environment. *(Article 32,34)*
- I have the Right to protection from any kind of exploitation and everyone has the Responsibility to ensure that I am not being subjected to be taken advantage in any manner. *(Article 36)*

IN ALL ACTION CONCERNING CHILDREN, THE BEST INTERESTS
OF THE CHILD SHALL BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION

All these rights and responsibilities are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. It contains all the rights which children have all over the world. The Government of India signed this document in 1992.

Source: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Government of India

Right to Education and Out-of-School Children: Development of an Exemplar Bridge Course

Suniti Sanwal*

Abstract

The Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009, guarantees free and compulsory education for children between 6–14 years of age in India. The RTE Act also makes a provision for providing special training to those children who may have either never enrolled in school, or may have dropped out of the school system. In order to bridge their learning gaps, a bridge course is being developed. This article discusses the process of development of an exemplar bridge course. To understand the issues and challenges of Out-of-School Children visits were made to the Special Training Centers (STC) of two Indian states, Gujarat and Delhi, which provided special training to out of school children for bridging their learning gaps so that they can be mainstreamed into age-appropriate classes. The study draws a comparison of the curriculum, teacher qualifications, salary, training and classroom arrangements in the STCs of these states. Drawing lessons from the visits, the article highlights the gaps and how they were taken into account while designing the bridge course. The bridge course has been divided into four levels, (barring level I, which is a readiness level), each having a diagnostic test, three competency stages and an assessment test. The author makes some recommendations for the STCs based on field experiences.

INTRODUCTION

School education helps in the all-round development of a child's personality, and inclusion of healthy attitudes and good values. School education is not only important for the holistic

development of the child, but it is also a right of the child to get an equitable and quality education. In India, children between 6–14 years have a right to free and compulsory education. But a large number of

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children in India are out-of-the school system. There is a wide variation in their estimated numbers, as there is no standard definition of 'Out-of-School Children.' According to the 2011 census, there are 38 million Out-of-School Children in the 6–13 years age group, which constitutes 18.3 per cent of this age group.

The Social and Rural Research Institute-India Market Research Bureau (SRI-IMRB) 2014 survey commissioned by MHRD estimated this figure to be 6 million (around 3 per cent), while for the same year, the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) 2014 survey and the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) 2014 database, showed the rates for Out-of-School Children between 8 and 10 per cent (UIS and UNICEF, 2016).

For bringing some uniformity, the following standard definition is suggested by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD, 2013): "A child 6–14 years of age will be considered out-of-school if he/she has never been enrolled in an elementary school, or if after enrolment has been absent from school without prior intimation for reasons of absence for a period of 45 days or more."

PROVISIONS IN THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT 2009

With a view to bringing all children who have not been admitted to, or who have

not completed elementary education within the ambit of schooling, a special provision has been introduced in Section 4 of the Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009. It reads, "where a child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then, he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age." In this endeavour, it further states, "provided that where a child is directly admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age, then, he or she shall, in order to be at par with others, have a right to receive 'Special Training' (ST), in such manner, and within such time limits, as may be prescribed." The plan would invariably include identification of learners, development of Special Learning Support materials, arrangement of special classes, mainstreaming of OoSC and their evaluation. The training of teachers and other concerned functionaries involved in this activity needs to be planned carefully to achieve the objectives of RTE.

The RTE Act further specifies that the duration of 'special training' shall be for a minimum period of three months extendable up to two years. There should be a periodic assessment of learning progress made by such children in 'special training'. The entry level assessment and benchmarking will determine the duration of 'special training' in each case and placement in age-appropriate class thereafter.

THE PRESENT STUDY

As mandated under RTE 2009, many states developed bridge course in their state languages. It was felt that the bridge courses developed by the states were not solving the purpose at the ground, therefore National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was given the task of developing an exemplar bridge course for out-of-school children by MHRD, which would be appropriate for never enrolled as well as dropped out children. In order to understand the issues and concerns of Special Training Centers (STC) for out of school children, visits were made to the STCs in the states of Gujarat and Delhi with the help of State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs). The SCERT faculty and

districts coordinators were involved in the field visits. Discussions with the principals, teachers, SCERT faculty and with the district coordinators provided an insight about the issues and concerns of Out-of-School Children. This article attempts to summarise the understanding from the field based on the visits in these two states and how this understanding was used to develop the Exemplar Bridge Course.

OBJECTIVES

- To visit STC in two states to understand the issues and concerns of Out-of-School Children.
- To develop an exemplar bridge course for both categories of Out-of-Schools Children, i.e., never enrolled and dropped out.

Table 1: Comparison of STC s of Gujarat and Delhi

S.No	Details	Gujarat	Delhi
1.	Places visited	Banaskatha, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad	Central, south, east, west, and north districts of Delhi
2.	No. of STC visited	6	5
3.	Identification of Out-of-School Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• '<i>Shala Praveshotsav</i>', or an enrolment drive for new admissions to school is made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of the schools undertakes identification exercise of Out-of-School Children in the catchment area of their schools.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education volunteers known as the “<i>Bal Mitra</i>” identify the Out-of-School Children under the overall supervision of the Principal of the concerned school. • All such children are identified with the help of <i>anganwadi</i> workers, local panchayat and registered in the neighbourhood school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This exercise is conducted only in those schools where possibility of availability of Out-of-School Children is assessed by Cluster Resource Centres (CRC)/Block Urban Resource Centre (BURC). • The information on Out-of-School Children is collected in a prescribed format
4.	The Bridge Material (Curriculum, Text books, teacher Guides)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gujarat Council of Educational Research and Training (GCERT), District Institute of Educational Training (DIET), Experts, NGOs and United nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) have developed teaching-learning material. • It comprises 515 lesson cards and 460 activity cards consisting of Hindi, English, Gujarati alphabets numbers, colours, shape, vehicle, animals, fruits, vegetables and simple sentences, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delhi SCERT has developed a curriculum for Out-of-School Children for five subjects namely English, Hindi, Math, Science and Social Studies at four levels i.e., Level I — Classes II and III, Level II— Classes IV and V , Level III — Classes VI and VII and Level IV— Class VIII. But there is no study material or books developed.
5.	Teacher Pupil-Ratio	1:17–20	1:30–40

6.	Teacher Qualifications and Salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Volunteers are appointed to teach. • The minimum qualification is XIIth pass • They are paid ₹5000/- per month. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Volunteers are appointed. • The minimum qualification is under-graduation with a B.Ed. • They are paid a salary of ₹12,000/per month
7.	Teacher Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are provided an initial training for a week and later 4 days refresher training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCERT conducts trainings for STC teachers.
8.	Classroom Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are divided into four groups according to their learning levels. • The youngest group is called the 'Star' which caters to the children of 6–8 years, i.e., Classes I and II and mainly focuses on the readiness programme. • The second group is called the 'Moon' and caters to children of Classes III and IV. • The third group is called the 'Sun' and caters to the children of 10+ to 12 years for Classes V and VI. • The last group is called the 'Rainbow' for children of 12+ years catering to children of Classes VII and VIII. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never enrolled and drop out children were sitting in the same class and were being taught the same content. An exception was Shaheed Hemu Kalani Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, where children were made to sit according to their age groups in the STC.

9.	Classroom Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children sang many poems, told stories and generally had a positive self-concept and liked coming to school. • The Principal and the teachers also showed acceptance towards the STC children. • Children who were mainstreamed into regular classes were continuing their studies successfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The atmosphere was mixed while in some schools there was a positive attitude for STC children, but in others, teachers reported that other staff members and the principal were not co-operative with the STC teachers.
10.	Mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children were mainstreamed into regular classes and they were doing well in the regular classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers reported that all children who came to STC were mainstreamed into regular classes after one year without any consideration of whether they have bridged the learning gap or not. As a result they are not able to perform in the regular classes and get teased by other children.
11.	Children Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children could read from their copies and also explain the meaning of the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children were not able to read what they had copied from the blackboard, although the writing was without any grammatical errors. Some children had written sentences in English which they were able to read, but were not able to comprehend.

These qualitative dimensions gave an insight about the issues, which needed to be addressed during the development of the bridge course.

The Lessons Learnt

- In both the States, there was no provision made for those children who had not attended any kind of preschool. The framework of global initiative acknowledges that children who are of an appropriate age for pre-primary, but who are out-of-school as being in dimension 1, and considered out-of-school (UNICEF and UIS; 2016).
- All the STC are a multi-age group having children of different learning levels. They take admission at any time of the year. The teachers, therefore, need to be trained in handling multi-level classes, which is presently not being done.
- The teaching-learning material and course content developed by States for STC is largely a condensed version of the school textbooks in which the content of two years is merged. What children in regular classes learn in two years' time, the STC children are supposed to learn in a shorter time. Therefore, the content and concepts should be provided in a more interesting ways through activities which facilitate peer learning, working in teams/small groups.
- Mainstreaming in age-appropriate classes will be successful only after the student's learning level is bridged according to age appropriate classes. Therefore, it should be ensured by assessing children that the learning gaps of children should be bridged so that they feel accepted and confident in the school, and do not face the risk of dropping out again.
- In Delhi, STC teachers reported that all the children who come to STC are mainstreamed in the regular classes, without any consideration of their learning levels. When these children find it difficult to cope in the regular classes, the children get teased and stigmatised and teachers are also blamed for not doing their part in bridging the learning gap.
- In Delhi, where there were 50–60 children, the same class was designated to both the STCs and two different teachers were teaching two groups—Classes I–V and VI–VIII simultaneously. The blackboard was shared by drawing a line in the center.
- Assessment for finding the learning level of each child becomes imperative. The children should be grouped as per their learning levels. Never enrolled and dropout students have to be taught as per their levels. Same instructions cannot be imparted to both the groups.

- Continuous and comprehensive assessment is required to monitor each child's progress and provide instructions accordingly.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXEMPLAR BRIDGE COURSE

METHODOLOGY

Brainstorming Workshops

After the visit in the two states, brainstorming workshops were held with experts, NCERT faculty, people from NGOs having experience of running bridge course, state officials responsible for Out-of-School Children, school teachers of different subjects and STC teachers to decide the pattern of bridge course. It was decided that the material should be such which is engaging, activity based and relevant to the child's life. Since the teachers may not be trained, it was decided that guidance to the teachers will be provided throughout in all the chapters of the books for transacting the curriculum.

Content Development Workshops

Once the structure of the bridge course was decided, academic coordinators for each subject were identified specialising in English, Hindi, Mathematics, EVS and Science and Social Science. Subject experts who were school teachers, SCERT/DIET faculty, experts from NGOs, academicians from outside NCERT were invited. Three to four workshops

were held for development, review and finalisation of textbooks at each level.

Barring the readiness level, all the three levels have five components. Each level has a diagnostic test to identify the current learning level of the child, so that bridging can start from the current level. Each level has further been divided into three competency stages —

a. Basic stage b. Intermediate stage and c. Grade appropriate stage. At the end there is an assessment test to ensure that the child has acquired the requisite competencies for that grade level.

LEVEL I- READINESS MODULE

This module offers opportunities for hands-on activities for matching, sorting, classification, grouping, rhymes and songs, story-telling, educational games, dominos, flash cards, language and math activities, drawing and small project works. It has hands on activity cards as well as worksheets. The module contains age appropriate activities for 3–6 years old children. It is recommended that all the children be given this module for the first 15 days to get accustomed to school life. This module provides joyful learning activities and is intended to provide help to children to adjust to the school schedule. Teachers also get time to build rapport, know about the child's background and experiences, reduce the fear of school and create a desire to learn.

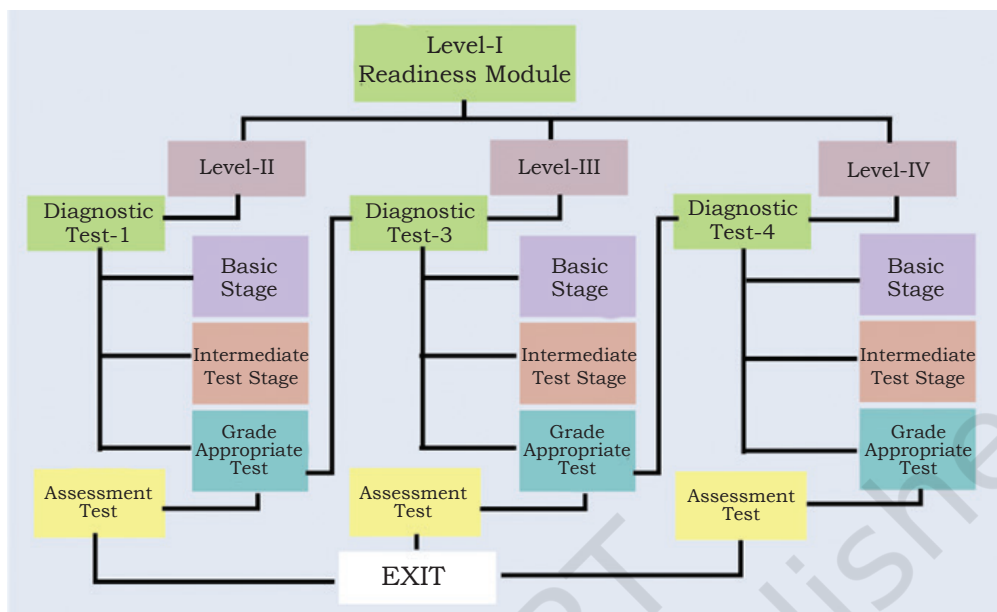


Figure 1: Structure of the Bridge Course

LEVEL II

The subjects covered in this level are English, Hindi and Mathematics. This level provides the foundations of language learning and early mathematics as it is the first step on which the subsequent learning is based. This level aligns with the learning outcomes of Classes I and II. The students after completion of this level can be mainstreamed to grade II.

LEVEL III

This level is aligned to the learning outcomes of Classes III–V. The subjects covered are English, Hindi, Mathematics and Environmental Studies. The student can be mainstreamed to Class V at the end of this module.

LEVEL IV

This level is aligned to the learning outcomes of Classes VI–VIII. The subjects covered are English, Hindi, Mathematics, Science and Social Science. The student can be mainstreamed to grade VIII at the end of this module.

Teacher Handbook (*Udaan*)

The bridge course has a teacher handbook which informs the teacher about the RTE Act, the roles and responsibilities of the principal and teachers. It discusses in detail the diverse conditions of the children, their psycho social aspects and the role of the teacher as a motivator. It guides the teachers on how to group children as per their learning levels,

the pedagogy to be used for curriculum transaction and how to track the progress of the child using different assessment strategies. It provides examples for each subject to facilitate their understanding.

Field Testing

Once the books were finalised, all the books were field tested in at least two STCs in Delhi for a month. The teachers were given the books. Few lessons were taken up by the coordinator and the Junior Project Fellow to demonstrate how the lessons need to be transacted. The schools were visited twice in a week to get the feedback of the teachers and students. As per the feedback, modifications were made in the books. Qualitative changes in the content and illustrations were made after the field testing.

Highlights of the Exemplar Bridge Course

The exemplar bridge course has a readiness module which can be used for children of 3–6 years of age. It is recommended that it should be given to children of all the ages for 15 days when they come to the STC. The hands-on material and worksheets are joyful for children and they get time to get accustomed to school routines. The teacher can also utilise this time to develop rapport with the child.

Instead of merging the content of two classes into one level, the content has been divided into three competencies stages. It makes the content simpler and doable. As

children move from one stage to other it gives them confidence and encouragement to complete the stages faster.

The books have lot of activities, opportunity for discussions, sharing and talking in the classroom, allowing the child to be actively involved. The activities facilitate peer learning, and learning in small groups and large groups.

The teacher handbook provides guidance to the teachers for grouping children as per their levels, pedagogy to be used and tracking the performance of children in all the subjects in a continuous and comprehensive manner through different assessment strategies.

The content is aligned to the learning outcomes for each subject and class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present paper discusses the provisions under the RTE Act for Out-of-School Children. In order to develop an exemplar bridge course, visits were made to the STCs of Gujarat and Delhi. The provisions, teacher pupil ratio, bridge material, teacher salary and qualifications, classroom organisation, classroom atmosphere, mainstreaming and children competencies in both the places have been compared. The course is transacted by the educational volunteers in both the states. There are different types of children in the STC, never enrolled or those who have dropped out,

they take admission at any time of the year. Generally, they are first generation learners from poor economic backgrounds. Therefore, it is important that the teacher should be qualified and trained in handling multi-level and multi age groups. A teacher having the qualifications as prescribed for elementary stage must be appointed to handle children of the STC. He or she should be paid at par to the regular elementary teacher. No matter how interesting the content is but if a trained and motivated teacher is not present, children will not be able to bridge their learning gaps. Training on handling multi-age, multi-level groups should be provided to STC teachers. Continuous handholding support and mentoring should also be provided to them.

The bridge course should also be designed in such a way that it provides this flexibility to the teacher therefore, the Exemplar Bridge

Course has been designed in three competency stages. Transacting the curriculum in groups which are matched as per their learning levels makes the transaction easy for the teacher. For effective transaction of the curriculum, it is important that the teacher pupil ratio should not exceed 1:30 as recommended in RTE Act. Identifying the initial learning level of the child and putting them in the matched group is required therefore a diagnostic test has been planned. To ensure that the child has acquired the grade appropriate competencies before mainstreaming into age appropriate classes an assessment test has been planned to minimise the chances of dropping out, once children are mainstreamed into regular classes. The bridge course has a teacher handbook to guide the teachers in grouping children, pedagogy and assessment techniques.

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Life Skills for Personal and Professional Development of the Teachers

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Anjali Bajpai**

Abstract

Teachers hold the key to secure our future as they are invisible hands that mould and shape our society. Modern society demands high quality teaching and learning from teachers. Their activities in the classroom will impact the wellbeing of the economy and success of the society. Teachers play a major part in shaping the values, knowledge and skills of the students. Teachers have to possess a great deal of knowledge and skill with regard to both teaching and assessment practices in order to meet the demands and standards of quality education. It will be only possible when the teacher possesses sound physical and mental health. Life Skills would play a significant role in achieving sound status of mind for the teachers, therefore, the need for Life Skills Education is felt for the teachers. By adopting Life Skills, they become aware about these skills and can not only improve the status of their mental health and ensure their wellness, but also transfer this knowledge to their students during their teaching-learning which is important as it has not been made a part of the curriculum of all boards except CBSE. This paper explores the need of Life Skills for the teachers, its importance, about training programmes and courses enhancing life skills for professional and personal development of the teachers. The paper also highlight some examples showing how a teacher can integrate Life Skills Education in the classroom teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Education has always been a powerful agency in any society and it is considered as an indispensable instrument for bringing positive change in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the people. The whole process is a result of many important agents, and the teacher is one of them. They are pillars of the nation-building process because they help to influence the next generation to become moral, responsible and productive members of the country.

Teachers' learning is a continuous process, they acquire new knowledge, improve their teaching skills, and develop new proficiency, which in turn improve students' learning. Teacher wellbeing is pre requisite for excellence in their job which can also be achieved through Life Skills Education.

Life Skills Education is a basic learning need for all the individuals for empowering them to face challenging situations. It aims at providing individual with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It bridges the gap between basic functioning and capabilities. Life skills education programs are theory- and evidenced-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and teachers are one of them.

LIFE SKILLS

Life Skills refer to the ability to maintain the state of mental and physical well being of an individual.

World Health Organization (1997) defines Life Skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” Here, ‘adaptive’ means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances, and ‘positive behavior implies that a person is forward looking and even in challenging situations, can find a ray of hope. United Nations International children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines Life Skills as “a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, Attitudes and Skill.”

KEY LIFE SKILLS

World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997 has identified ten core life skills which help the person to develop into healthy responsible and productive citizen. These are— self awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and managing emotions. These life skills fall into three basic categories social skills, emotional skills, and thinking skills. All these skills are interrelated and reinforce each other. These are also complimentary and supplementary to each other. Together they are responsible for our psychosocial competence; build self-esteem and self-efficacy, and nurture holistic development.

Need and Importance of Life Skills for the Teachers

Life skills education can boost essential qualities of teachers which are necessary for their personal and professional development. These skills enhance their psycho-social competency so that they can perform better in life. Hence, life skills are very important for teachers' growth.

To be successful in life one should have the confidence in one's own abilities and self-respect. Student's self-esteem could be uplifted by a teacher having good self-esteem. Life skills are responsible to recognise self-awareness, to build one's self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-awareness means recognition of our 'self', our character. It tells us about our strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Developing self-awareness and self-confidence is fundamental to success in many aspects of life and needed for both teachers and students.

To think clearly and rationally critical thinking is required for a teacher. It promotes creativity and it is foundation for scientific approach and also helpful in problem solving and decision making which is used by a teacher every day. Students have the ability to do something creative and it is the teacher who recognizes the ability of students and set them on the right track to give wings to their creativity and it would be only possible if the teacher is creative minded.

A teacher must have the ability to solve conflicts or problems of his/her students, Students face problems in their studies and also in their daily lives. Sometimes a small problem can lead to worst and unexpected situation, if not treated properly. Problem solving skill helps students to deal constructively with problems. A teacher can induce problem solving skills among students efficiently if he himself equipped with this skill. An effective teacher gives shape to future and nurtures students talent and potential. Teacher provides guidance and right direction to the student's career. Teacher shows right path to the students by boosting their decision-making capacity. And it would be only possible if teacher himself able to take correct decisions.

Lack of qualities such as patience, tolerance, values, and respect for elders are very common among students. The teacher's caring attitude will have a major influence on the students. They are deeply affected by the teacher's character, love and affection. A good teacher becomes a role model for students. Students tend to follow their teacher in almost every way. Empathetic behaviour is expected from a teacher. Empathy is the capacity to place oneself in another position, it is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. A teacher should understand and care about student's needs, desires and feelings so that students share all his problems

without any hesitation. Teacher should understand things from the student's perspective and can make healthy student teacher relationship. He/she has to interact with the students and others, which require healthy and friendly relationship, i.e., interpersonal relationship skill. This skill makes them more successful in their personal and professional life.

It is significant to keep teachers' knowledge up to date, and deliver high quality lecture, with the ability to explain difficult things in a simple way. For this teacher must have good communication skills. This is the strongest tool that facilitates learning for exchanging ideas both verbally and non-verbally. He/she imparts information effectively, interacts with the students well with good communication skill. It also helps in driving creativity and curiosity among the students.

Stress, depression, frustrations, etc., are very common nowadays among teachers and students, which can't be good for wellness of both. Teacher should know the sources of stress affecting their life, and find out the mechanism to overcome these, only then will they be able to deal with a threatening situation of their students which can be of great importance for mental and social well-being. Emotionally healthy teacher can perform better in and outside the class. Coping with emotions are necessary because intense emotions can have negative

effects on students' health. Teacher should be able to recognise different kinds of emotions as anger, sorrow, sadness and its influence on behavior. Time management skill is also very important for a teacher, good time management allows to complete a task faster and lowers stress. A skilled teacher can make their student learn about the value of time by setting himself as an example.

So, Acquiring life skills leads to enhancement in qualities essential for a teacher such as self-esteem, sociability, tolerance, competencies to take action, to think critically and creatively, solve problems, make independent decisions, build healthy relationships, facilitate communication, empathise with others capabilities to have the freedom to decide what to do and how to do, and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Training Programmes for Teachers to Develop Life Skills

Life skills are beneficial for teachers' personal and professional development, so

- Teacher should be aware with life skills education.
- They must possess important life skills as they groom budding minds.
- The teacher having required sense of life skills can transact it well to their students in effective teaching-learning environment.

- Life skills training are important for all the levels of teachers (primary, middle and higher).
- Life skills training are important for both the levels, i.e., in-service and pre-service teacher education.
- Teachers can uplift the future of the society with advance life skills and innovative techniques and methods in their transactions.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005 clearly outlines that rather than a stand-alone programme, the Adolescent Education Programmes (AEP) should become an integral part of school education and the responsibility of transacting life skill based education to secondary school students be fixed up on secondary teachers. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 (NCFTE: 2009) has rightly focused on life skills education among the prospective teachers (Chauhan, 2016: p. 91).

All of these indicates the need of some effective training programmes that can enhance life skills of the teachers. Some of the schools organise workshops, training programme, capacity building programme on the life skills to sensitise teachers towards it and enhance their capacity for fullest development. Beside these some of the organisations providing training in this area are as follows:

- In 2005 YUVA School Life Skill Program (SLP) in Delhi directs its attention on teachers and

students to train in life skills area so they can use their fullest potential and become happy, healthy and productive citizens.

- Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, RGNIYD Sriperumbudur, India in 2008 has launched life skills as a subject of study and also started trainers training programme in life skills as well.
- Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE, 2010), has been organised to provide training in life skills to students, educators (schools & colleges) and others to attain excellence in life skills. It offers different capacity building and training programmes on life skills according to the need of the clients, which help them boost their skills enabling them to apply it in various aspects of their life.
- The Central Board of Secondary Education first commissioned the PC Training Institute (PCTI) in 2012, public private teacher training venture to provide teacher training for life skills along with some other programmes such as health and wellness, value education, and gender sensitivity.
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has introduced life skills education as integral part of its curricula for Classes VI to VIII consecutively in 2003–05

and published teacher's manual for life skills for transaction of the ten core life skills at upper primary level in 2013. These manuals provide guidelines for each of the ten core life skills, methods of its transaction and mode of assessment. Manuals contain interesting, relevant and meaningful activities for life skills education. The pedagogy suggested for teaching life skills education is interactive, participatory, experiential and facilitative. These activities include games, poem, story writing, card making, collage making, journal writing, puzzle making, situation to analyse, etc., and worksheet to fill. With the best use of these manuals' teachers can strengthen life skills among the students.

- SWAYM (MHRD, Govt. of India, 2017) also offers free online course on developing life skills for prospective teachers and other stakeholders to provide basic aspects and practical strategies of life skills education.

So, in India life skills education and training has emerged for the teachers and different stakeholders. Teachers are suggested to join these training programmes and empower themselves with life skills, and then apply it in classroom teaching.

Integration of Life Skills Education in Classroom by Teachers

Life skills can be inculcated both formally and informally. In a formal mode, CBSE has introduced life skills education as an integral part of the curriculum. Teachers are advised to adapt an inter-disciplinary approach for transacting Life Skills Education. The transaction should be both through curricular as well as co-curricular activities. The teacher-centered approach and learner-centered approach are suggested to teachers for empowering life skills among students in the CBSE life skills teacher's manual. Teachers are responsible for developing essential life skills through different teaching strategies. Strategies such as classroom discussion, brainstorming, role plays, small group/buzz group, educational games and simulations, storytelling, debates, situation analysis and case studies can be used to inculcate life skills in the classroom. These strategies are suggested in the teacher's manual for life skills education & CCE of Classes IX & X (pp.10–15).

When the teacher exposes learners to the content of life skills, they should go beyond book and connect with real life and ask life skills related questions. Teachers should share their experiences, give real life examples and ask students to share their experiences also, this will enhance students' understanding about life skills. Teachers can incorporate interactive life skill activities during classroom teaching to internalise these among the students.

Every day, the teachers may organise number of strategies and activities as part of the curriculum. Skillful selection of the theme of these activities can enhance life skills of students at the primary level. Some examples of such activities are as follows:

- In mathematics class, calendar making activity enhances critical thinking and creative thinking along with understanding of content.
- In a science class, the teacher can organise plantation activity with the help of the students. This will develop their social skills like interpersonal relationships.
- In a language class, the teacher can give a word to make creative sentences or a topic to write a story to develop their communication skills. Reading and writing enhances communication skills; games like Chinese Whispers also develop communication skills, dumb charades enhances nonverbal communication, and musical chair enhances listening skill of the students.
- The teacher should narrate stories based on life skills followed by discussion which enhance critical thinking, problem solving and listening skill. The teacher should ask the students to help their weak peers in completing their work, enhancing empathy and interpersonal relationships.

The teacher should take the opinion of students in selecting class representative, uniform in charge as this develops decision-making skills amongst students.

- Solving riddles and puzzles develop problem-solving ability of the students. Art and craft classes are to be full of creativity. Teachers should ask students to make a drawing of a flower and write their likes on each petal and dislikes on the leaves. It will enhance self-awareness and creativity of the students. In this manner teachers can integrate life skills activities in the class teaching without any extra burden on them, and thereby empowering the students with many skills.

CONCLUSION

Teachers are the builders of the nations future as it is in their responsible hands that the future of our young talented minds lie. Both teacher/students are productive, responsible and strong pillar of the nation, hence, they should possess sound physical and mental condition. The teachers' personal as well as professional efficiency is extremely important for our county to develop at a faster pace and for the economy to flourish. This efficiency can be brought about by incorporating life skills. By acquiring these valuable skills, the teachers would not only be able to establish a healthy relationship with the students but also, because

of this relationship, the teaching-learning process will turn out to be more fruitful. Life skills are essential for both the teachers and the students, but the teachers will be able to make the students adapt these skills only when they themselves practiced it. It is important for a teacher to be equipped with these skills and set themselves as positive role models for the students. Teachers are advised to join these training programmes and courses in order to strengthen themselves in life skills, and then applying it for their professional and personal

development. Whether it is a part of the curriculum or not, a teacher must transact these skills among students by using their practical experiences and adapting some powerful strategies so that students can utilise their full potential. This task will become easier if life skills education programme gets implemented in teachers training programme. Therefore, it is suggested that life skills education training be provided at both in-service and pre-service teacher education. This will enable the teacher to internalise these skills amongst young students for the betterment of the nation.

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3

An Exploration of Visual Literacy through Pictures in Developing English Reading Comprehension for Elementary Students

Swati Mazta*

Abstract

This paper attempts a small-scale understanding of visual literacy through pictures in developing English reading comprehension for elementary students. It is based on the theory of language development through pictures, that if used effectively in the classroom might aid to develop English reading comprehension among elementary learners. During the teaching-learning process, the possible ways of using some factors of pictures are discussed that might help to improve learners English reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, we are moving more into technology than other equipment in the classroom teaching-learning methods. However, we still use old traditional methods, making teaching-learning easier for our young learners. The term 'young learner' covers a large chronological age span: from around 3–15 years. Some writers and researchers segment learners according to age: 3–5 year old; 6–8 and so on (Nunan, 2011). On the other hand, with the growing popularity of audio-visuais, both teacher-learners

have become habitual in absorbing information more visually than ever before. This is because smartphones, computers and picture aided books are in print or visual form. The term 'visual' refers to the act of seeing or perceiving something in one's brain. For example, visual refers to pictures or images, paintings, cartoons or comic strips, charts and graphs, diagrams, realia bringing real-life, authentic artefacts in the classroom, maps, and many more. Visuals that are more readily available for teaching are regularly used to make teaching-learning easier but they are also a

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great way to learn and develop English reading comprehension.

VISUAL LITERACY

Many scholars have found that we develop and learn visual skills before acquiring verbal skills. Young learners are keen observers of things that are surrounding them. They start pointing those items, pictures, and many more things to their reach of eyes. Visual is to see someone or something through naked eyes. "A visual-minded individual is one who remembers things that he sees" (Anderson, 1972: p.87). Visual learning is one of the learning styles among learners. It is a sensory receiver of the information. According to Spencer (2018), "research has found that around the globe, 65 per cent of our general population are visual learners, meaning they need to see information in order to retain it."

Centuries ago, the human race had always communicated through visuals. It is not new in the mediated world; it is just another version; perhaps we have passed down the message and its meaning through different paintings, sculptures, symbols, images, and others. We passed down stories and traditions through photographs, illustrations, carvings, etc. We passed down stories and traditions from one generation to another. In our media-driven environment twenty-first century, being visually literate is becoming increasingly important. From internet advertising to jokes to emoji messaging, we are constantly flooded

with pictures, body language, hand gestures, object language, signs and symbols (pictorial representations of a message), abstract language (graphics or logos to represent ideas), demonstrating how traditional ways of communication are transforming. It has become vital for our teachers to develop visual literacy abilities in students by providing them with the resources and vocabulary they require to discuss images.

Visual literacy has completely changed the environment of individually or collaboratively seeing the same things and describing them differently in one's sense. Most of the information is a blend of colourful images and a few words for young learners. It is the role of the teachers to impart the knowledge and skills to the students to enhance and comprehend all the information in all its ways. A very famous Chinese proverb reads, "A picture is worth a thousand words." This is applicable to young learners and even adults. It is often simpler, easier and better to show something in the picture than to describe it verbally as the same information reveals everything in a single frame. It even saves energy of the person too. "A single picture of a thing can do more than half-an hour of talk on it" (Chakrabarti, 1967: p.106).

Our teachers have been teaching visual literacy to young learners through various visual aids to see pictures and learn their alphabets or words associated with them by heart. Through this method, young learners

develop rote learning or mechanical/drilling way of memorising the words. The importance of reading and understanding pictures seem less. In addition, the teachers have been using colour books, photos, storybooks or poems, posters, picture cards/flashcards, diagrams drawn on black/whiteboards, picture puzzle books, photographs, charts, maps & globes, overhead projectors, and many other visuals to impart knowledge effectively to learn English grammar skills through rote learning.

However, now in the twenty-first century, as the teaching scenario has wholly changed, the elimination of the rote learning method is necessary to construct knowledge and develop reflective learning among young learners. Using visual items aid learners in both linguistic and non-linguistic skills. Visual items in the classroom help young learners increase their skills such as visual, reading, writing, speaking, non-verbal, etc., and enhance vocabulary and most importantly, expand their reading comprehension. It is no surprise that visuals have a more powerful impact on learners than any other medium.

Importance of Visual Literacy in Enhancing Picture Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a massive problem among the young learners. Low-level and average-level learners face many difficulties in reading and comprehending the text. Reading

complex text makes young learners' disinterested and bored resulting in not paying attention to what they are reading. According to Silbert (2015), "Decoding individual words slows down or prevents reading comprehension." Using visual aids in the classroom with young learners can improve visual literacy and facilitate reading comprehension. According to Wright, "It is important to have as wide a range of resources as possible in the classroom so that the students can have a rich base and stimulus for this development. And the resources must include pictures" (p. 2). Objects or artefacts we see around us have a massive impact on us and provide us with knowledge. Therefore, using a picture with young learners will help them guess, interpret, and make predictions from what they hear and read and what they see around, and recall seeing things to relate it with them. Making use of pictures can benefit learners in the following ways:

- Visual items are conveyed faster and are processed extremely quickly by the brain. Trafton (2014) in her news article 'In the blink of an eye' states that a team of neuroscientists from MIT found that the human brain can process entire images that the eye sees for a little as 13 milliseconds—the first evidence of such rapid processing speed.
- Pictures can be used independently and associated with written text, audio, and audio-visuals. This help teachers to enhance

comprehension and reflection of the young learners.

- Young learners are attracted more towards visual information pictures, flashcards, comic books, storybooks with colourful illustrations, and many more towards visual study material. It helps learners develop the learning process, reading skills, and understanding of the text using pictures and visual directions. Pictures make young learners visually alert and active in the classroom, and help them build interest and improve their understanding and love for visuals.
- Using pictures can exceptionally benefit young learners in the classroom. Visuals can serve as a helpful bridge in the language learning process, especially with these young learners as they are working towards developing fluency and vocabulary in English. Apart from enhancing reading and writing skills, visual literacy aid in producing images and interpreting the meaning out of the photos. We rely more on mobile, computers, videos, and pictures in the digital world to comprehend and convey meaning quickly.
- Young learners are fun-loving. They love to make noise, play and laugh without thinking if they are disturbing others. They

are curious to know things, explore around, are creative and imaginative, and for this, teachers need to provide them with a learning environment to support and develop their learning skills. 'The physical environment is also crucial for establishing a secure, positive environment' (Nunan, 2011). Therefore, the teacher must provide a positive, stress-free and welcoming environment for learning and holistic development.

Role of Picture Reading in the Classroom

Encourage participation

Many young learners are shy. They prefer to avoid reading the text during teaching. Which leads to a lack of confidence in them. While reading, they struggle with words and stammer intermittently. All this forces them to dislike reading. Knowing whether they are engaged or bored in the class becomes difficult. As a result, they tend to hide behind their classmate's backs and avoid making eye contact with the teacher. Thus, Using pictures in the classroom can generate interest and actively motivate learners to participate in reading comprehension (understanding and retaining information). "Pictures can motivate the student and make him or her want to pay attention and want to take part" (Wright, 1989: p.17). It

will help them build confidence and make them active and attentive in visualising, listening, and reading—picture aids in describing, decoding, and understanding the text.

Language barriers

Learning a language is challenging. Learners will gradually develop and understand English during these foundational years of learning English as a second language. Primarily teachers should not focus on phonics, accuracy and translation of the text to young learners. Using pictures can help teachers build fluency and comprehend the text for developing reading comprehension without language barriers in young learners. "Pictures bring the world into the classroom (a street scene or a particular object, a train)" (Wright, 1989: p.17). Using pictures can help learners read, speak and comprehend the image to form sentences and produce vocabulary. A picture can stimulate and memorise the information and recall it whenever asked later. For example, pictograms "are language independent and can be understood with the same conventional meaning in a lot of different places where a number of different languages are spoken" (Yule, 2016: p.595). These pictograms can help read pictures comprehend and interpret the meaning behind them. This help attract readers attention. Some pictograms are as follows:

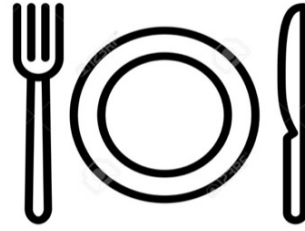


Figure 3.1: Restaurant



Figure 3.2: School ahead



Figure 3.3: Accessible toilet

Reading comprehension is fun!

All learners are different and have different styles of learning the same things differently. VAK (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) is a learning style. It was designed by Walter Burke Barbe and developed by Neil Fleming. Using this style of teaching-learning in the classroom among young learners can benefit them from grasping the content, making reading simple and comprehending fast. Through this learning style, learners can develop picture reading comprehension by visualising the picture, hearing the sound, and doing hands-on learning. It will benefit all types of learners and increase their comprehension of picture reading. It will generate fun among learners in the classroom as the class will attract more towards pictures, be attentively engaged, and will be able to recall the text readily even through gestures and expressions used while teaching the class.

Total communication process helps young learners to understand the pictures well. Reading picture help learners to enhance verbal and writing skills, but it also develops nonverbal communication skills (body language, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, symbols, signs, and many others). Using photographs of people, objects, or any activity in the classroom will help to find out the mental and emotional state of the people, artefacts used in the photographs, and more things. For example, showing a photo of people and asking about their

physical description, how they dress, how they look— sad or happy, how many they are. These would required various types of responses: yes/no, one-word answers or open-ended answers.

EFFECTIVENESS OF VISUALS

The effectiveness of a photograph is determined by its selection and application. Choosing and using a suitable image for low-level and average-level learners is a must in the classroom. Using typical pictures or photographs is necessary to convey the entire tale without writing words or sentences. It will help young learners to reinforce communication skills and improve cognitive development. Choosing an image for the classroom is the most complex and crucial part for the teacher. There are few opportunities to bring authentic materials into the school. "Pictures for younger children should be bright and should have fewer details. Coloured pictures are attractive, but make sure that they are of the natural colours (white, black, red, yellow, green, and blue). In a learning situations, pictures or photographs help children see what things really look like." (Chakrabarti, 1967: p.113) As a result, if possible, photographs, realia and other teaching resources should be brought and used with learners. Further, "Authentic materials have a positive effect of learner motivation, provide exposure to real language and support a more creative approach to teaching" (Richards, 2016).

Pictures and photographs intended for classroom exhibition should be sufficiently large and straightforward to be seen by all learners. If an image is small, either show it individually or project it on the screen to clear visibility before it loses its value. The picture needs to be held correctly for displaying to the class. A class needs a proper stand or easel to keep the picture for clear visibility to attract the learners' attention. Too many pictures should not show to the learners at a time. It is always better to go from simple images to complex. What children see may differ from what the teachers intend to see. The picture does not always arouse interest in the children at once. Therefore, teachers should instruct the students on what learners need to observe in the picture before handing it in. To make good use of a photo, develop a list of questions that learners must answer from the image. Teachers should teach students how to create an opinion on a visual. It would eliminate the need for translation while also improving visual association learning.

Activities for the Teaching of Visual Literacy in the Classroom

1. Able to identify, locate and speak a sentence.

Language learning is implicit. Children use and learn language indirectly while utilising the language itself. During storytelling poems, rhymes, flashcards, activities such as drawing posters,

colouring, etc., aid the teachers. It generates interest to learn and show attentiveness, and the teacher gets the idea of how much children have understood, what they have comprehended, what they have liked and what is their interest. Reading comprehension is the most crucial area for language learners at the primary level. It is their foundational years of learning English as a second language. Learners should answer who, what, where, when, and why questions. Therefore, teachers need to be creative and imaginative and access many resources to teach the young learners.

Some simple and easy to follow activities that can be used in the class with young learners are as follows:

- Plan for hands-on activities which use visual resources such as photos and objects. Introduce activities orally. It must be a collaborative work. For example, an activity of paper folding (origami) can be encouraged. The teacher may ask the students to sit in pairs— student A and student B. The teacher ask the Student A to instruct student B through picture description, and student B has to perform accordingly. It will develop an understanding of the picture and enhance their comprehension to perform correctly.
- Show them any picture for about 10–12 seconds. For example, the painting titled 'The Bedroom' by Van Gogh. Later ask them

questions related to the image. This fun activity will check their memory of how fast they visualise things and remember them. This activity will develop communication and interactive skills, and activate vocabulary related to images, colours or numbers.



Annexure I : 'The Bedroom' by Van Gogh

- Narrate fairy tales, folk stories, or fables to children in the classroom. For example, narrate 'The Thirsty Crow' or any age-appropriate story.



Annexure II: 'The Thirsty Crow'

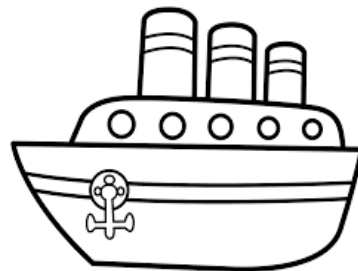
Ask them to sit in groups. Give them pictures and ask them to put them in order according to the story they listened to. This activity will develop listening skills, memorising skills, and comprehending the story to retell it by putting pictures in order.

- Provide them pictures of the four seasons. Ask them to draw a comparison and contrast among the four pictures according to the season, and whether they can visualise the given image. This activity will develop children's speaking skills, listening skills, writing skills and vocabulary.

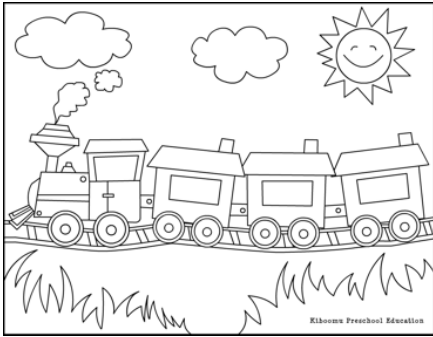


Annexure III : The Four Seasons

- Young learners are excellent and are fond of colouring or sketching any work using colourful pens,



Annexure IV : Steamship



Annexure V: Christmas Train

crayons or dark pencils. It will help them develop their artistic elements and spatial-visual skills of the learners, but give a side activity either of describing or writing a story behind the pictures, which will generate the linguistic output of the students.

CONCLUSION

"Pictures are invaluable aids in learning" (Chakrabarti, 2015: p.106). Using picture reading in the English classroom will help learners enhance their reading comprehension. It will help them retain information for a long time, as pictures are easier to recall. It will strengthen their language development. Reading pictures will be stimulating and enjoyable for young learners. There will be no boredom, and the class will be engaged, interactive, exciting and lively. Visuals might encourage, boost and motivate learners to improve their communication skills. Hence, developed activities will help learners reinforce visual literacy skills, reading comprehension, and other literacy skills.

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FIGURES

FIG.3.1 https://www.123rf.com/photo_151907453_illustration-vector-graphic-of-restaurant-icon-fit-for-food-eat-dining-lunch-etc.html

FIG.3.2 <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/school-children-traffic-sign-red-triangle-1779050549>

ANNEXURES

- I- <https://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/the-bedroom.html>
- II- <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/illustration-story-thirsty-crow-1632330754>
- III- https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/products/puzzles/wooden-puzzles/Seasons-and-weather-puzzle-set/s/PP217?%20utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=SeasonsPuzzle
- IV- <https://coloring-4kids.com/ship-transportation-coloring-pages-steamship-for-kids-printable-free/>
- V- <https://coloringhome.com/coloring-page/1701431>

4

Test Anxiety Among Students of Upper Primary Level

Sunita Singh*

Abstract

Test anxiety refers to a symptom or group of symptoms that can induce 'worries' and tension, and sometimes physiological symptoms like blood pressure increase or in some cases decrease (Kazdin, 2000). The main objective of this paper is to find out the test anxiety among students of upper primary level. To achieve this objective, the researcher used a tool named 'test anxiety scale'. The tool consists of 55 items. The reliability of the test was found to be 0.81 by the split-half method, and the content and face validity of the test were also established. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a total of 100 students. It was found that half of the samples have an average level of test anxiety. These results reveal that nearly half the sample of students in the present study experienced Average Test Anxiety. This indicates that the other half were not unduly stressed or anxious about their examination or test. The remaining half of the sample of students was distributed nearly equally into the other two categories, i.e., Lower Test Anxiety and Higher Test Anxiety.

The paper concludes by stating that anxiety does not suddenly manifest itself at the upper primary stage; it quite certainly originates at the primary stage. Parents, teachers and all stakeholders need to ensure that assessment should not lead to an undue increase in stress levels at the primary stage, for this would have repercussions in later academic life.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a normal reaction of apprehension, tension, or uneasiness to any perceived threat or anticipation of danger (Chauhan, S.S, 2000). It is

considered a problem when symptoms interfere with a person's ability to sleep or otherwise function. Studies showed that different types of disorders caused by anxiety have a high frequency all

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over the world, and test anxiety is one of the most common disorders among them (Cheraghian et al., 2008). A low level of stress is necessary, but it is sometimes so complicated that it limits individual performance in tests and leads to a behavioural disorder or low confidence, or poor academic performance. Due to cutthroat competition in school education, test anxiety is prevalent among students than a few years ago. Students of all academic achievement levels suffer from academic anxiety. Even students who do well on classwork and homework can suffer from test anxiety and do poorly on tests (Bensoussan, 2012). Frequent poor academic performance can increase anxiety levels.

Test anxiety refers to the appraisal of a test or other evaluative situation as threatening and consists of distinct cognitive, affective physiological and behavioural components (Zeidner & Mathews, 2005). Spielberg and Sarason define test anxiety as a situation-specific trait that refers to anxiety states experienced during examinations. This is a complex and multidimensional construct, embodying distinct individual perceptions, and physiological and behavioural responses (Cited by Zhang and Henderson, 2014). Test anxious pupils have difficulty concentrating on tests, and in reading and understanding test instructions and questions; they become easily distracted, and experience problems in recalling learnt material (King, Ollendick & Gullone, 1998 cited

by Dutta and Dasgupta, 2013). Thergaonka N.R. (2007) reported that in a competitive educational system, parents compel their children to get a higher score than others, they always force children to study most of the time and prior to the examination, and children are not allowed to play, watch TV, or spend time with family members. High expectations of parents and pressure to secure a position on the merit list may cause test anxiety among students. Anxiety among students and their parents has been reported to be on the rise in India, especially among those facing board certification examinations. Curse, A. et al., (2010) found girls had higher test anxiety levels than boys. In this study, students reported that tests affect their performance negatively and cause them to forget what they know. Students studying with lower degrees are more anxious than those who are more familiar with the test taking process in the academic environment (Nejad, et al., 2011). It was also reported that there is more impact of anxiety on female students as compared to male students.

Based on a review of the above literatures and from personal experience, the investigator came to know that most of the students experienced anxiety before and during the examination. Such situations raise the question in the researcher's mind—is there any difference in test anxiety among upper primary students? Hence, the present study

has been done by the investigator to seek the answer to the above question.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Test Anxiety among students of upper primary level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the test anxiety among students of upper primary level.
- To compare the test anxiety among students of upper primary level concerning their gender.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following null hypotheses are framed and the level of significance is taken as 0.05.

H01: There is no significant difference in the test anxiety of boys and girls of upper primary level.

METHODOLOGY

Keeping in mind the nature of the present research problem, descriptive survey method was found to be the most suitable for this study. All the upper primary students enrolled in CBSE affiliated schools of Varanasi city were taken as the population of the study. A total of 100 students, 50 boys and 50 girls of upper primary level (classes VI-VIII) were withdrawn from the population. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the selection of first schools and the students studying in them.

To achieve the objectives of the present study a tool known as the

“Test Anxiety Scale” which has been developed and standardised by researchers was used to know the test anxiety level among students. This tool consisted of 55 items, which cover different dimensions of test anxiety— like physiological (11 items) emotional (11 items), behavioural (13 items) and cognitive (14 items). The physiological dimension refers to physical signs like perspiration, sweaty palms, feeling too hot or too cold, headaches, upset stomach, nausea, rapid heartbeat shallow/irregular breathing, dizziness muscle tightness. The emotional dimension denotes the indicators such as feeling fearful, guilty, angry, depressed or uncertain. Procrastination and avoidance, excessive study, over/under eating; poor nutrition, sleeping too much or too little, fatigue or inability to relax are the symptoms of behavioural dimension. In the cognitive dimension, individuals have characteristics like negative or self-defeating talk, excessive worry, difficulty in concentration, difficulty in identifying key ideas, difficulty in organising and expressing thoughts, and going blank on exam questions

There are six filler items whose marks were not added to the final score. Items were close-ended. Each item has two response categories, viz., “Yes” and “No”. The reliability of the test was found to be 0.81 by the split-half method. The content and face validity of the test were also established. Students were categorised into three categories

based on the score obtained on the Test Anxiety Scale, i.e., low test anxiety (Score 0–12), average test anxiety (score 12–24) and higher test anxiety (score above 24).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to verify the stated hypotheses, data were analysed with the help of the SPSS package. The level of confidence was fixed at 0.05 for testing the hypothesis. The results have been reported, interpreted and discussed objective-wise.

- To assess the level of test anxiety among students of upper primary level.

The first objective of the present study is to assess test anxiety among the students of upper primary levels. A close-ended test anxiety scale was administered to determine the pattern of distribution of students into different levels of test anxiety. The scores obtained from upper primary students are matched with the established Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) norms for different levels of anxiety.

Upper primary students' whose scores are less than 12 are categorised as having lower test anxiety. Whereas, students' who scores above 24 fall in the higher anxiety category, and those students whose test anxiety score is between 12–24 are declared as having average test anxiety. The following table summarises the number and percentage of upper primary students falling into the different categories of test anxiety levels:

The result reveals that nearly half the sample of students in the present study experienced average test anxiety. It indicates that the majority of the students were not unduly stressed or anxious about their examinations or test. They may worry slightly and may experience some form of behavioural or emotional problems, but they can easily handle and manage them. This level of anxiety is considered not to be very harmful and may sometimes prove to be good for students to encourage them to perform better in their tests.

Table 1: Test anxiety level among students of upper primary level

Level of Education	Students are categorised under respective test anxiety levels.						N (total no. of students)
	Lower test anxiety		Average test anxiety		Higher test anxiety		
Upper primary	No of Students	%	No of Students	%	No of Students	%	
	24	24	48	48	28	28	100

The remaining half of the sample of students is distributed nearly equally into the other two categories, i.e., lower test anxiety and higher test anxiety. 28 per cent of the sample of students at upper levels experienced higher test anxiety. Before the examination, they experienced rising anxiety while during the examination they felt either too hot or too cold. They also had headaches, stomach upsets, or nausea during or a few days before the examination or test. They also suffered behavioural irregularities like restlessness, dizziness, recurrent urination, and frequent thirst, besides excessive or very less sleep and hunger.

From the above table, it is clear that approximately 1/4th of students have lower-level test anxiety. It was conveyed that these students remained relaxed and carefree during and before their examinations or tests. They experienced very little behavioural and emotional trauma.

significant relationship between test anxiety, age, and the level of education. Nejad, et al., (2011) and Prabhudeva (2007), of whom, suggested that students studying with lower degrees are more anxious than those who are more familiar with the test-taking process in the academic environment.

Gender-wise comparison of the test anxiety among students of upper primary level to examine objective-2, which aims to compare the test anxiety among boys and girls of upper levels in relation to their respective gender, the t-test has been calculated as shown in the following tables:

It has been revealed in the above table that the calculated value of t for $df = 98$ is $t_{0.05} = 3.320$, and the p-value is $.001 < 0.05$. This shows that the p-computed value is at 0.05 levels of significance for the degree of freedom 98. Hence, the null hypothesis, that “there is no significant difference in the test anxiety in male and female students of upper primary

Table 2:

T-test analysis for test anxiety between Female and Male upper primary students

Level of education	Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	T	Df	p-value sig. (2-tailed)	Inference
Upper primary level	Male	50	15.88	8.115	1.147	3.320	98	.001	Significant
	Female	50	21.10	7.597	1.074				

In fact, they enjoyed their daily routine or sometimes had fun during examinations days.

The finding of the present study is supported by the study of Cheraghian, et al., (2008). They reported no

level” was not accepted. The higher mean score of females in comparison to males reveals that girl students in upper primary classrooms are experiencing more test anxiety than their counterparts.

These may be due to factors related to the gender bias of school, society and parents. In the upper primary stage, girls are maturing towards puberty. Many stereotypes in our society, associated with girls and their education have an adverse effect on their personalities. Girls are psychologically struggling for their acceptance at home, society and school which harms their self-esteem; hence, this may be a possible reason for the higher test anxiety experienced by these students.

This finding is supported by the findings of Gurse, et. al, (2010), Mohammad et al., (2012) and Annayat and Tina (2014). They also reported that the impact of anxiety is more on female students as compared to male students. However, Deb and Walsh (2010) found that boys were more anxious than girls.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

- In a nutshell, it emerges from this study that students of upper primary level showed a normal distribution pattern of test anxiety. It had also been concluded that approximately half of the sample of students, had higher (28%) and low levels (24%) of test anxiety, which may adversely affect their cognitive functions and hinder healthy mental development.
- The study reported that approximately (25%) of students fall under the category of high level

of test anxiety, which needs more concern and attention. Severe anxiety disorders lead to cognitive distortions, dysfunctional schema, psychosomatic complaints, headaches, stomach aches, fainting, etc. Educational psychology literature reports that consequences of severe anxiety include cautious or rigid thinking, limited responsiveness, interference with cognitive processes, diminution of complex intellectual processing and problem-solving, heightened susceptibility to persuasion, higher likelihood of imitating models and increased attention to oneself rather than to the environment. Dobson, (2012) suggested that problem-based learning, discussing test procedures with students and teaching study, and test-taking skills are methods to help students feel more in control of the outcome of academic tasks.

CONCLUSION

Teachers and parents can teach students the skills that they need to be in control of learning, which would help in controlling anxiety. It is further suggested that an average level of anxiety is useful in keeping pupils motivated in learning (Alam, 2017). Moderately anxious students did better as compared to the high and low-anxious students in academic achievement.

Test Anxiety mostly works as a hindrance to students' academic performance. Many non-clinical and clinical preventive measures are available to handle the problem of severe test anxiety prevalent among students, but the need of the hour is to create awareness among students and teachers about them.

In an informal talk with the teachers, parents and students it was observed by the researcher that teachers, as well as parents, created fear in the students regarding examinations or tests hence, there is a need to think about this because it brings some trouble. Presently students come with experience of tests or examinations from a very early stage, i.e., from the primary level. So there is a need to ensure that students enjoy this assessment process, and do not develop any type of fear about the exam. One of the objectives of a continuous and comprehensive evaluation is for examination to become part of teaching-learning, so that it minimises the effect of examination or test phobia among the students. Hence, teachers as well as parents,

must think about achieving this objective. Such type of psychological pressure, directly and indirectly, affects the all-around development of a child.

Anxiety does not suddenly manifest itself at the upper primary stage; it quite certainly originates at the primary stage. A positive or negative attitude towards tests and assessments is developed over time, created by teachers as they introduce or inform about the concept of tests or examinations. Hence, the role of primary teachers becomes very important in developing a healthy and conducive environment during teaching as well as examinations or tests. If students have test anxiety at the primary level, it will impact subsequent stages and their future academic life as well.

There is a need to organise various types of assessment activities to minimise the negative impact of examination stress. In addition, the focus on achievement and overall development of an individual, contributing to local and global society should always be kept in mind.

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A Peep into Children's World

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Abstract

Empirical research studies on children and childhood from socio-cultural and ecological perspectives are in their nascent stages across the world, especially in India. The present research was aimed at understanding which/what living beings and objects children of ages 7–10 consider of utmost importance to them. Data were collected from a total of 346 children studying in two selected private-run and government-run schools in Delhi using a structured questionnaire presented in the form of a worksheet. A mixed methods approach was used to analyse the data using the process of thematic coding and subsequently applying descriptive statistics to find out prominent patterns, and ascertain the influence of gender and type of school on the responses of the children. The findings are presented in the sub-sections of—‘most important living being’ and ‘most important thing or object’. The analysis indicates significant differences in the responses of children according to the type of school—government and private.

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN

Recent scholarly discourse in child studies has emphasised the understanding of childhood as a ‘social construction’ thereby implying that childhood is diverse and varied across cultures and societies. Through developmental psychology is rooted in the constructs of Piaget, Kohlberg and

Erikson’s theories have remained the predominant way of understanding children (Walkerdine, 2009). Recent scholarship from the fields of sociology and anthropology are challenging the notions of ‘universal childhood’. Scholars such as Vygotsky (1978, 1986) have long-established the importance of social context in the broader understanding of children and cognition, yet it is only in the current century that there has been

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a focus on individual differences in childhood and the understanding of the development of children in terms of diversity (Balgopalan, 2008; Vasanta, 2004; Walderdine, 2009). There is now a growing recognition that the myth of universality of childhood needs to be deconstructed and understanding childhood as socially and historically constructed thereby situating children in a social and cultural context (Vasanta, 2004).

The conceptual frame of the present research is rooted in the social constructivist theories and the ecological framework. The theories of Lev Vygotsky and Urie Bronfenbrenner are seminal to facilitate this understanding.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory enables us to understand children and their development in a social context while cognising that child have an immense potential for learning. By proposing development as a 'zone' in which there are certain concepts and skills that are within the reach of the child albeit with some support from others (labelled zone of proximal development in the theory), Vygotsky's theory (1978) has revolutionised the understanding of children and their development. In the Vygotskian framework of learning (1986), social interaction with one's peers, parents, teachers and other members of the community is crucial in enabling the construction of knowledge by the children and cultural tools are of immense importance in this process

of cognitive development. Vygotsky's constructs of 'spontaneous' and 'scientific concepts' (Vygotsky, 1986) provide useful pegs to situate cognition within an evolutionary frame and thereby understand the role of 'formal institutions of learning. While children acquire 'spontaneous concepts' in their direct interactions with the world, 'scientific concepts' are formulated in a formal context of learning.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1986) emphasises the environmental influences on children and provides us with a framework to facilitate understanding of children in the larger social context. In Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1994) theory, the environment is envisioned as a series of nested structures that the child spends his/her life in. Depicting the systemic contexts as concentric circles, Bronfenbrenner (1986) positions them in a hierarchical manner—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and cronosystem. All these systems influence each other and also influence the child. Beginning from the child's immediate surroundings the four systemic contexts encompass the influence of formal institutions such as school, media, cultural values, customs and laws amongst other factors. The theory stresses the bidirectionality of the interactions, and hence, again takes cognizance of the child as an active being.

Though there have been some attempts at researching children

from this perspective it is still in its nascent stages. Most research on children is focused on the nature of children’s thinking and learning along with how children learn, often foregrounding it in the constructs of Piaget and Vygotsky. There have been a few pieces of research on intentions and desires (Schult, 2002) and children’s aspirations (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl, 2005) that highlight and establish the socio-cultural and familial influences on children and their thinking.

METHODOLOGY

The present research was aimed at finding out what children considered important in their lives in terms of people and objects, and analysing these responses in terms of the influence of gender and economic class (primarily ascertained through the school the children were going to).

The overall paradigm of the research is interpretive (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: p. 22) which is characterised by the concern for the individual with the aim to understand the subjective world of

human experience. This perceptive is especially crucial in an attempt to understand children and distinguish research on children as distinct from research on adults.

THE FIELD AND THE SAMPLE

Two schools in the same vicinity in South Delhi were selected to be a part of this research. These included—a state-run government school and a private autonomous school that primarily catered to families of middle-income groups. The children were in the age range of 7–9 years studying in Classes III and IV. The distribution of the sample is presented in table 1.

TOOL OF DATA COLLECTION

There is a lack of methods to study children’s views and experiences pertaining to investigating their subjective experiences. Ways of researching children, especially in an interpretive frame are yet to gain impetus. After studying the few types of research that employ such methods (Punch, 2002) it was decided to use a worksheet as a tool of data collection for the present research. A structured

Table 1: Distribution of sample by gender and the school

	Private school	State-run school government	Total
Girls	92	79	171
Boys	80	95	175
Total	172	174	346

questionnaire was designed and presented as a worksheet to children to enable data collection from a large group of children. The worksheet was bilingual in nature (Hindi and English). Questions were simple and open-ended in nature mostly in the form of sentence completion.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The data collected were analysed using a mixed-method approach. Thematic analysis was the primary method of data analysis in which patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset were systematically identified and organised. The process followed for this included entry and tabulation of data in excel sheets, after which data obtained was sifted through, and preliminary coding was done leading to the emergence of certain thematic categories. Responses of each child were then categorised as per those categories and in that light, the categories were further refined. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were applied in which quantification of a number of responses in each category was done and percentages were calculated to find out the difference between responses of children by their gender and the school they were attending.

Ethics

Informed verbal consent was sought from the children regarding their participation in the research. The schools were informed of and given permission for the interaction of student-teachers with the children,

and the requisite permissions for that were taken from the administrative officials as required. All the protocols to protect the confidentiality of responses and to ensure that no one was harmed in any way due to the research were duly followed.

Significance of research

The research is of immense significance since children's voices have remained muted through the studies on childhood as children have remained 'muted groups' (Hardman, 1973) and there is a dearth of research on children that ascertains their perceptions about the significance of the most important person and object in their lives. However, since the sample size of the study is small (N=346) and the sampling is not randomised, generalisations cannot be made based on this study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data is presented in the following themes—the most important living being in the children's lives and the most important object. The responses of the children are compared across the type of school they were going to (as a major indicator of their economic class) and gender.

The most important living being in the children's lives

The children were asked to specify the most important living being in their life and give a reason for the same. Table 2 depicts the responses of the children after coding and categorisation of the

Table 2: Most important living being in children’s lives as represented in percentages

Most important living being	Percentage of private school children	Percentage of government school children
A person/persons in the child's family/friends	33.82	50.29
Animals	6.65	0.00
Plants	8.38	0.00
Misc. — Film actor, teacher, God	0.87	0.00
Total	49.71	50.29

responses segregated by the school they were going to.

The above table clearly indicates that for a majority of children (84%) a person in their family or a friend was the most important person in their lives, thus indicating the

continuing importance of the micro system during the middle childhood stage. This category includes varied responses from children as indicated in Figure 1. Herein, the sub-category of ‘both parents’ is when the children stated either

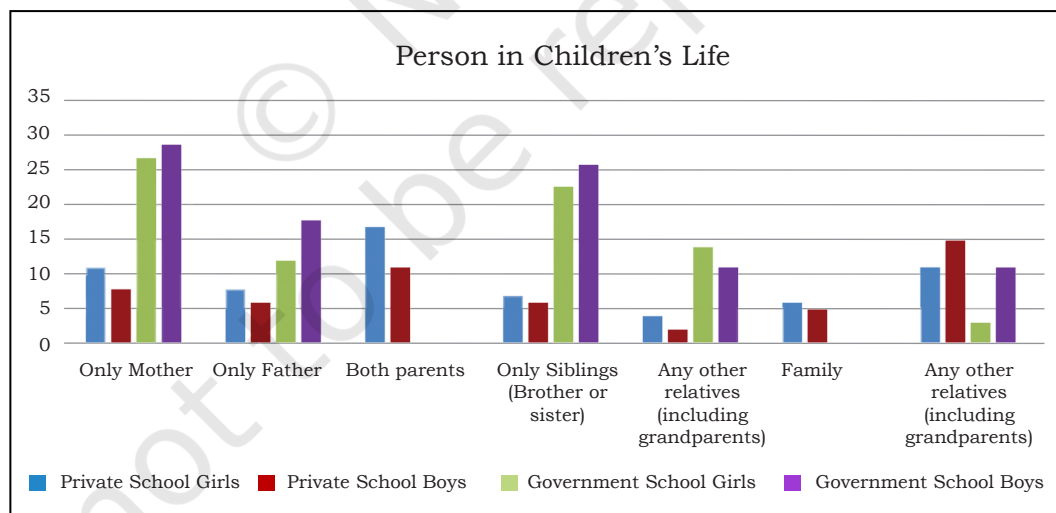


Figure 5.1: Most important person: Sub-categories

'parents' or 'mother and father' as their response.

As is evident from the Figure 5.1 there seems to be a difference in the responses of the government and private school children, with more children from government school specifying mother and siblings as the most important person in their lives; 'parents' and 'family' has been mentioned only by children going to private schools. Though there are not much difference in the number of responses of girls and boys in each category, the explanation for their choice was 'gendered'. While specifying the father as the most important person, the reasons given by the children of private school centred around — 'keep me safe', 'plays with me', 'gives me everything I want, while, responses given by children in the government school revolved around 'gives money' and 'things'. Reasons for the mother being the most important person was the same across both school as well as gender and revolved around 'care', 'love' and 'nurturing and rearing' with some children specifying cooking as well.

All the responses of government school children choosing a relation (mother, father, both parents, siblings and relatives) were around love and care. Only children going to private school chose 'both parents' and specified reasons such as 'they help in growth', 'help and guide me', 'love and play with me', 'help me do my homework'. A few children chose their friend as the most important living being and the reasons

specified were—'because she is a friend' or 'she is my best friend'.

While all the children going to the government school have specified only a person/person in their family or a friend; children attending private school have also specified 'animals', 'plants' or a 'film actor', 'teacher' and 'God' as a most important living being. This is an interesting finding and indicates the influence of schooling on children's responses. Responses such as 'plants are important since they give us oxygen/food/air' and 'without trees, human beings will die' indicate that the children are referring to the constructs taught at school and using the language of schooling discourse. This gains significance since the children's response is to an open-ended question on what is most significant in their lives. The majority of the children from a private school who specified animals were referring to their pet dog and the reason for their choice was — 'is cute' and 'plays with me'. Miscellaneous answers included—'teacher as she teaches us important things in life' and 'actor Tiger Shroff because I love his movies and he has six-pack abs'.

The responses of the children could be indicative of their family structure; for example, while a lot of government school children have mentioned siblings as the most important living being very few private school children have done so. Another pertinent finding is private school children's categorisation of 'parents' and 'family', which signifies the

development of their understanding of class inclusion.

MOST IMPORTANT OBJECT IN CHILDREN’S LIVES

The sentence completion of the most

important object in the children’s life generated a wide variety of responses as categorised in table 3.

It is evident from the above table that the majority of children in the government school (46%) specified a

Table 3: Most important thing/object in children’s lives

Most important living being		Private school children		Government school children		Total response
		Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Food (fruits, chocolate, ice-cream)		5	2	35	45	87
Toys and games		15	19	5	11	50
Gadgets	Mobile/iPad	7	11	0	2	20
	A.C	2	1	0	0	3
	T.V.	7	4	6	8	25
	Watch	0	2	0	0	2
Vehicle	Car	2	3	0	1	6
	Cycle	2	5	0	0	7
	Aeroplane	0	1	0	0	1
House		8	4	7	8	27
Nature (plants)		9	7	1	0	17
Animals (general and pets)		5	4	0	4	13
Family (including parents)		5	4	4	0	13
Friends		5	2	2	4	13
Accessories		4	0	6	2	12
Study		12	9	9	9	39
Water		0	2	0	1	3
Clothes		4	0	4	0	8
Total		92	80	79	95	346

particular food as the most important thing/object. A fruit (apple/grapes/mango) was stated most often because of its' taste. A vast variety of sweets such as *barfi*, *laddoo*, cake and other eatables such as pizza were also specified for the taste. This is an interesting finding since the children have internalised the value of food and might be projecting their desires in this question as well. The economic conditions of the children could be a prominent reason for this choice. Children's access to resources is also evident with a lot of private school children specifying various gadgets as the most important thing in their life.

There are gender differences in specification of 'toys and games' and 'mobile' as the most important thing in the children's lives with more boys than girls specifying it. This differentiation is explicit in their specification of the game with more boys stating—'car', 'supersonic', 'carrom board', 'dart gun' and girls mentioning 'doll', 'barbie', 'doremon teddy', 'home set'.

The importance of mobile was centred around playing games while T.V. was important since 'one could watch cartoons and films. A few children also said that their house was important for them primarily since it provides them shelter. Nature and animals were mentioned by more private school children than government school-going children. The reasons given by them for the same were quite different. While government school children focused

upon the beauty of the plants as in the case of a girl who said that, for her rose is the most important object because 'it is beautiful to look at'; children of the private school gave reasons that were around the importance of plants and animals in the environment such as—'they supply us the air to breathe, 'are necessary for us to live. It is quite interesting to note that a few children have mentioned family and friends as the most important objects/thing. This could be indicative of the nature of the question being unclear to these children or the children being unable to segregate the importance of living things and objects in their minds.

Quite a few children also mentioned studies as being the most important object for them. This category also includes books as the response. The reasons given for these as being the most important were different across the schools the children were going to. The reasons given for specification of books and studies by private schools were — 'books help us in studies and gives us knowledge', 'school because we learn so much and become intelligent' while children going to government school reasoned—'studies because my parents trust me that I know more, so I have to study more', 'books so that I can study and get a good job'.

CONCLUSION

It is quite evident from the data analysis that there are differences in

both the responses of the children and the reasons specified for the same across the type of school the children were attending. Access by virtue of their economic background seemed to have influenced the choice of children. It can also be inferred that the responses of children about most important living beings and objects are also influenced by the processes

of schooling. Gender differences are also evident in children's responses. Though girls and boys seem to have given similar responses in terms of their selection of most important living beings and objects, yet a deeper probing of the specification of choices as well as an explanation of the reasons for the choice highlights the gendered perspectives.

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Orchids Series Classes III–V

Varada Mohan Nikalje*

The roots of all Indian literature can be traced to the rich oral literatures of various primitive societies. The oral narratives, transmitted from generation to generation, have survived for centuries. Folktales is our legacy from the past, what we live today and what we pass on to future generations.

Folktales, generally traditional oral narratives, are an important facet of tribal identity. As emphasised in the UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), folktales reflect indigenous wisdom, knowledge, notions of justice and social obligations, embodying the hopes and aspirations of a tight-knit group.

The preservation of tribal identity, culture and values remains a point of concern in today's world. Changing developmental paradigms such as exposure to science and technology, globalisation and floating population has resulted in a widening of horizons; unfortunately, it has also paved the way for gradual and often

intangible erosion of identity, culture and mother tongues. There is a need to familiarise young learners with folktales that represent the enormous wealth of oral tribal literature.

Arunachal Pradesh is home to twenty-seven major and minor tribes, each with its own distinct language with vocabulary, syntax and grammar at wide variance with each other. English, thus, serves as a *via media*; indeed, it is the official State language.

Arunachal Pradesh has been the first state in India to work on a series of folktales in English, titled 'Orchids'. Initially, a set of thirty tales from sixteen major tribes, had been placed in reading corners in Classes I and II across the state, not as prescribed texts, but meant to supplement reading. The success of this endeavour resulted in the development of tribal tales for Classes III–V. Orchids not only represents a significant landmark in safeguarding the cultural heritage of the region, but also meets the twin

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goals of quality education and the perpetuation of Indian ethos.

The project reflects continued collaboration of both State and centre levels: the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Arunachal Pradesh, with inputs from the various cultural and tribal societies, with academic support from the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi, funded by the MHRD.

The folktales for Classes III-V were chosen from the tribes that were spread across eleven districts of Arunachal Pradesh: Tangsa, Singpho, Adi, Mishmi, Khamti, Wangcho, Apatani, Nyishi, Nocte, Galo, Miji, Tagin, Monpa and Sherdukpen.

These folktales existed originally in the tribal languages. The effort made in translating them into English, choosing only those tales that have relevance to school students in the twenty-first century, has naturally brought about some loss of the original flavour and spirit. However, a sincere effort was made to minimise the loss, by involving members of the Cultural Society of various tribes. Moreover, if it were not for such efforts, these folktales would have diminished into nothingness.

The story 'A Wise Judgement' is based on the gap and the social positions between the rich and the poor, and how it affects the judgement of the people around about the same. It also highlights the concept of righteousness and morality.

The story 'The Mithun and the Tiger' cautions people of the necessity

of keeping secrets, or at least to think before speaking.

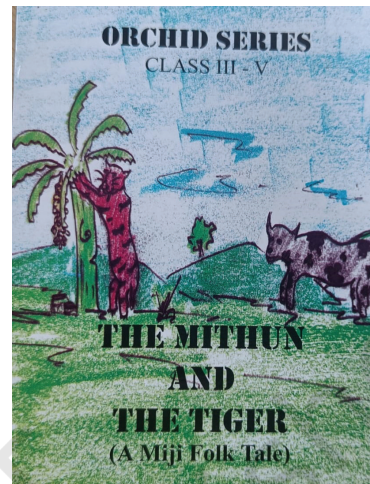


Figure 1: *The Mithun and The Tiger*

The story 'Twin Suns and Twin Moons' highlights the courses of day and night and the relationship of it with the routines we follow. The concept of having one sun and one moon ensures discipline in the lives of the native people.

The story 'Palo Talo and Arii Miidi' highlights the concept of moral and

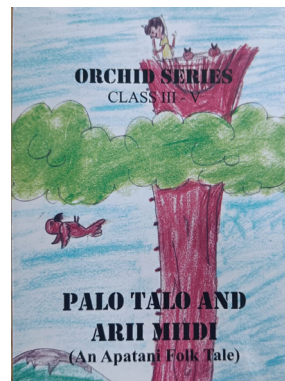


Figure 2: *'Palo Talo and Arii Miidi'*

physical strength in coordination with nature. Amidst the diversity of flora and fauna, it is about devoting one's effort in protecting the right and killing the evil.

The story '*Boum Ka-Kir*' and *Nanyi Ga-Gi*' indicates a specific ethnobotanical knowledge and cultural practices. It also highlights the significance of values in living with a family. It highlights love and belongingness.

The story 'How the Owl Got the Sunken Eyes' recognises the learning embedded in local living traditions and how the concept of day and night came into being; along with that it also addresses why and how the owl sleeps during day and is awake during night

The story 'The Man Who First Tamed the Buffaloes' bears testimony to the way of life that prevailed in the region after man could tame the otherwise hyperactive buffaloes and immortalise the sanctity of the union between nature and man. Wherein, if nature or animals can damage, they can protect too. It also signifies that the world of tribal imagination is very different from that of the modern society.

The folktales reflect the tribal imagination which fuses the natural

and the supernatural, the animate with the inanimate. In tribal folktales, animals and birds speak to humans, or the sun and stars may visit the earth. This is not to say that tribal folktales have no rules, but merely to emphasise that the principle of association of human emotion to nature is very strong. Thus, stars, sky, trees, humans, and gods can experience fear, joy, sorrow and jealousy.

Teachers may emphasise that literature is not only written texts, but should be widened to include all oral narratives. The illustrations are deceptively simple, with short dark lines that, almost miraculously, create an ambience of sky, fields, houses and people. They also appear to be easily comprehensible and relatable to the children for them to draw and picture stories without using the language, necessarily. The use of varied colours also makes it attractive for children to read and understand the context, and thereafter, the entire story.

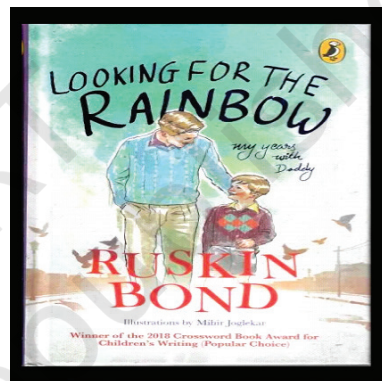
This series presents the diachronic study of orality and literacy which encompasses not only pristine orality and subsequent chirographic in these folk tales, but also the print and later electronic media, which build on oral and writing cultures.

BOOK REVIEW

Looking for the Rainbow: My Years with Daddy

Vandana Kerur*

Author : Ruskin Bond
Publication : Puffin Books
Year of Publication: 2017
Illustration : Mihir Joglekar



Ruskin Bond is a name familiar to most children who are fond of reading books in English. He has written over five hundred stories and essays for children.

This is Bond's first memoir for children in which he talks of his childhood days spent with his father and pays a tribute to him. "As I sit here, soaking up the mellow spring sunshine, the distant past looms up before me, and I remember things that I thought I had forgotten. Most of all I remember my father—'Daddy', as I always called him," he writes.

Born in Kasauli in 1934, Ruskin Bond grew up in Jamnagar, Dehradun, New Delhi and Shimla. Ruskin was four years old when his British parents, Edith Clerke and Aubrey Bond separated (followed by a divorce later). He was raised by his grandmother. It was inevitable perhaps, that he was sent to a boarding school quite early.

The separation of parents would certainly leave a lasting impact on a child's mind, and Ruskin's was no exception. Yet, in the memoir, he deals with it in a short, ironical comment:

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“It was 1942, the middle of World War II, and my parents too had been at war with each other. They had, in fact, separated, and my mother was about to marry again.”

Later, his mother remarried an Indian. Ruskin was called back from the boarding school. But he preferred to go to his father. As he says in the memoir,

"My father was serving in the Royal Air Force, and was living on his own in an Air Force hutment in New Delhi, working in the Codes and Cyphers section at Air Headquarters. I was particularly close to my father, and I insisted on going to live with him rather than to a new and unknown home."

Thus, for two years he lived with his father. This book 'Looking for the Rainbow' tells the story of the two years he spent with his father in New Delhi and Shimla.

Young readers would need to be told, and adults would need to remember, that up till then, Calcutta had been the capital of British-ruled India, and Shimla was the summer capital. At the time of the narration, however, the capital was New Delhi, still very new and was still coming up. The hutment consisted of two brick-walled rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, located in Humayun Road, which at that time was only a lane with shrubs and bushes.

The author recalls his encounter with snakes and jackals, and the rush to the Air Road Shelters

during bombing. He also remembers suffering from prickly heat in Delhi. He recounts the various stamps in his father's stamp collection, and how both father and son spent an entire rainy afternoon classifying them. Bond and his father then had to shift from their hutment which was prone to leaking, and things became worse as soon as the monsoon broke.

That was the last time he saw his father though he did not know it at the time. His father's sudden death a few months later pushed the author, then a young boy of ten, into a different and unfamiliar world. As Ruskin Bond writes in his Foreword, "Most of us grow in our teens or twenties I think I grew up when I was ten".

The author reminisces that he was lucky to have a father who gave the boy nearly all his spare time, who brought him books, took him for walks, shared his interests and most important, held his hand in the dark. 'Not many fathers are capable of tenderness towards their children. They are usually too busy 'earning a living for the family'—at least, that's the excuse they make.' says the author, with the dry humour so characteristic of him.

As the author begins to write, he remembers things that he thought he had forgotten. In a life full of stress and strife, he vividly recalls the warmth, love and tenderness of his father.

Bond introduces readers to the realities that are around, perhaps

unnoticed, such as the chirping of birds, the clattering of raindrops on the rooftops, the fragrance of flowers, the smell of the earth when it rains, the dancing of leaves in the breeze, the musical gurgling of running streams, the swaying of trees, and simple routine activities such as the churning of butter, the smell of toast and details of everyday life. For instance, he learnt the habit of knocking his shoes against the floor or wall and examining them carefully every morning from his father.

"I did not realise the importance of doing this, until one day a centipede dropped out of one of my shoes. After that I was very careful to examine them. And it's a habit that is still with me."

Readers will be enthralled by the descriptions of visits to the cinema, long walks and the conversations that created a bond between father and son. What adds to the attraction is the unassuming style. The visual element is very strong: it is like a film unfolding before one's eyes. 'Straightforward' best describes Ruskin's writing style: it is simple, direct yet lovingly indulgent to young readers.

Bond's father played a major role in teaching him how to enjoy reading and writing, which later shaped his creative talents. The author's words show that from his childhood days he developed this habit. This reflects the autobiographical elements found in Bond's work. Nature plays an important role in Bond's writing.

Bond's description of natural surroundings of northern India and foothills of the Himalayas forms the background in his stories.

Parents, and teachers, may take the opportunity to point out to young readers at some point, that good literature need not always be full of difficult words or obtuse terms. What an author should strive for, is clarity. There is a certain elegance in simplicity. This can be seen in the theme, the choice of words, and in the illustrations. Ruskin Bond writes about nature and ordinary people and their daily lives. His stories are written in a simple, lucid and engaging style. The illustrations are in black and white, with the shadow outline technique rendering it suitable for the theme of nostalgia, complementing the work exceedingly well. The book is small-sized, making it easy to hold by young readers.

The author once said, "When I sit down to write, I write to enjoy myself. I write what interest me or what is personal to me. I write to inform and educate the readers. Whatever I write, I want to keep it simple, adopting a simple style so that readers could relate to my writing and enjoy the experience."

I write a story in my mind in advance. Afterwards I need to put it on paper only, using the words that are effective and writing beautiful sentences.

The Indian Council for Child Education has recognised Ruskin Bond's contribution to the growth of

children's literature in India. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for, 'Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra', his novel in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999, and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.

What exactly is it that has won Ruskin Bond the hearts of millions of readers?

Countless charming short stories and introspective novels are underlined by a strong note of optimism. The literary world of Ruskin Bond is like an oasis, a green patch in the dreary desert of modern feverish literature. Ruskin has extended an

uncorrupted world of simple, but delightful and absorbing stories narrating life in a new healing order. The tales of innocence and experience are revealed through his fiction and poetry to comfort his readers, not to lull them to sleep but to usher in an awareness of the beauty of everyday life, the wonders of nature, and the varying shades of the lives of men, women and children.

As an observer of human life and a perceptive student of human character. Bond displays the maturity, sophistication and ease of a master storyteller.

DID YOU KNOW

Promotion of Reading and Library Grants: An MHRD Initiative

Onshangla Zimik*

Reading can be defined as the ability of an individual to identify and comprehend printed words. The reader employs symbols as triggers to retrieve information stored in their memory, which they then use to formulate a reasonable understanding of the writer's intended message. It's easy to overlook the intricacies of the reading process. For many individuals, reading is a reflexive activity, and they rarely take the time to reflect on the complexities involved in the process.

WHY IS READING IMPORTANT?

The contribution of reading in improving learning outcomes has been demonstrated in various research studies. Reading is a step towards developing command over language and writing skills. It enhances vocabulary, creativity, critical thinking, imagination and expression, helping children to relate to their surroundings and real life situations. However, it does require continuous practice, development and refinement. Thus,

there is a need to create an enabling environment in which students read for pleasure and develop their skills through a process that is enjoyable and sustainable.

WHY DO WE NEED LIBRARIES?

Children need access to quality books and other reading material to develop and grow as readers, thinkers and writers. The need for a library in every school is recognised by the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The library is an essential component of the school, providing not only resources for learning, but also strengthening the purpose of reading for pleasure, recreation and further deepening of knowledge and imagination.

Evidence from the National Achievement Survey, 2017 has clearly brought out that school children who have access to a school library, and who read story books have higher levels of learning.

* *Research Scholar*, Department of Comparative Literature, School of Language Literature and Cultures Study, Central University of Gujarat

Initiatives by the Department of School Education and Literacy

Keeping this in view, the Samagra Shiksha scheme was revised in March 2018, to include the provision of library books to all schools covering all classes from I–XII. The library grant amount varies from ₹5000/- for stand-alone primary schools to ₹20,000/- for secondary/senior Secondary schools.

Guidelines have been issued earlier with regard to the utilisation of the funds under the Library Grant of Samagra Shiksha. These present Guidelines emphasise the promotion of reading as a whole apart from development of libraries and procurement of library books and the activities that can help achieve these goals.

The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has initiated a massive integrated teacher training programme, *NISHTHA*—National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement to build the capacities of around 42 lakh teachers and heads of schools, faculty members of SCERTs, DIETs and Block Resource Coordinators (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs). The modules include sensitising the teachers on the importance of reading, how to manage libraries and carry out reading-based activities to develop a culture of reading amongst children, and help improve learning outcomes.

Procedure for Identifying, Printing and procuring library Books:

- A selection committee will be constituted at the State/UT level to select books for school libraries under the library grant of Samagra Shiksha. The secretary education shall be the chairperson.
- Eminent children’s literature writers, school principals, teachers, educationists and other persons associated with children’s education and learning should be part of the selection committee. The director SCERT and State Project Director (SPD), Samagra Shiksha, shall also be members.
- Story books, magazines and comics published by NCERT, NBT, CIIL, SCERTs and other central and state government agencies can be considered for selection, including publication division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- States and UTs are encouraged to develop their own story books including local lore and folktales through SCERTs and DIETs by involving teachers, parents and others. Famous stories from the paired State/UT under *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* (EBSB) may also be selected. Children can also develop storybooks for other children.
- In case the States/UTs face difficulties in purchase of library

books in regional languages through NCERT, NBT, etc., they may utilise 20 per cent of the funds for procurement of library books in regional/local languages from publishers who publish books in regional/local languages.

- The books that can be procured under the library grant of the *Samagra Shiksha* include the following:
- Storybooks
- Reputed children’s magazines and comics
- However, the funds cannot be used to procure textbooks, reference books, exam related publications or any material unsuitable or inappropriate for children till the age of eighteen.
- The books will be categorised for age-appropriate reading. Books for Classes I–V will be known as *BULBUL* series, Classes VI–VIII as *KOYAL* series and Classes IX–XII as *MYNAH* series. The logos for these series are shown below.

BULBUL KOYAL MYNAH

- In case the book is appropriate for more age groups then two or all three bird logos should be used.
- All books must have the logo of the *BULBUL*, *MYNAH* and *KOYAL* series, either printed on the cover page or pasted using

a sticker, which must bear the name of the *Samagra Shiksha* and the year of purchase, i.e., year when *Samagra Shiksha* funds are used.

- Based on suggestions received from States, it is advised that these books may be printed and distributed to schools by following the same procedure for printing and distributing the textbooks.
- All books procured for libraries under *Samagra Shiksha* scheme must be procured at State/UT level by the committee.
- States and UTs may place direct orders with NCERT/NBT/CIL/I&B/SCERT and other publishers for procurement of the books or obtain the copyright of books.
- Supply of books should be at the state headquarter, and in case of larger States, the district level. Distribution up to school level may be done as in the case of textbooks.
- For visually impaired children, library collection should include tactile map books and *Barkha* Series from NCERT as well as audio books from National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and NCERT.
- MHRD will upload soft copies of books on the *DIKSHA* portal of shagun online junction (www.seshagun.gov.in). States

and UTs can download these, translate if required, and print and distribute these books.

- Ebooks may also be preloaded on digital devices and sent to schools.

Setting up and Managing Libraries:

A library must be child-friendly, attractive and colourful. Libraries may be of different kinds:

- A standard physical library with reading area, display shelves, stock room, issue/receipt counter.
- Reading corners which can be located in a part of the classroom, or any other convenient space in the school.
- Classroom library inside a classroom where books can be accessed during class period.
- Rotating library where books are interchanged between classes/sections/students.
- For effective management of libraries, schools can constitute a library management committee and Students Library Council (SLC).
- Bal Sansads (Child Cabinets), where available, may be given responsibility to maintain the books in the reading corner.

Library Activities and Promotion of reading culture:

- To promote reading amongst students, schools need to establish vibrant libraries as a

learning centre, set up reading corners and create a print rich environment.

- Various child-friendly components such as poem corners and message boards can be developed.
- Innovative and low cost ways to display the library books to make them accessible to children readily may be adopted.

The suggested reading activities are:

- Read aloud
- Book-making
- Shared reading
- Extending/rewriting the story
- Library treasure hunt
- Book review
- Drama
- Reading by older students to younger students
- Story-telling/ Talking hour
- Reading by parents and volunteers to children
- Spelling bee
- Theme-based reading

Schools may also involve alumni, youth icons, parents, retired personnel, college students to encourage community involvement and foster a sense of ownership in promoting reading culture to ensure long-term impact and sustainability. Innovative ways such as celebrating language festivals, organising monthly story-telling sessions, reading events and literature fairs may be carried out for promoting reading.

Language Learning Beyond the Textbooks: A Reflection on Teaching Language to Children

Kalpana Manwal*

Formal education begins with the main focus on three aspects—Numeracy, Literacy and Environment. Out of the three, language is the first thing that a child becomes aware of and starts using at an early age. Making sense of numbers and understanding the relationship with the environment is introduced later, but language is present right from the beginning. This paper details out the importance of learning beyond the textbooks and understanding language as a part of their everyday usage. Language is the most intrinsic part of human existence, and hence, it is best learned in a asocial environment.

Keywords: Language, textbooks, learning, education

When children enter school, they meet language in the form of subjects. Language which has been there since birth suddenly becomes something restricted to their textbooks and notebooks. The creativity which a child is supposed to show with language often gets side-lined by the need to rote learn to get good grades.

During my internship days, I got the opportunity to work with young learners. In a classroom of 40 students, there were learners of different learning levels. Teaching language in such a setting had its own complications. While teaching internship is an opportunity to work with students it often puts a restraint on a trainee as an individual. They often strive for a balance between teaching as per the official syllabus and teaching according to the students' level of understanding.

Like every other teacher intern, we were advised to create a book corner. As someone who grew up with storybooks, I entered the classroom space with a perception of childhood solely based on my experience as a child. I brought some children's storybooks, some magazines, picture books, and cut-outs of comic strips, poems, and riddles from the kids' corner of newspapers to suffice for a class of forty.

It was quite difficult to make the class teacher understand the

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purpose behind creating a story corner or language corner, and why I wanted to give more time to engage with the books which were not a part of the syllabus. On the other hand, engagement with learners was easier. They too had similar perceptions about the books and the games, but for them, it was an opportunity to avoid their studies so they enjoyed the time allotted to the language corner/ book corner.

This lack of enthusiasm towards the textbooks can be attributed to the fact that the transaction of language content is still very much product-oriented. Students also know that the story or the poem given in the textbook has to be followed by some written exercise. NCF-2005 emphasises on child-centred learning but inside the classroom, learning is very much teacher-centred. The exercise of writing the answers is still very much directed by the teachers thus taking away another chance from the children of being creative while working with language. In a classroom, it is essential to give students time to think on their own, which is considered a time-consuming task by many teachers.

With storybooks, there were no time constraints on the children. They engaged with those books at their own pace. The storybooks weren't a part of the syllabus so they had the time to read the content.

With textbooks, there is rarely any time given for reading to young learners. It's the teacher who directs

the whole process. As an intern, I too could not create that space for my students where they could engage with the text before taking part in any kind of discussion. There was a demand for timely completion of the syllabus so the learners were given a Hindi translation of the text. Reading long texts in English (second language for most of the children) was a tedious task for many children. Most of the learners were not at the reading level that was expected of them in Class IV. Bringing in storybooks with simpler vocabulary and bilingual texts were some ways employed to encourage the learners to read English text on their own.

One of the interesting things I observed was that, even though not all the learners liked reading, many of them used to take the books from the language corner for the sake of activities given in them. They showed interest in different activities like finding the differences, spotting the listed items, etc. Jokes and comic strips were a hit among the learners who did not want to read a long story. Children's magazines were more popular than the storybooks. I think the reason for their popularity was the variety of content they provided. The enthusiasm and interest shown for the books which were not a part of the syllabus were always lacking when it came to their textbooks which were filled with stories, poems and activities, and provided much scope for them to work with the language.

By the time my internship ended, I had around 15–20 students who actively asked for storybooks and magazines in their free time. Even if some of them asked for a particular book which they had become fond of, was a sign of them engaging with them. There was a learner in the class who wanted me to be there when she reads aloud a story, and for the first few days, she struggled a bit in reading the words without splitting them into letters but she started reading them without breaking them after some time.

One of my fondest memories from that time is of the quietest child of the class asking some questions related to a storybook he had developed a liking to.

It'd be unfair to say that my ideas failed, but to say that I achieved what I had in my mind at the beginning of the internship about getting children into reading would be far-fetched as well.

LANGUAGE GAMES

Schools don't have much interactive material/games on language, and the same was true in my case. I decided to prepare some language games to transact/deliver the content in a fun way.

Some of the popular games were—
Eliminate and arrange.

This language game is an advanced version of arranging the story in sequence.

The more your students are familiar with different stories, the more challenging one can make the game to be. This was one of my favourite language games. The stories which I picked for this game were '*DOST KI POSHAK*' (*RIMJHIM*, Class-IV, NCERT), Hansel and Gretel (German fairy-tale with suitable changes for the young children).

There were some paper strips which had major events that happened in the story '*dost ki poshak*', but there were some other strips with lines which were taken from the story, Hansel and Gretel. It also included some mixing of characters and events to confuse the players. The learners had to remove the strips which contained elements from the other story, and then arrange them in order.

FUN WITH WORDS

Games to Enhance Vocabulary

The model/structure for these games was inspired by the movements of the hands of a clock. There were different versions and different levels, but all of them focused on the vocabulary.

One of the simplest versions of this game consisted of a circular disc made of cardboard with some paper strips pasted on its boundary. There were some strips on the circle attached to the centre by a pin. The students had to work in groups and move the strips in such a way that



the different words could be matched with their antonyms or synonyms. Another version of the game included aligning the words with their Hindi meaning and the picture (in case of nouns).

This structure was further modified for some learners. It was meant to confuse the learners at first so that they could work out the relation between the different levels. There were three circles of different sizes each placed over the other and each circle had some words. The word strips given on the topmost, and the smallest circle had their Hindi meaning given on the word strips of the middle circle and their antonyms on the third and the largest circles. The learners were asked to spin the

circles in such a way that the words, their meanings and their opposites were aligned.

The mentioned games didn't become an instant hit amongst the learners. Some learners enjoyed these games and led the group when it came to doing it right. Few learners observed all that was happening around them, and some learners weren't too keen about participating but more interested in selecting a magazine and doing some activity given in it.

The good thing was that no one they never sat idly when they saw their peers participating. The learners who played the games did discuss the possible right antonym/synonyms with their respective groups.

CONCLUSION

Language is ever-present, yet for various reasons it becomes one of the difficult subjects for children when they enter school. Not only English but first language also poses a difficulty for young learners. The transition from oral to written is quite instantaneous for many children who don't have access to print material at home.

The textbooks children have are a good source, but it's important to

go beyond the textbooks, to make them understand that one can work with the language even when the said language's textbook or notebook is not in front of them. Exposure to language in different forms and freedom to work with language is necessary. Plenty of material related to different languages available. All we need is to create a space where children can work with language without any restrictions and fear.

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