

How To Teach Young Children

By Chhanda Islam

HOW young children learn should determine how teachers of young children teach. The word teach tends to imply telling or giving information. But the correct way to teach young children is not to lecture or verbally instruct them. Teachers of young children are more like guides or facilitators. They prepare the environment so that it provides stimulating, challenging materials and activities for children.

Then, teachers closely observe to see what children understand and pose additional challenges to push their thinking further. It is possible to drill children until they can correctly recite pieces of information such as the alphabet or the numerals from 1 to 20. However, children's responses to rote tasks do not reflect real understanding of the information. For children to understand fully and remember what they have learned, whether it is related to reading, mathematics or other subject matter areas, the information must be meaningful to the child in context of child's experience and development.

Learning information in meaningful context is not only essential for children's understanding and development of concepts, but is also important for stimulating motivation in children. If learning is relevant for children, they are more likely to persist with a task and to be motivated to learn more.

Integrated components of teaching practices between U.S.A. and Bangladesh-A comparison:

Practice in U.S.A.:—

Experiences are provided that meet children's needs and stimulate learning in all development areas—physical, social, emotional and intellectual.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

Experiences are narrowly focused on the child's intellectual development without recognition that all areas of a child's development are interrelated.

Practice in U.S.A.

Each child is viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and development. The curriculum and adult's interaction are responsive to individual differences in ability and interests. Different levels of ability, development and learning styles are expected, accepted and used to design activities.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

Children are evaluated only against a predetermined measure, such as a standardized group norm or adult standard of behavior. All are expected to perform the same tasks and achieve the same narrowly defined, easily measured skills.

Practice in U.S.A.

Interactions and activities are designed to develop children's self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

Children's worth is measured by how well they conform to rigid expectations and perform on standardized tests.

Practice in U.S.A.

Teachers prepare the environment for children to learn through active

Children are expected to sit down, watch, be quiet, and listen or do

paper and pencil tasks for inappropriately long periods of time. A major portion of time is spent passively sitting, listening and waiting.

Practice in U.S.A.:—

Children are provided concrete learning activities with materials and people relevant to their own life experiences.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

Work books and other similarly structured abstract materials domin-



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exploration and interaction with adults, other children and materials.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

Teachers use highly structured, teacher directed lessons almost exclusively.

Practice in U.S.A.

Children are expected to be physically and mentally active. Children choose from among activities the teacher has set up or the children spontaneously initiate.

Practice in Bangladesh:—

ate the curriculum.

While it is true that most schools in Bangladesh exhibit some characteristics described here as inappropriate, many schools and class-room incorporate elements of appropriate practice, while most others are models of what is deemed developmentally appropriate practice for young children.

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