

Early Childhood Education-A Devoir

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the aims and objectives of early childhood education, relevance of child development for the teacher, educating them so as to understand the learner and his behaviour, hence to develop a solid foundation for the child right from his/her early years of life. Early Childhood Education refers to educational programs and strategies geared toward children from birth to the age of eight. Educationally, pre-schoolage is very important and it paves way for effective learning. The child is prepared in all respects to profit from schooling during this period. Enriched environment is to be provided for the receptive mind of the child. The early childhood education should, therefore, be according to the physiological and psychological needs and conditions of the child. It should be free, flexible and comprehensive in finding the best ways of getting families and schools to work together to achieve the aims of pre-primary education in well planned and properly organised programmes and practices.

Key Words: Early Childhood Education, Pre-school, Pre-primary education, Enriched Environment.

Introduction

Early childhood is generally recognized as the period from prenatal to age eight. The brain is determined and develops biologically during the prenatal period. The most rapid period of brain development takes place in the first two years of life, laying the pathway for all later functions. Brain development is influenced by the child's interaction with the environment. By the age of six, 90% of the brain's structure and organization of neural pathways are developed-or not developed if the child has been mal nutrition and stimulation. Failure to support the child's brain development through proper care can lead to permanent damage.

Role of Education in Early Childhood Period

Rousseau's view on Early Childhood Education- At the first stage from 1 to 5 years, Programmes relating to development of physical strength should be undertaken. The child should

be allowed to wander freely in the country side. His playthings should be very simple, such as branches with fruits and flowers and no expensive toys.

Children learn through manipulating objects and materials, and exploring the world around them by trial and error within their environment, a concept commonly referred to as “learning by doing”. Programmes aiming at educating young children should reflect this. They should also promote practices which serve the best interests of young learners in their own social context and that help them make the most of their active learning capacity, accommodating their diverse needs. While educating children, we should keep some objective in our mind.

Objectives of Early Childhood Education

1. To build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, toilet training, eating, washing, cleanliness and try to develop good habits along with good health.
2. To develop acceptable social attitudes and manners and to encourage healthy participation that makes the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of others.
3. To develop emotional stability by guiding the child to express, understand, accept and control his feelings and emotions.
4. To encourage his/her aesthetic sense.
5. To kindle the beginning of intellectual curiosity concerning the environment and to help him understand the world in which he lives and gives him/her through opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment.
6. To give them proper space for self-expression and encourage their independence to be creative.
7. To give them freedom to express his thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech.
8. To develop in the child a good physique for adequate coordination of his body parts.

Role of Teacher to understand the learner and his behavior.

G.M. Blair said that Modern teacher, if he is to succeed with his work, should be a specialist who understands children, how they grow, develop, learn and adjust.

1. Understanding Individual Differences: No two persons are exactly alike. There are individual differences. Pupils always differ in their level of intelligence, aptitudes, likes and dislikes and in other propensities and potentialities.
2. Understanding the learner: Acquisition of knowledge is no more the main object of education but it is still very significant in the process of education. For this purpose the educator will have

to consider the mental processes of the child and not only the quality of knowledge which he is going to put into the living mind.

3. Understanding Developmental Characteristics: The teacher must be acquainted with the characteristics of each stage and utilize these characteristics in imparting instruction and moulding the behaviors' of the learners.

4. Understanding Group Dynamics: The teacher must know the operations of group dynamics in classroom teaching learning as well as total school and social environment and their effect on learning.

5. Understanding the nature of classroom learning: The knowledge of learning and developing helps the teacher to adapt and adjust his teaching according to the level of the learners.

6. Understanding effective methods of teaching: Recent researchers made in the field of Educational Psychology give us valuable suggestions regarding better methods of teaching and memorizing for developing desirable habits.

7. Curriculum Construction: Child developmental principles are used in formulating curriculum for different stages.

8. Measurement of learning outcomes: Child development study has made many strides in this respect quite recently. It has produced several reliable tests and instruments of mental measurement which are proving to be extremely useful in the field of education.

9. Understanding the learning process: Child development study discusses the nature of learning theories and types of learning for different age levels and situations. Therefore, knowledge of child development becomes essential to a teacher to study all these problems.

10. Knowledge of mental health: A study of educational psychology helps the teacher to know the various factors which are responsible for the mental ill health and maladjustment. He accordingly attempts to eliminate such factors and creates a healthy mental environment.

11. Developing Scientific Attitude: Knowledge of child development is helpful in making the teacher morescientific in his educational practices.

12. Educational Psychology and Nervous System: The entire education depends on the function of the brain and nervous system.

13. Child development and play: Play is a natural tendency having great educational potentials.it provides a variety of activities for children.

14. Developmental Psychology and productive activities: It helps the teacher to know how various activities in these fields can be used for the fulfillment of the basic needs of children.

15. Understanding the significance of Research: Developmental psychology helps in developing tools and techniques for the measurement of various variables which influence the behavior and performance of the learners as well as teachers.

16. Guidance for the education of the exceptional children: Developmental psychology has contributed a lot for making specific provisions and organization of educational Programmes for exceptional children who remained neglected in the past and was devoid of suitable educational facilities.

17. Character development: Developmental psychology helps a lot in the formation and development of character.

18. Constructive and creative Discipline: Now days, teacher adopts a cooperative and scientific approach to modify the behavior of the students. Stress is laid on self-discipline through creative and constructive activities.

19. Use of audio visual aids or new instructional technology: It has been experimentally proved that the use of audio visual aids holds the attention and interests of the children for a longer period and makes the difficult concepts more clear and learning more lasting.

20. Time table framing: Principles of child development are kept in view in framing the time table.

21. Provision for co-curricular activities: For the balanced and harmonious development of children, activities like debates, discussions, dramas, social service and games and sports should be included.

22. Use of innovative process. The knowledge of the process of child development enables us to introduce new innovative ideas and practices.

23. Production of suitable teaching learning material: New materials are keeping in view the intellectual development of children, their needs and interests at difficult levels.

24. Humanistic democratic administration and management: Democratic practices in the functioning of educational institutions are taking the place of autocratic practices. Emphasis is laid on humanistic approach to develop the child.

Role of activities and Learning material in Early Childhood Education

The impact of recent developments in child developmental psychology upon the nature of the teaching learning process has been quite revolutionary. In recent years, advances in the information technology have opened several means of teaching learning through play way.

The General Assembly of the United Nations on 20th November 1959, proclaimed the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" for focusing the attention of the International community on happy childhood. The Declaration states that the child should have full opportunity for play and recreation which should be serving the same purposes as education. The society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right."

Play materials and their use for education

1. To have all possible provisions for all-round development of the children in aspects like physical development, healthful living, social and emotional development, cognitive development and aesthetic development.
2. To prepare them for better adjustment in formal schooling.
3. For preschool children activities are to be carried out in a play atmosphere. Activities like plays and games occupy the first place.

Play way spirit can be utilized in many practical ways in the teaching of different subjects:

1. Mother Tongue: Dramatics, magazines and games are the different ways of introducing the spirit of play way in teaching of the mother tongue and other languages.
2. Mathematics: Running a school shop is the best way of teaching mathematics in a play way spirit.
3. History: There is a great scope of introducing the spirit of play way in the teaching of history. Visit to museums, historical buildings, caves, monuments, forts etc.
4. Nature Study: Heuristic method has brought the play spirit in the teaching of Science. Scientific hobbies like soap making, gardening, radio repairing and photography should be encouraged.
5. Moral and Social Training: Various co-curricular activities like self-government, scouting, home room, co-operative stores, games, NCC, all impart training in citizenship in an play way spirit.

Appropriate Early Childhood Education is very important as it influences the mental, emotional and physical development of a child. It is parents and teachers combined responsibility to ensure the quality of early childhood education. So, the child will lead a balanced and prosperous life in the future.

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