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Early Childhood Education Management: A Study on Effectual in Village Institutions of West Bengal, India

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to discuss some methods that can be helpful for the development of Montessori as well as the Kindergarten Approach to Education. Our research work is based on an unstructured questionnaire and observation method. To imply adequate qualitative and quantitative data, we searched the goals and objectives of Kindergarten and Montessori education policy from local concerned institutions of West Bengal in India. Our field study was conducted on some villages of Midnapore and South 24 Parganas District of Bengal. Early childhood is a stage that requires an overall holistic development model. These two approaches deal with that, but there are some methods related to language and communication that can easily develop the quality of the approaches above. It is shown with projected lesson plans and timetable management. This study explores and discusses such methods and points out how these methods can bring changes to those approaches. This paper also inputs the Indian state education policy about it.

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1. Introduction

Many studies in the international literature on scale development study have been conducted measuring self-directed learning skills (Tekkol & Demirel, 2018). However, Maria Montessori was ahead of her time and was the first female Italian physician who believed learning was a "natural, self-directed process." Her clinical observations led her to the conclusion that children build themselves from what they see in their environment. They can effortlessly absorb knowledge from their surroundings. Her core finding was that children can teach themselves and she devoted her life to furthering the self-creating process of the children (Marshall, 2017). Some of the key points of the Montessori Method of education that makemake it one of the most scientific and effective approaches are (Montessori Education, n.d.; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

1. It is based on the principle of using the correct material. The adult's role in this learning process is to ensure the children get the right environment and the same is maintained.
2. Children are given different activities by Montessori teachers, which are carefully designed to explore their intelligence.
3. The materials used in Montessori classrooms are central to the Montessori Method of Education and are used to serve a specific purpose.

Another Approach to Early Childhood Education that has significantly contributed to the learning process of young learners and has become a very popular mode of schooling owing to its effectiveness is the Kindergarten Approach or System. Kindergarten means "children's Garden."The father of this approach, Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel, pioneered this teaching method based on fun and play. He described the play as the work of childhood in the purest and spiritual form. It is through play that children express their needs, thoughts, and desires. He emphasized learning through activity and the "unification" of life. According to this approach, teachers should allow children to be led by their interests and to explore them freely (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The role of a teacher is to guide the child to attain "self-activity." A closer look at the Kindergarten Curriculum will reveal the use of a series of gifts developed by Froebel and occupations used for constructive activities (Russell, 2011). Games, songs, and stories are regular activities in Kindergarten schools that are incorporated to help students' wholesome development and make them realize and understand the importance of socialization. Thus approach is undergoing a dramatic change from nearly 200 years (Resnick, 2007).

2. Method

The Montessori Approach helps the students teet their natural learning desire, love the learning process, and become independent and self-sufficient when placed in an enriching and well-prepared environment. Moreover, Kindergarten schools provide a setup where children interact socially and engage in fun and enjoyable activities. This method, in turn, prepares them for the larger world and formal learning. For the better outcome of Montessori and Kindergarten approaches, the following lesson plan can be designed for early childhood learners. Montessori Kindergarten and traditional or classical Kindergarten are two stages of life. However, both aim to prepare the child for yoga, meditation, music, and calculation in practical life (Difference between Montessori and Kindergarten Style of Learning, n.d.).

Table 1. Lesson Plan for Early Childhood Learners

Topic: Weather	Subject: Science
Level/Class –K.G. to 2	No. of Students – 30

Time: 40 minutes

Teaching Aids :
- Weather Flashcards
- Drawing Copy and Crayons
- PPT on weather/season
- Worksheet on weather

Aim of the Lesson :
a) Main Focus / Target to be achieved - Explaining the meaning of weather and describing different types of weather
b) General Aim: Students will know about:-
  - Different types of weather
  - What is the weather?
  - How to differentiate between different types of weather
  - Names of different seasons

Concepts Introduced: Sunny Day, Cold Day, Rainy Day, Windy, Summer, Winter, Monsoon, Spring, Autumn,

Vocabulary/New words introduced: hot, cold, humid, pleasant, sunny, rainy, cloudy, summer, winter, autumn, monsoon, spring.

Table 2. Time Table Management Activity

Time Allotted	Activity Planned	Teacher's Activity	Student's Activity/Response	Anticipated Problems
5 minutes	Warmer Session	The teacher greets the students and tells them to stand in their places. The teacher sings the song, "If you are happy and you know it, clap your hands..." and asks the whole class to join in.	The students start singing along with the teacher. They also perform actions as the teacher also performs with them. They clap, stomp their feet, go around as the song says, and enjoy the activity.	
5 minutes	Tell students about the lesson that they are going to learn today.	Ask them to look outside and ask if it is hot or cold. Ask them, "Are you feeling hot? Alternatively, are you feeling Cold?" Show them the fan and ask them whether it is on or off. They will answer, and the teacher will understand their basic knowledge of the weather.	They look outside and try to analyze the weather conditions. Students try to understand whether they feel hot or cold and reply accordingly. It will help them to understand what kind of a day it is. Is it hot or cold, or is it raining outside? This way, they will get an idea about the lesson they will learn.	Some students may not respond and seem to be puzzled. They may need help understanding what the teacher is asking.
10 minutes	The teacher explains what is weather and the types of weather. Mainly four types of weather are explained – Sunny, Cold, Windy, and Rainy. Explain to students how the weather changes from day to day. The teacher explains the different types of weather by referring to food and clothing.	The teacher uses flashcards to show what a Sunny day looks like. Similarly, the teacher uses flashcards to explain cold, windy, and rainy days. When showing each flashcard, the teacher loudly utters the words Sunny Day and Cold Day, and the students are to repeat them. Multiple times, the names of the weather must be called out. Doing actions to explain how one feels hot or cold or making thunder sounds to symbolize a rainy day will make the lesson interesting and fun. The teacher focuses on explaining how each day feels like and what we do to be comfortable on such days.	Students have to repeat the words and actions of the teacher. This will help them understand the different weathers better. They now know how they feel on a hot, sunny day and on a rainy or windy day.	The flashcards may need to be visible to the whole class. So, the teacher should walk around the class holding the flashcards and repeating the same cards to make sure every student has seen them.

10 minutes	After discussing the weather, some key points of the main seasons will be discussed. The teacher will give a short introduction about what a season is and the types of the seasons - Spring, Summer, Monsoon, Winter, autumn. In this class, the main focus will be on weather, with a small introduction about seasons that will be explained in-depth in the next class.	Showing a small and informative PPT about the weather will make the lesson more interesting. Children always learn better with visual engagement. So, the PPT will have important pictorial details about different weather. Right from how we feel about a particular weather to what we do to stay comfortable, the PPT will highlight all the essential points. There will also be a short introductory section for the different seasons.	Students find the PPT very enjoyable and learn about the various weathers. The teacher can make the session more inclusive by asking some questions to the students to ensure complete attention from them. If the teacher shows the picture of ice cream and lemonade, students will have to say when they eat or drink them. The students will answer, "When we feel hot in the summer season." (How can I explain to Grandpa the importance of the weather to our climate? 2020)	
5 minutes	The teacher asks children to draw a picture of their favorite weather or season.	The teacher will give them an idea about what to draw. Students can draw a big, bright sun and an ice cream for a sunny day. To draw a rainy season, students can draw clouds and an umbrella.	Students get busy drawing. They may ask several questions while enjoying their drawing session, which will further clarify their concepts.	Their idea may need to be clarified. Here, the teacher should help them identify what to draw to show one specific type of weather.
5 minutes	The teacher then distributes easy and well-illustrated worksheets.	The worksheet will have pictures of different types of weather on one side. Students will have to identify and write the name of the type of weather shown in the picture. They will have to identify what weather it is and write the name in the blanks given. A hint box will be given below to help students spell the weather names.	Children will identify the correct image with the correct weather name. This condition will help the teacher know how well the students have understood the topic and where more effort is required.	Evaluation of the worksheet is necessary, and the students must clarify all doubts to complete the worksheet correctly.

3. Results

The issues may differ, but a lesson plan is important for childhood education. Communication is very important to implement such a lesson plan to attain the best result. At this point, it is necessary to connect two entities – the teacher and the students. Under the above circumstances, we need to focus on the role of the Communicative Language Method (CLT) and the Audio-lingual method to understand the novelty of these two for the better implementation of Montessori and Kindergarten approaches. In this way, the lesson plan is converted into a communicative one. For this, it is important to identify the core area of focus for both - Communicative Language Teaching and Audio-Lingual method (Education at a Glance, 2009).

To begin with, the role of learners or students in the Audio-Lingual Method is reactive, which indicates that they are supposed to respond to stimuli. Habit formation and over-learning are the two primary aspects of this approach. Students are made to produce a correct response by following skilled training techniques. The emphasis is to make students over-learn the target language so that their native language habits get replaced with target language habits. This situation shows that the role of students in this method is very passive, with little ability to influence or control the content, style, and pace at which they learn the target language (Pedagogy of Teaching English, n.d.). This method focused on pronunciation and conversation practice with pattern drills without grammar or translation classes. This method does not encourage initiating interaction by students as it may lead to mistakes. Students are involved largely in this method by following the teacher's model and other materials of imitation accurately and rapidly. The teacher controls the language behavior of the students, who in their turn, respond to and perform controlled tasks to learn a new language.

However, in the Communicative Language Method, according to Breen and Candling, the role of a learner is of a negotiator between self, the learning process, and the object of learning. This role of the student as a negotiator "emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and the classroom procedures and activities the group undertakes (Ezzahouani, n.d.). This method emphasizes making the student learn in an interdependent way where he contributes as much as he gains. In the CLT method, a student often has no text and no grammar rules or standard classroom arrangement. Students are expected to interact mainly with each other rather than the teacher; thus, error correction may be limited or lacking. This method recommends that students learn to respect that failed communication is a joint responsibility and, similarly, successful communication is a joint achievement. Thus, in CLT, the role of a student is that of a negotiator and communicator, whereas, in the Audio-lingual method, a student is an imitator.

Inclusive Application and Exclusive Reality
In this context, it is important to understand the Communicative Lesson Plan. One needs to involve learners and include communicative activities in the Communicative lesson plan. For example, one can involve a role play for the lesson planning. Then, selecting a topic and arranging a role-play session with the learners and making them involved is essential. Again, the role-play topic depends on the learners' age level. For example - if the level of the learners is 6 to 7 years, then we can select topics like to market, the railway station, etc. Also, for the recapitulation part, you can involve activities that can be verbally done, basically a communicative activity (Bawa, 2020).

For the lesson plan format, one can include the following parameters-1) Name of the activity,2) Date, 3) No. Of students, 4) Materials Required, 5) Time taken, 6) Level of the Learners, 7) Objectives,8) Presentation and recapitulation. These things can be described in the following way:
Topic – Exploring the Supermarket
Date
No. of Students - 20
Age Group – 7-8 years
Class Duration -35-40 minutes
Level of Learners – Elementary
Objectives – To encourage students to communicate spontaneously with each other by creating a scenario that they are accustomed to. Presenting a reallife scenario will help them unfold their real communication skills.

Warmer – The teacher can play a quick round of memory games with the students. The teacher can start the game with the name of a fruit, and the student will

Context Setting – The teacher asks the class whether they have visited a supermarket. Then she explains to them what a supermarket is and what goods are sold there. For this, the teacher can show the class some pictures about different supermarket aspects or a video. During the context setting, the teacher will use words like shopping, shopkeeper, market, selling, and buying, which will trigger more student input (Let us take a Trip to the Grocery Store, n.d.). The idea is to try and make things as real and relatable for the students so that they find it easier to participate in the activities that will take place in the classroom. The teacher can ask simple questions like "Have you been to a supermarket?". The students will answer "yes". The teacher then asks them to explain what they have seen there. Have you seen a fruit section? The students may remember that yes they have and enthusiastically reply yes. Some may also add that they have also seen groceries and fruit sections. This way, the context of the communicative activity will slowly be set by allowing students to be involved and interact.

Table 3. Activity (to understand communicative lesson plan)

Activity	Duration	Method
Divide the class into 5 groups.	5 minutes	Each group will have 4 students in it. Each group will have one shop assistant, one cashier, and two customers. This is to allow each student in the class to actively participate in the role-play act to allow them to speak and communicate in the target language. There will be four different counters representing four sections of the supermarket. The teacher can ask students what items they have seen in the supermarket. Their input will help in deciding the counters. So, there can be a vegetable counter, a fruit counter, a grocery counter, and an ice cream selling counter. Some props and boards will be required here to mark each counter. Like, toys can be placed on the table of each counter, and there will be a signage with the name of the counter written on it. The lines of the customers and sellers will change according to the counter they are playing their roles for. Furthermore, each group will have a cash counter where the customers can pay for what they have bought. This interaction with the cashier will add a new direction to the plan. Students will learn new words to add to their vocabulary.
Explain the theme of the role-play of the groups and let the students know each role they are playing.	5 minutes	Here, the teacher can write a few lines on paper for each role the students will play during the act. Like, there will be lines for the shop assistant, Good Morning, How Can I Assist You" and lines like "Let me help you" and "What are you looking for, sir/madam." Similarly, the lines of the cashier and customers will also be given in writing to the students. The teacher will explain how the seller and buyer communicate in a supermarket by providing the lines. Nevertheless, the students can memorize them without memorizing them. They can improvise the lines by putting in their inputs per their knowledge/idea (from what they know about the same).

Students talk amongst themselves according to their groups about how they will perform. They sketch a storyline for the role play.	10 minutes	The teacher can discuss with each group about how they will be performing. Each team will decide on their act by emphasizing the role of every character involved. This inter-communication among the students is a great exercise, and the teacher's guidance can help them plan a proper skit for their role play.
Groups start perform-ing their act. Each group will perform individually as the others observe and try to understand the scene.	15 minutes	The groups will perform one by one. The teacher will ensure that the others pay attention to what is being enacted by the groups. This condition will increase the student's interest, and they will eagerly await their chance. Students who are customers will visit the counters and communicate with the shop assistant. Then, after picking up what they are looking for, they will proceed to the cash counter. Here, they will also learn that they must pay a certain amount for things they procure. They can be given fake money for this part.
Recapitulation	5 minutes	A quick recap of the activities the students have performed will help them repeat the sentences and words they have used. This condition will positively affect them; they can use the terms in similar real-life situations. Thus, the ability to relate what they do in the classroom to the real world will bring out the real essence of learning the target language, Communicative English.

The use of role-play in Communicative English Class has its goodness. It allows the students to enjoy an interactive session where they can freely communicate with each other in the target language without the fear of mistakes being pointed out. Language teaching is done in a safe and playful environment; thus, the results are more effective and long-lasting (Islam & Islam, 2013). The English communication between the participants will help contribute icontributenowledge of the language. Language teaching will thus become both interactive and engaging. Instead of reading out sentences from textbooks, when students speak out themselves, they realize the meaning and intention behind each sentence in a better and more fruitful manner. The teacher should encourage students so that they speak naturally and spontaneously. They may need to be grammatically correct. However, the effort on their part needs encouragement and appreciation, and the teacher plays an important role here. The errors can also be rectified naturally without making a strong impact on the students that they have made a mistake (Hossain, 2015). Mistakes are not very good to feel about, and students lose interest if their mistakes are always pointed out to them in black and out. Rather, role play inspires them to correct mistakes without impacting their morale or attempts.

Outcome of Survey and Experience of West Bengal
Early childhood education plays a crucial role in a child's development and lays the foundation for future learning. To enhance its effectiveness, several strategies and practices have been proven successful in the Indian context through Village schools of West Bengal. Here are some key considerations for improving early childhood education in Village Bengal -
   i.   Play-based Learning and Care: Incorporate play-based learning activities into the curriculum. Play is essential to a child's development and promotes social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Create a stimulating environment with age-appropriate toys, games, and activities encouraging exploration and creativity.
   ii. Student-Centric Teaching and Holistic Development: Focus on the holistic development of children, addressing their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social needs. Design activities and lessons that target various developmental domains, such as language and literacy, numeracy, motor skills, and socio-emotional development.

iii. Localized Curriculum and Co-curriculum Activities: Develop a curriculum that reflects the local context, culture, and language. Consider incorporating local culture, traditions, and community values into the curriculum to make it more relevant and engaging for children.

iv. Trained Teachers: Ensure that early childhood educators are well-trained and qualified. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills. Effective teacher-child interactions are crucial for promoting learning and development in early childhood.

v. Family Involvement: Foster strong partnerships with parents and caregivers. Encourage their active involvement in their child's education by organizing workshops, parent-teacher meetings, and other collaborative activities. Provide resources and guidance to parents on supporting their child's learning at home.

vi. Assessments and Monitoring: Implement age-appropriate assessments to monitor children's progress and identify areas where additional support may be needed. Use observation-based assessments, portfolios, and checklists to gather evidence of children's learning and development.

vii. Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) and Infrastructure and Resources: Create a safe and stimulating learning environment with age-appropriate facilities, materials, and resources. Ensure that classrooms are well-equipped with educational toys, books, art supplies, and other learning materials that support active exploration and discovery.

viii. Inclusive Practices: Adopt inclusive practices to cater to the diverse needs of children. Provide support and accommodations for children with disabilities or special needs, ensuring equal access to quality education. Train teachers on inclusive teaching strategies and create a supportive classroom environment.

ix. Community Engagement: Engage the local community and stakeholders in early childhood education initiatives. Collaborate with community organizations, NGOs, and local authorities to promote early childhood education awareness, advocacy, and resource mobilization.

x. Remedial Teaching and Continuous Improvement: Regularly evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of early childhood education practices. Seek feedback from teachers, parents, and children to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes to enhance the quality of education provided.

4. Conclusion

The Govt. of West Bengal already started a Diploma under the Primary Education Board in all Districts called District Primary School Council (DPSC) for Early Childhood Education, a Diploma level education course. The courses are also known as Diploma in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE), Diploma in Early Child Care Education (DECCE), Diploma in Elementary Education (D. El. Ed.), and Diploma in Early Childhood Care & Education (DECCE). Also, other abbreviations such as DECE, DECED, and ECE help the candidate develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for working with young children (i.e. children up to six years old).

These programs are generally accredited by SCERT (State Council for Educational Research & Training, W.B.). The duration of the course varies from 1 year to 2 years. It empowers them to organize and manage child-care centers like preparatory, preschools, nursery schools, kindergartens, day-care centers, etc. These Diploma courses deal with a preschool curriculum and can significantly contribute to a child's proper growth with growing maturity. This study (Diploma course) wants to combine the field placements to enable the students to understand children's physical, emotional, and cognitive needs.

Recommendations

The ultimate goal of this lesson plan is to create a positive classroom environment conducive to oral communication. The emphasis is on listening, observing, and speaking without any hesitation. Through such role-play, students will effortlessly gain communication and language skills that will be important for the latter lessons. Also, they become aware of how they are expected to behave when communicating in the social environment (Five Components of Effective Oral Language

Instruction, n.d d.). Learning becomes relaxed and thus helps students gain greater confidence that will finally help them develop linguistic competence in the latter stages. Thus, the Communicative Language Method (CLT) and Audio-lingual method through the Communicative Lesson Plan can help develop Montessori and Kindergarten approaches to childhood education. Notably, every child is unique, and providing a nurturing and supportive environment that values their individuality and promotes their overall development is essential.

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