

Teaching Strategies Used by Early Childhood Teachers of Haryana and Chandigarh (U.T.)

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ABSTRACT Early childhood education concerned with fostering the optimum development of each child. Planning a growth promoting curriculum, program environment and providing intervention strategies for individual child promoting developmentally appropriate practice. The teaching strategies should be such in early childhood class room that could be adopted to every domain of the curriculum. Study was conducted on 58 schools (29 schools from Hisar, District of Haryana and 29 schools from Chandigarh) having pre and primary sections to investigate the teaching strategies used by early childhood teachers. The result show that teachers from both the places used different teaching strategies for children but these were not appropriately implemented due to lack of knowledge, untrained teachers and policy constraints. Teachers were not aware of developmental level of children and were not planning activities according to the level of children. Main difference found in teaching strategies used by teachers of Hisar and Chandigarh were kind of experiences provided by teachers, opportunities for problem solving skills, methods of knowledge imparted and encouragement for learning..

INTRODUCTION

Teaching strategies are the instructional methods used by the early childhood professionals either alone or in combination to enhance children's learning in variety of situations for their all-round development. Children learn in many ways. The teaching strategies that support their learning vary accordingly. Some strategies are more appropriate in certain situation than others, which strategies professionals use depends on what they want children to learn. According to Martin teaching (1974) teaching strategies should be based on the teachers' rationale for example when the teacher has decided on what to teach, then one needs to know a variety of ways that could be taught any particular skill or concept. Teachers have a choice when deciding how to present information or new concepts to children. Some information must be presented in a direct formal, example safety rules such as those about fire, can not be explored, they must be stated firmly. But generally speaking and telling is the least successful strategies for presenting information to young children. Thus, the teaching strategies are method of presenting instruction, such as demonstration, lectures cum demonstrations. Teachers must deliberately plan way for children to learn how to work together to achieve mutual goals regardless of age (Harmin, 1994; Marcus and Mc Donald, 1990). Kostelink et al. (1999) also explained teaching strategies as the way which support children are learning to

the situations. The strategies for teaching should be such in early childhood classroom that could be adopted to every domain of the curriculum. Some of these are exploratory activities, guided discovery, problem solving, discussion, cooperative learning, demonstrations and direct instruction activities. These strategies should be developmentally appropriate in order to promote effective learning in the light of all the aspects of development. Keeping this fact in view, the present study was under taken to know the existing status of preschool program regarding teaching strategies

METHODOLOGY

Study was conducted in purposively selected state of Haryana and union territory of Chandigarh. Multistage sampling technique was used for sample selection. Pre and primary sections were selected purposively from rural, urban and peri-urban areas of Hisar district and Chandigarh. Two pre-school laboratories were taken from the Department of HDFs, CCS HAU, Hisar and other lab. Nursery school from Government Girls College, Chandigarh run by the Department of Child Development was also selected purposively. Further seven schools from each cultural settings i.e. rural, peri-urban area were selected randomly from both places – Hisar and Chandigarh. Sample from urban areas is consisted of fourteen schools; seven from private and equal number from public sector were taken

randomly. To gather information, principal and school teachers were interviewed to know about teaching strategies. Data were collected through interview schedule and observation check-list. Descriptive analysis was used to draw inferences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 displayed that 65.59 percent schools of Hisar and Chandigarh were reported that curriculum was based on play-way method. Brevr (1998) also reported that play is the one of the teaching strategies available to teachers as they plan for children in learning. On the contrary, the observation suggested that almost all the schools reported that the curriculum is based on play-way method but no play equipment and material were provided to children. No appropriate activities were organized and conducted; it was observed that in some schools children were made to sit in one room for the whole day during school hours.

The kind of experiences provided to children by the teachers were also studied and it was found that among individualized and group experiences, 75.86 percent schools of Chandigarh and 48.27 per cent school of Hisar provided both type of experiences through the teachers. Very few schools in both the districts provided individual experiences.

The provision for flexible schedule was reported by only 48.27 per cent and 58.62 per cent schools of Hisar and Chandigarh, respectively. The data also reveal that very few schools of both the place reported to follow daily schedule with quiet to vigorous activity (24.13%). This shows that school teachers were not aware about the importance of flexible daily schedule.

The researcher observed that except very few schools and preschool labs, none of the preschool was using the flexible and daily schedule with quiet to vigorous activities. Most of the schools were using rigid and strict-time table with monotonous activities. Due to strict time-table children used to feel very uncomfortable, getting bored and losing their interests, in the school activities.

Table spotlight that 37.93 per cent schools of Hisar and 31.03 per cent schools of Chandigarh reported to promote active learning through different material. This table also highlights that 72.41 per cent pre-school of Hisar and Chandigarh provided opportunities for story telling whereas facilities for children to handle picture book were

provided by 24.13 per cent of Hisar and 41.37 per cent of Chandigarh school. The story telling was most common activity which was used most frequently in almost all the school of both the places under investigation.

Table elucidates that very few schools of Hisar and Chandigarh reported to provide first hand experiences through different activities such as field trips/excursions, visit to zoo, gardens or museums, demonstration and through doing by themselves. In Hisar the number of schools providing one or more such activities was 3.44 per cent to 27.58 per cent where the range in Chandigarh for such activities was from 13.79 per cent to 34.48 per cent.

Teachers use demonstrations to illustrate instructions, offer children a preview of something they will do later, or open a lesson in a dramatic way (Cliatt and Shaw, 1992).

Perusal of results in Table indicates that majority of schools of Chandigarh (79.31%) and Hisar (72.41%) reported that questioning techniques was most frequently used for problem solving in comparison to other techniques like puzzles, Maze, group discussion and brain storming. Group discussion technique was reported as second preference for problem solving by 58.62 per cent school of Chandigarh and 31.03 per cent school of Hisar. Puzzles were used for problem solving by 44.82 per cent schools Chandigarh and 20.68 per cent school of Hisar. None of the schools used maze and brain storming technique for problem solving.

Questions are basic instructional tools common to every early childhood classroom. However, the kinds of questions adults ask dictate the quality of the answers they receive (Trepanier-Street, 1991).

Table display that 75.86 per cent schools of Hisar and 93 per cent of Chandigarh reported that the learning is based on subject rather than problem or theme. Krogh (1990) also said that learning activities selected for the theme are reflective of how the students want to explore the topic or the kinds of activities they have identified that will help them to acquire the knowledge or skills related to the theme.

Methods of imparting knowledge to children could be formal or non-formal. Non-formal method was reported to be more important in preschool education system. Table indicates data regarding non-formal and formal methods of imparting knowledge to the children. It was found that non-formal methods of imparting knowledge were

Table 1: Existing status of educational programme for young children regarding teaching strategies

S. No.	Aspect	Hisar (Haryana. N=29)	U.T. Chandigarh N=29	Grand total N=58
1.	Curriculum is based on play way method	19 (65.5)	19 (65.5)	38 (65.51)
2.	<i>Kinds of Experiences Provided by Teachers</i>			
a.	Individual	4 (13.79)	3 (10.34)	7 (12.06)
b.	Group	11 (37.93)	5 (17.24)	16 (27.58)
c.	Both	14 (48.27)	22 (75.86)	36 (62.06)
3.	Provision for flexible schedule	14 (48.27)	17 (58.62)	31 (53.44)
4.	Daily schedule with quite to vigorous activity	7 (24.13)	7 (24.13)	14 (24.13)
5.	Different material promote active learning	11 (37.93)	9 (31.03)	20 (34.48)
6.	Opportunities for story telling	21 (72.41)	21 (72.41)	42 (72.41)
7.	Facilities for children to handle picture book	7 (24.13)	12 (41.37)	19 (32.75)
8.	<i>Concrete/First Hand Experiences Provided by</i>			
a.	Field trip/ excursion	5 (17.24)	6 (20.68)	11 (18.96)
b.	Visit zoo- garden	7 (24.13)	10 (34.48)	17 (29.31)
c.	Demonstration	8 (27.58)	6 (20.68)	14 (24.13)
d.	By doing	1 (3.44)	4 (13.79)	5 (8.62)
9.	<i>Teachers Guide/Direct Activities</i>			
a.	Every time	12 (41.37)	19 (65.51)	31 (53.44)
b.	Sometime	3 (10.34)	6 (20.68)	9 (15.57)
c.	When required	12 (41.37)	6 (20.68)	18 (31.03)
10.	<i>Opportunities for Problem Solving by</i>			
a.	Puzzle	6 (20.68)	13 (44.82)	19 (32.75)
b.	Maze	-	-	-
c.	Quiz	3 (10.34)	4 (13.79)	7 (12.06)
d.	Group discussion	9 (31.03)	17 (58.62)	26 (44.82)
e.	Questioning	21 (72.41)	23 (79.31)	44 (75.86)
f.	Brain storming	-	-	-
g.	Any other – self made stories	-	1 (3.44)	1 (1.72)
11.	Opportunities for cooperative learning	24 (82.75)	20 (68.96)	44 (75.86)
12.	<i>Learning is based on</i>			
a.	Subject	22 (75.86)	27 (93.10)	49 (84.48)
b.	Problem	1 (3.44)	3 (10.34)	4 (6.89)
c.	Theme	3 (10.34)	4 (13.79)	7 (12.06)
13.	<i>Knowledge Imparted Through</i>			
a.	Non-formal method	23 (79.31)	18 (62.06)	41 (70.68)
b.	Formal method	7 (24.13)	12 (41.37)	19 (32.75)
14.	<i>Teacher Uses Different Audio Visual Aids</i>			
a.	Computer	6 (20.68)	3 (10.34)	9 (15.51)
b.	Television	5 (17.24)	9 (31.03)	14 (24.13)
c.	C.D. Player	-	-	-
d.	Video cassettes	4 (13.79)	5 (17.24)	9 (15.51)
e.	Audio cassettes	12 (41.37)	12 (41.37)	24 (41.37)

S. No.	Aspect	Hisar (Haryana. N=29)	U.T. Chandigarh N=29	Grand total N=58
15.	<i>Children are Encouraged for Learning by</i>			
a.	Imposing them to learn	16 (55.17)	11 (37.79)	27 (46.55)
b.	Making them to take initiative	12 (41.37)	18 (62.06)	30 (51.72)
c.	Any other (giving them opportunities)	3 (10.34)	1 (3.44)	4 (6.89)
16.	<i>Children with Special Need are Considered by</i>			
a.	Giving extra timings	12 (41.37)	20 (68.96)	32 (55.17)
b.	Main stream	2 (6.89)	6 (20.68)	8 (13.79)
c.	Counseling/ guidance	6 (20.68)	3 (10.34)	9 (15.51)
d.	Referring to the specialist	9 (31.03)	4 (13.79)	13 (22.41)
c.	Counseling/ guidance	6 (20.68)	3 (10.34)	9 (15.51)
d.	Referring to the specialist	9 (31.03)	4 (13.79)	13 (22.41)
17.	<i>Opportunities for Recreation/Learning by Special Person</i>			
a.	Community worker	2 (6.89)	1 (3.44)	3 (5.17)
b.	Magician	7 (24.13)	16 (55.17)	23 (39.65)
c.	Puppet player	5 (17.25)	5 (17.25)	10 (17.24)
d.	Musician	5 (17.25)	6 (20.68)	11 (18.96)
e.	Play therapist	-	1 (3.44)	1 (1.72)
f.	Counselor	-	-	-
g.	Snake charmer	-	-	-
18.	<i>Provision for Parents Participation</i>			
a.	Helping during activities	3 (10.34)	2 (6.89)	5 (8.62)
b.	Helping during meal time	-	-	-
c.	Any other way (providing help during cultural activities and organizing visit)	13 (44.82)	13 (44.82)	26 (44.82)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

reported by more school of both the places i.e. Hisar (79.31%) and Chandigarh (62.06%) than formal method. The results were in tune with the findings of Wortham (1994) who said that teachers prepare the environment for children to learn through non formal active exploration and interaction with adults, other children and materials

Table 1 exhibits the status of teaching aids in schools. Audio cassettes were used by 41.37 per cent schools of Chandigarh and Hisar. Computers were used as teaching aid in 20.68 per cent schools of Hisar and 10.34 per cent schools of Chandigarh. Television was also being used as an audiovisual aid in teaching by 17.27 per cent Hisar and 31.03 per cent school of Chandigarh. Video cassettes were used by 13.79 per cent

schools of Hisar and 17.24 per cent schools of Chandigarh.

The researcher observed that most pre-schools were using audio cassettes only for nursery rhyme and songs. It was also observed that the education department of Chandigarh provided TV sets to schools but school used these TV sets only as show pieces. These sets were not in proper working conditions. Most of the urban schools had computer but except one or two schools no school gave computer exposure to children. Malik (2000) also suggested that young children respond quickly and naturally to appropriate technologies, which frequently offer a high level of physical control and immediate feedback in a variety of forms. Use of technology enhances effectiveness of a learning experience which may embrace, among other things, problem solving, letter and number recognition, symbol and pattern recognition, word meaning and number sense

The data in Table revealed that 68.96 per cent schools of Chandigarh and 41.37 per cent of Hisar reported to consider the children with special needs by giving them extra time and only a few were including children with special needs in main stream. 31.03 per cent schools of Hisar and 13.79 per cent school of Chandigarh referred the children to the specialist.

Observation suggested that only in few schools the children with special needs in their studies were made to stay back. Most of the schools were teaching children with special need in main stream.

Parent's participation with children while being in school make them know the child better and they may participate in their activities to help them to learn better. Most of the schools taking parents help during cultural activities and it was reported that 44.82 per cent school of Hisar and Chandigarh were taking parents help in such events. However, only 10.34 per cent school of Hisar and 6.89 per cent schools of Chandigarh were involving parents during other activities also.

Although the respondents reported that they are using different teaching strategies for children but these were not appropriately implemented due to lack of knowledge, lack of trained teachers and some policy constraints. The teachers were not paid sufficient salaries and due to this they did not take interest and devote time and efforts for children. In most of the schools there were no separate teachers for pre-school section. Teachers

who were teaching primary classes were also working as preschool teachers therefore; they were not aware of the developmental level of the children and were not planning activities according to the level of child. Educationist in this field should take steps to inculcate a variety of teaching strategies for school curriculum so as to develop better learning in children as per developmentally appropriate practices.

Teacher may be exposed to refresher courses/short training during job. Summer/winter vocations may be used for this purpose. These refresher courses/short training should be based on developmentally appropriate practices and may be organized by the department of Human Development/HDFS etc. So each and every aspect may be taken care of. During the investigation it was experienced that teachers do not have been basic knowledge about teaching different strategies and their importance in learning process of children.

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