

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research paper is to acquire an efficient understanding of pedagogical approaches in early childhood education. The primary objectives of the schools are to promote student learning, lead to their progression and enrich the overall system of education. In order to achieve these objectives, it is vital for the teachers to formulate the pedagogical approaches in an appropriate manner. The pedagogical approaches focus upon various aspects. These include, child-centred learning, play-based learning, participatory teaching and commitment to non-violence. In the implementation of pedagogical approaches in an appropriate manner, it needs to be ensured that they prove to be understandable to the students. The teachers are required to make use of technologies and other scientific and pioneering methods in enabling the students to acquire an efficient understanding of the lesson plans, related to academics and extra-curricular and creative activities. Research has indicated that technical and innovative methods in pedagogical approaches have proven to be favourable and meaningful to the students and the overall system of education. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper are, significance of pedagogical approaches in early childhood education, pedagogical approaches in early childhood education, and measures to improve pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: *Activities, Children, Early Childhood Education, Measures, Pedagogical Approaches, Schools, Teachers*

Pedagogical approaches in early childhood education are based on the approaches that are dedicated towards promoting learning among children. The pedagogical approaches are required to focus upon various aspects. These include, child-centred learning, play-based learning, participatory teaching and commitment to non-violence. In other words, when the pedagogical approaches are put into operation in the field of early childhood education, it needs to be ensured, the approaches are focused upon children. The play-based learning methods needs to be emphasised upon as learning begins with play. The students need to be dealt with kindness and courtesy. In some cases, working with nursery school students and teaching them is overwhelming. But it is vital for the teachers to develop constructive viewpoints and deal with students in an effective manner. Furthermore, there should be provision of equal rights and opportunities and there should not be any kind of discrimination on the basis of any factors, such as, caste, creed, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, gender, and socio-economic background.

Pedagogy is related to how or practices in educating the students. Educating or imparting knowledge and understanding to the students in terms of lesson plans or academic concepts is not an easy task. In other words, the teachers need to be well-equipped in terms of pedagogical methods and approaches that are needed to implement the job duties in an effective manner and achieve the

desired outcomes. Pedagogical approaches are concerned with the set of instructions, techniques and methods, which enable the learning to take place and make provision of opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. The pedagogical approaches that are put into operation by the teachers primarily concern the students. They need to impart knowledge and students need to acquire knowledge. In order to promote student learning, it is vital for the teachers to put into operation effective teaching-learning materials as well. These include, books, visuals, technologies, pictures, flashcards and so forth.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Pedagogical methods refer to the elements that are used in pedagogical scenario or is referred to in a pedagogic strategy. A well-established and organized pedagogy is important in teaching. The main reason being, when the teachers make use of various pedagogical approaches to impart learning and understanding to the students, in some cases, students are able to acquire understanding of the lesson plans in an effective manner, whereas, in other cases, they experience setbacks. When they experience setbacks, it is the job duty of the teachers to provide help and support. For this purpose, they either need to guide the learning abilities of the students or they need to modify or bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches. It is vital for the teachers to be mindful in terms of the ways that need to be put into operation in teaching students and they are able to acquire a deeper understanding of the academic concepts and creative activities. Therefore, implementation of pedagogical approaches in an effective manner will help the students to understand the academic content satisfactorily.

In a significant sense, pedagogy is an overarching concept. It is comprehensively referred to the deliberate process of cultivating development in the given culture and society. From this point of view, pedagogy has three basic components, i.e. curriculum or the content that is being taught; methodology or the way, teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies are put into operation and the techniques for promoting socialization among students in the repertoire of cognitive and affective skills required for successful functioning of the society that the education is aimed to promote. The second aspect of pedagogy is the curriculum. Curriculum or the content of teaching, may be designed to encourage learning processes, i.e. memory, attention and observation and cognitive skills, i.e. reasoning, comparing, contrasting and classification. In addition, the acquisition of information is an indispensable aspect on the part of students (Curriculum and Pedagogy, 2001).

The teaching strategies or the methods that are implemented in the formulation of curriculum and instructional strategies are regarded to be of utmost significance. These need to facilitate organized interactions among students as well as teachers. These include, roles of the teachers, teaching styles and instructional techniques. The third aspect of pedagogy, which might be thought of as cognitive socialization is referred to the role of the teachers (Curriculum and

Pedagogy, 2001). It is apparent that in nursery schools, the students need constant care and supervision from the teachers. When they are learning academic concepts or participating in creative activities, the teachers are the ones, who need to ensure that they learn in an appropriate manner. The expectations of the teachers, teaching strategies and curriculum methods in promoting the repertoire of cognitive and affective characteristics and competencies that students in nursery schools need to learn and do well academically are vital factors that need to be focused upon. Therefore, it can be stated that it is necessary to recognize the significance of pedagogical approaches in order to achieve academic goals and up-grade the overall system of education.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The teachers or the practitioners are expected to make use of different pedagogical approaches in instructing students. These approaches include, adult-led and child-initiated activities and free and structured play. Adult-led activities include the structured approaches with defined learning intentions that are applicable to the whole class or to the groups. Pedagogical approaches include child-centred and teacher-centred activities. The model of the integrated pedagogical approaches allows the components of playfulness in child-initiated and teacher-directed activities (Bakar, Daud, Nordin & Abdullah, 2015). In other words, to facilitate student learning, it is necessary to promote activities, which are carried out by students on their own as well as the activities, which are directed by the teachers. The pedagogical approaches have been stated as follows:

Play-Based Approach

The play-based approach involves both child-initiated as well as teacher-centred learning. The teacher encourages the student's learning and inquiry through interactions that have the main objective of augmenting their thinking and understanding. Play is regarded as a complicated activity with many aspects. Some of the characteristics of play are, spontaneous, free-to-fail, enjoyable, challenging, intrinsically motivated, engaging, imaginative and social. In nursery schools, play-based approach is primarily focused upon in promoting student learning. When the students get enrolled in nursery schools, at the initial stage, they are given playthings. This approach to learning can involve purposeful, facilitated, guided or free-play. When the students participate in play, the teachers observe their performance to find out how they are learning (McGolerick, 2013).

Play is regarded as an especially important aspect of learning at an early ages due to the plasticity of student's brain. When they are given playthings, they are able to develop motivation towards learning. In other words, their mind-sets gets stimulated towards learning. When they play with a toy, which seems unique to them, it is apparent that they will feel pleasurable in learning. In nursery schools, students have numerous interests. They feel pleasurable, when they get engaged in play activities. They usually develop motivation towards learning, when they are imparted information in terms of the environment, food items, family, animals, birds and so forth. When they participate in extra-curricular and creative activities, they feel pleasurable and enjoy learning. When knowledge is imparted to the students in terms of academic concepts, then too the teachers make

use of play activities in order to facilitate learning among students. Therefore, it can be stated, play-based learning is regarded as a significant approach in the field of early childhood education.

A play-based approach is typically separated into several sections, i.e. science area, reading nook, block section, kitchen, dolls, cars, art, musical instruments and so forth. Research has indicated that in nursery schools, students form close connection with playthings. In some cases, they are possessive as well and express unwillingness in giving their playthings to others. Therefore, the teachers impart them understanding that they need to give the toys and other playthings to fellow students. In other words, all students should have the right to play with various playthings. In schools, all students are encouraged to participate in play activities, before learning is initiated in terms of other concepts. Therefore, it can be stated that play-based approach needs to be encouraged in order to familiarise the students towards the school environmental conditions.

Theme-Based Approach

The theme-based approach is referred to the way of teaching and learning, whereby many areas of the curriculum are connected together and integrated within the theme. Thematic units also prove to be assisting to the teachers with the paving way to facilitate learning among students. In nursery schools, students usually have their own ways of learning things. Therefore, with the implementation of the theme-based approaches, the learning is facilitated among students, when they have their own ways of learning the concepts. Thematic units are common in nursery schools. The reason being, since nursery school students learn through interactive hands-on activities. Thematic units are mainstream among students as well as the educators in achieve the academic goals (Theme Based Approach, 2018).

It is vital for the educators to understand that utilization of thematic units and implementation of theme-based learning is regarded as systematic and methodical in educating and learning. The students are able to relate to real-world experiences and augment their understanding in terms of the topic. Thematic units also prove to be assisting to the teachers in making learning pleasurable for the students. One of the important aspects that needs to be taken into consideration is, students in nursery schools need to take pleasure in learning. They need to arouse interest towards learning and teachers are required to put into operation the methods and approaches, which may lead to development of motivation and facilitate student learning (Theme Based Approach, 2018).

A thematic way to deal with instructing includes incorporating every single branch of knowledge together under one subject. It enables the students to acquire an understanding of the topic in various forms. This can be explained with the help of an example. For example a topic of plants is selected, then all of the classroom tasks and activities will be focused upon the topic plants. These include, artworks, crafts, colours, pictures, and even music and singing will be based on plants. The teachers need to plan the time duration, i.e. for how long, they need to focus on one particular topic and then proceed towards the next. One topic usually takes place from couple of weeks to one month. When the students have acquired efficient understanding of the topic, then the

teachers would proceed towards the next. Therefore, it can be stated that themes helps the teachers as well as the students to form the design that brings in the structure to the whole of the approach (Theme Based Approach, 2018).

Activity-Based Approach

The activity-based approach is the approach that is focused upon the initiation of activities that are put into practice by the teachers to encourage the participation of students. The activities that are initiated in nursery schools are based on various subjects and concepts. These include, academic concepts of alphabets, numbers, environmental concepts, drawing, painting, dance, music, singing, role play, sports and physical activities. When the teachers feel that certain concepts are difficult to understand by the students, then they encourage their participation in activities, so they are able to acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts. Furthermore, their participation in activities also enables them to develop confidence in interacting with others and overcoming any kind of apprehensiveness and vulnerability. Therefore, it can be stated that activity-based learning approach is regarded as one of the crucial approaches in augmenting student learning.

When the activity-based approach is implemented, it needs to be ensured that they prove to be beneficial to the students in performing one's tasks and activities in a well-organized manner. When the students are participating in various activities. They are able to benefit in number of ways. These include, augmenting one's communication skills, acquiring an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, getting acquainted with the school environment, and developing self-assurance. Activity-based learning is required to encourage the participation of students in activities by stimulating their senses, such as, sight, smell, vision, feeling and getting involved with the subject. In some activities, the students are encouraged to work with real objects, whereas, in others, they are required to work with imaginary objects. When activities are organized, the teachers need to make provision of assistance and support to the students, so they are able to overcome problems and challenges that are associated with activities.

When the activities are to be initiated, there are various aspects that need to be identified. The first and foremost aspect is, they need to know what are the areas in terms of which students are experiencing setbacks and activities need to be centred on alleviating setbacks. Second aspect is nature of the students. For instance, when the students are shy or introvert in nature, then activities will have to be initiated for them to develop communication skills and interactive abilities. Third is, activities need to be organized on the basis of lesson plans and extra-curricular and creative activities, so they are able to acquire an efficient understanding of the concepts. Therefore, it can be stated that when the teachers take into account these aspects, they are able to initiate activities in an appropriate manner.

Projects/Inquiry-Based Approach

Projects/inquiry-based approach to learning is an approach in which the students are able to gain knowledge and augment their skills and abilities. This is facilitated by working on an extended

period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, participating and complicated question, problem or challenge. In this case, the students work on projects for an extended period of time from one week to one month. When the students are working on a project, it is apparent that they need to interact with others. As one cannot work in seclusion. Interaction primarily takes place with the teachers as well as the fellow students. The interaction with the teachers is regarded as effectual, as it is through teachers that the students are able to augment their understanding in terms of the project. Whereas, interaction with the fellow students is regarded as worthwhile in performing well and generating the desired outcomes. Therefore, it can be stated that communication is the key to projects/inquiry-based approach.

Through projects/inquiry-based approach, the students are able to develop in depth content knowledge, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication skills. This approach needs to be implemented from the stage of early childhood. The reason being, in order to lead to effective growth and development, it is necessary to focus upon the 5Cs. When teachers and students will work in integration with each other to develop the 5Cs from the stage of early childhood, then the students will be able to hone these competencies as they grow older. Apart from these aspects, the project-based learning is focused upon enhancing problem-solving abilities among students. As when they experience any types of problems, they are able to provide solutions in an effective manner. Furthermore, the students are also provided with information in terms of modern, scientific and innovative methods. As when these methods are put into practice, the students will be able to carry out the tasks satisfactorily and in less amount of time.

Project-based learning is regarded as important for the students as they are given the opportunities to work in collaboration and integration with others and drive their own learning. The development of cognitive abilities, content knowledge, creativity, problem-solving skills, collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills takes place through the effectual implementation of this approach. Therefore, it is essential for the teachers to ensure that this learning takes place among students. It is also regarded as a dynamic classroom approach, in which the students are provided with the opportunities to explore real world problems. This approach has rendered a significant contribution in facilitating student learning and in up-grading the overall system of education.

Emergent Curriculum

Emergent curriculum is referred to as the philosophy of teaching and a way of planning of the curriculum that puts the major emphasis on being responsive to the needs and requirements of the students and create meaningful learning experiences for them. The approach of emergent curriculum has been highlighted in the works of early childhood theorists such as, Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky. It is defined as the process, where the teachers plan the tasks and activities, in accordance to the age group of students. Apart from the age group of the students, the other factors that are taken into account include, their needs, requirements, interests and abilities. Students usually feel comfortable in the classroom environment, where this approach is put into operation.

The reason being, the natural curiosity and the imagination of the students get augmented. One of the major benefits of this curriculum is, it facilitates interaction among students to a major extent.

Emergent strategy is referred to as the process of identifying the unexpected outcomes from the execution of the strategies. In addition, learning to integrate the expected outcomes into the future plans. The emergent curriculum is planned to encourage the participation of the child in play activities and built on the strengths of the students. In nursery schools, the students have strengths as well as weaknesses. The teachers are required to implement the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies to reinforce the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. For instance, when the curriculum and instructional strategies are to be planned, it needs to be ensured, that the curriculum is child-initiated and in accordance to the needs of the students. In other words, the curriculum should be manageable and should not overwhelm the students.

The planning of the emergent curriculum requires observation, documentation, creative brainstorming, flexibility and patience. The initiation of the emergent curriculum is with the observation of the students for insight into their interests. When the students are engaged in learning, they need to feel that it will prove to be beneficial to them to achieve the desired objectives and bring about improvements in their overall quality of lives. The content of the curriculum is influenced by the norms, values, standards and principles. In other words, it is not only important for the teachers to impart them knowledge in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts, but it is also vital to augment understanding in terms of morality and ethics to emerge into productive human beings. Therefore, this approach has rendered a significant contribution in facilitating student learning and in up-grading the overall system of education.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

In nursery schools, formulation of measures are regarded to be of utmost significance in bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches. When the educators are to formulate these measures, one of the important aspects that needs to be taken into consideration is, they make wise and meaningful decisions. As appropriate decisions will contribute significantly in the formulation of appropriate measures. When major decisions are to be made, there are organization of meetings in which the individuals exchange ideas and suggestions. On the other hand, when minor decisions are to be made, then the individuals, who are in leadership positions may seek ideas and suggestions from teachers as well as other staff members. It is necessary for the educators to formulate measures to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches on a regular basis. In order to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches, there are certain measures that need to be initiated and these have been stated as follows:

Planning of Financial Resources – Financial resources are regarded to be of utmost significance, when initiating any task or activity. In order to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches, the educators need to make sure that teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials and instructional strategies are put into operation in an effective manner. Hence, to make sure that they are implemented in a manner to attain the desired goals and objectives,

finances need to be spend on them. When the schools have sufficient financial resources, they can bring about improvements in an efficient manner in all aspects. Whereas, when the schools have limited financial resources, they need to plan them in accordance to the needs and requirements of the system of education. When changes are to be brought about in the school environmental conditions, or modern, scientific and pioneering methods need to be introduced or any rules and policies need to be brought about, then it is vital to plan financial resources. Therefore, planning of financial resources is regarded as essential in making improvements in pedagogical approaches as well.

Organizing Discussion Meetings – The educators and administrators are required to organize discussion meetings, when they are to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches. The teachers are required to convey the performance of the students to the principals. When they feel that there is a need to bring about transformations in the pedagogical approaches, they discuss various means that would need to be put into operation to bring about transformations. Furthermore, they discuss that there is a need to bring about changes in teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies and teaching-learning materials. In discussion meetings, the members of the schools exchange viewpoints and perspectives. Therefore, it can be stated, it is important to organize discussion meetings in order to generate information in terms of measures and strategies that are necessary to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches.

Improving Teaching-Learning Methods – In order to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches, improvements needs to be brought about in the teaching-learning methods. In putting into operation, teaching-learning methods, one of the important aspects that need to be taken into account is, they need to be favourable and suitable to the students. The teachers need to put into operation, modern, scientific and innovative ideas that are necessary to make the classroom experiences meaningful and understanding for the students (16 Innnovative Ideas, n.d.). The various teaching-learning methods that are implemented in the field of early childhood education are, imparting verbal explanation of the concepts, making the students write the concepts, using technologies in providing them explanation in terms of the concepts and so forth. Therefore, it can be stated, when improvements are to be brought about in the pedagogical approaches, then improvements need to be brought about in teaching-learning methods as well.

Improving Teaching-Learning Materials – In nursery schools, the various kinds of teaching-learning materials that are put into operation are, textbooks, notebooks, pictures, charts, posters, flashcards, pencils, colours, paints, playthings, games and so forth. It is vital to bring about improvements in teaching-learning materials as well in order to bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches. One of the major improvements that has taken place in teaching-learning materials is in terms of utilization of technology. Previously, the teachers make use of textbooks to impart knowledge and understanding to the students in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts, but with the advent of technologies, the teachers are making use of computers and internet in facilitating student learning. Therefore, bringing about improvements in teaching-

learning materials is one of the important measures in leading to improvements in pedagogical approaches.

Encouraging Interaction among Students – Facilitating interaction is not only important among the educators and administrators of the school, but encouraging interaction among students is also important in bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches. Research has indicated that learning cannot be facilitated among students just through the utilization of teaching-learning methods and teaching-learning materials. But students need to be encouraged towards interaction. Interaction can be promoted in an effective manner by making them work in groups. When they are to work in groups, the students are supervised by the teachers, but they also interact with each other in performing their jobs in a well-organized manner and in achieving the desired outcomes. Therefore, it can be stated that encouraging interaction among students is one of the ways of bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches.

Organizing Competitions – Competitions in nursery schools are regarded as one of the important ways of evaluating the performance of the students. After information has been provided to the students in terms of lesson plans in academic as well as in extra-curricular and creative activities, competitions are organized. In some cases, students are provided with the opportunity to make their own decisions, whether they are willing to participate in competitions or not. Whereas, in other cases, when there are organization of competitions, then the whole class needs to participate. The participation of students in competitions is regarded as one of the crucial ways that enable the teachers to identify how much the students have learned and whether their teaching-learning methods and teaching-learning materials have proven to be worthwhile or not. Therefore, on the basis of the performance of the students, improvements need to be brought about in the teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials and pedagogical approaches.

Organizing Workshops and Seminars – Organization of workshops and seminars are regarded as an integral aspect in bringing about changes in the overall system of education. In nursery schools, there are organization of workshops and seminars in terms of a particular topic, which the students are required to understand. In order to facilitate student learning, educators and administrators are also invited from other schools. They give presentations in terms of topics, which need to be imparted to the students to facilitate their understanding. In the organization of workshops and seminars, information is also acquired in terms of how to bring about improvements in the pedagogical approaches. The administrators and educators obtain ideas and viewpoints from other educators in terms of measures and approaches, which would be effectual in enriching the overall system of education.

Organizing Activities and Events – Research has indicated that in nursery schools, the organization of activities and events are regarded as one of the primary measures of bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches. The students are encouraged to participate in various kinds of activities, related to academic concepts as well as extra-curricular and creative activities. When they are encouraged to participate in activities, they not only augment understanding in terms of lesson plans and concepts, but they are also able to develop motivation towards learning. On the

other hand, the events are organized on a half yearly or annual basis. All the students are encouraged to participate in events. They are not rewarded, but their performance is observed by the educators as well as their parents. When the students participate in activities and events, the educators observe their performance and on the basis of their performance, they bring about improvements in the pedagogical approaches.

Skills and Abilities of Teachers – It is of utmost significance for the teachers to possess the essential skills and abilities that may enable them to carry out their job duties in a well-organized manner and achieve the desired goals. They are required to up-grade their skills and abilities on a regular basis and possess essential knowledge in terms of pedagogical approaches that are put into operation. With advancements taking place and with the advent of modernization, they need to up-grade their skills and abilities throughout their jobs. The teachers need to generate awareness in terms of modern, scientific and innovative methods in terms of pedagogical approaches. To achieve this purpose, they need to conduct research on regular basis. Therefore, it can be stated that skills and abilities of the teachers are regarded as indispensable in bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches.

School Environmental Conditions – In the school environmental conditions, it is necessary to pay attention towards the maintenance of infrastructural facilities, civic amenities, restrooms, heating and cooling equipment in offices as well as classrooms in accordance to the weather conditions, materials, tools, resources and so forth. Apart from these factors, it is necessary to create a sociable environment. A sociable school environment can be created, when the members work in collaboration and integration with each other and communicate with each other in a polite and friendly manner. Hence, making provision of proper infrastructure and facilities, implementing appropriate teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials and instructional strategies and communicating with each other in a polite and respectful manner are not only considered vital in leading to enrichment of the school environmental conditions, but these are also considered significant in leading to up-gradation of pedagogical approaches.

CONCLUSION

The pedagogical approaches in the field of early childhood education are based on the methods that have the main objective of promoting learning and understanding among children. The pedagogical approaches put emphasis upon various aspects, these are, child-centred learning, play-based learning, participatory teaching and commitment to non-violence. The pedagogical approaches are, play-based approach, theme-based approach, activity-based approach, projects/inquiry-based approach and emergent curriculum. When the teachers are imparting knowledge to the students in terms of lesson plans, topics, academic concepts or extra-curricular and creative activities, they need to make sure that they implement the pedagogical approaches in an appropriate manner. It is vital for the teachers to up-grade their knowledge in terms of these approaches, so they are able to carry out their job duties in a well-organized manner and promote growth and development of the students in an effective manner.

To bring about improvements in pedagogical approaches, there are certain measures that need to be initiated. These are, planning of financial resources, organizing discussion meetings, improving teaching-learning methods, improving teaching-learning materials, encouraging interaction among students, organizing competitions, organizing workshops and seminars, organizing activities and events, skills and abilities of teachers and school environmental conditions. The educators and administrators of the schools are required to generate information in terms of these measures and implement them in accordance to the needs of the students and overall environmental conditions of the schools. When these measures are initiated, it is necessary to ensure that they prove to be beneficial and favourable to all the members of the schools and overall system of education. Therefore, it can be stated that conducting research and formulating measures in bringing about improvements in pedagogical approaches are regarded to be of utmost significance in augmenting student learning, performing one's job duties in a well-organized manner and enhancing the overall system of education.

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