

EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

In modern education, the emphasis is given on learner-centered education. Students interact in the classroom actively whereas the role of teacher becomes passive. The increasing awareness of the learner-centered, teaching-learning process has generated a lot of attention towards the learners, how long they keep the content learn, how they conceptualize the content and how they help themselves to organize their knowledge to enhance meaningful learning. To keep this up to level, the learning must be done in the minds of the learner in the form of ideas, views and thoughts and it can easily be done in early childhood. In this age, a child can be easily moulded as we want to do because during this stage, children are influenced by their environment and the people that surround them. The main vision of this paper indicates an effective use of learning strategies that can be used to teach the young minds with change of present scenario.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Early childhood and ECE (Early Childhood Education)

Introduction

Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression.'

Dr. Hiam Ginnot

In the context of early childhood education, NAEYC (National Association for the education of young children 2019) defines "early childhood" includes the age 0-8 years and during this period child goes through the different phases of growth and development. Their brains develop much faster than other parts of the body. So, early childhood period is said to be critical as growth and development of the child occurs rapidly.

Early childhood is the stage in which child is encouraged for the healthy development and nurturing of all the important foundations like social skills, self-esteem, perception of the world and moral outlook easily as young children are not like other students because their needs are unique. Parents and teachers must be aware of their unique needs and rapidly changing behaviour. To understand their uniqueness, the very first step is to interact with the young minds. There are number of changes that occur among them and being teacher, we must know 'how to tackle the small world. For this, he must know the effective learning strategies that help them to teach the young minds besides this he must have known to the growth and developments that occurs

accordingly as explained by Jean Piaget's cognitive development and Erickson theory of psychosocial development.

Furthermore, teacher needs to be creative and adaptive and must be able to think outside his own mature perspective. He should be able to place himself in place of their student's shoe also. To know more frequently about their students, he must consider the following principles given by NCCP (National center for children in Poverty, 2006) for an effective use of learning strategies:

- High quality and continuous early care and education helps low income children to do better in school- it is necessary for getting the students on right track, teacher must know ' what to start and where need to go.' An empirical research's reviews show that learning occurs faster in early ages than others and they are born eager to learn.
- Social and emotional development is foundation for and intertwined with early childhood cognitive development- young children learns only when they have stable and supportive social relationship with their teachers. Building of emotional development works like an icing on the cake. It means that it is an appropriate age to manage emotions of the child and facilitate the development of literacy.

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- Formal early learning occurs in a variety of settings- it includes the school based and center based learning programme. Learning mostly takes place in a very congenial environment that we have provided to the kids. More the positive environment more will be the academic achievement of the child. So number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors of learning should be kept in mind.

- Closing or reducing the achievement gap – it is not simple for the teacher to reduce the gap among the kids due to individual differences. Here, the teacher has to understand the individual differences first. So, comprehensive approach is required to overcome this obstacle.

Based on above principles teacher is required to use effective teaching strategies and can fill the colours of his own choice. Every classroom has dynamic environment, full of energy and bring all the students together on one platform. Being an effective teacher, one must know the creative and innovative ways in order to meet the young minds of early childhood children. To connect with this small wonder world, teacher must know the needs of these 21st century world and foster the learning environment that inspires the critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, global awareness and social responsibility among them.

To foster this attitude among them, there are so many strategies that can be used in the classroom to teach the students for the boundless future. Some of the strategies are given below:

- ❖ **Integrated Technology:** Today a child is born in the era of advancement and technology. By incorporating technology into teaching is one of the greatest way to engage the students of early childhood. Integrated technology means to develop interest, motivation among students and strengthen the technical skills to enhance their learning. The use of smart boards in the classroom attracts the child towards the colourful images and sound of the videos displayed on the screens and it helps them to visualize the actual content of their course.
- ❖ Gwang (2009) Integration of technology in education serves the following purposes:

- (a) Helps in re-structuring an education system
- (b) Diversifying the teaching – learning methods
- (c) Engage all the students actively in the class
- (d) Students are able to adapt themselves according to the environment
- (e) Helps to enhance the effectiveness and productivity of education also.

- ❖ **Co-operative Learning:** Teacher-centered is one of the traditional method to teach kindergartens. Today in 21st century, students must be encouraged with mixed ability to work together. This can be done by using various small group activities. The teacher rather than calling one student at a time, allows children to discuss content matter in groups. In group activities both teacher and students work hard but here, a teacher act as a facilitator only and allow the students to speak frequently within the group. This will help to enhance their communication and critical thinking skills and leads to higher achievement also. Group activities may include solving puzzles, clay modeling, painting, recitations of rhymes and content related to their course.

Griswold and Rogers (1995) defined co-operative learning as the instructional use of small groups, so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning; a method of instruction by which students work together in small groups to reach a common goal; and an activity that facilitate collaborative efforts among students. This method develops co-operation among students.

- ❖ **Inquiry by based Instruction:** it means we have to pose thoughtful and provoking questions which helps to inspire the child to think critically and help him to become an independent learner. By encouraging students to ask questions and exploring their own ideas which help them to improve their problem – solving skills also.

Kumari (2016) refers this technique in which students are being engaged in questioning

techniques and share ideas involved in dialogue.

- ❖ **Differentiated Instructions:** Teachers can customize the learning experiences by differentiating the needs of the individuals in the classroom. Three types of cognitive learning styles can be done in the class- visual, auditory and kinesthetic. This will help the students to be fully independent and allow them to select their own interest based activities. By offering choices to them is one of the excellent motivations. Working in small groups allows the students to meet the needs of the diverse learners in a large classroom setting also. Varghese (2010) refers it as a multiple path so that students with different abilities, interest or learning needs, experience equally and appropriate way to understand, develop and present the concept that they learn daily in the classroom.
- ❖ **Goal Setting:** The goal setting process is an excellent way of involving children, so that they may be encourage to take their ownership of their learning. Goal setting can be done by frequent two- way conversations with children about their progress in particular areas. For this, models, charts and other teacher aids can be used to adhere a child according to his area of interest.
- ❖ **Cross-Curriculum Teaching:** Teaching multiple subjects simultaneously can help students to learn concepts and skills more frequently, instead of traditional teaching of subject in isolation. It is easy to blend science, maths and social studies content with reading and writing. For example- project method is very useful for children to learn, problem based learning and inquiry based learning. In this children create their own questions according to their interest and curiosity. This method will work so well as teacher engage the students in explaining and uncovering the information in a more meaningful way in which all the subjects can be involved. Therefore, this method is also effective for the learners.
- ❖ **Behavioural Management** By implementing an effective behaviour management strategy

allows to gain student's respect and getting an equal chance of reaching their full potential. Noisy and disruptive classroom do not allow a productive learning environment. This is important to maintain the mutual respect through the combination of discipline and reward. Fun activities and reward charts can allow the students to behave either as positively or negatively. Based on behaviour, the best student award can be given at the end of the week.

Emmer and Stough (2001) classroom management usually refers to the actions taken by the teachers in order to establish mutual respect, engage students and elicit their co-operation

- ❖ **Collaborative Learning:** Here, students work in small group to complete a given task or goal and reward is given to the group who complete their task first and on time. This type of strategy helps the students to enhance their confidence and they learn to work in a group or a team. It develops co-operative thinking among students. Goren-Bar and Koubek (2001) Collaboration learning is generally defined as “Any kind of group learning in which meaningful learning interaction between learners is taken place.”
- ❖ **Patterns of Writing Development:** Writing skill is very important in this age as what they learnt is an impact for later also. This can be done by doing calligraphy competition and reward will be given to the students who wrote in proper pattern.
- ❖ **Early Reading Habits:** Reading books is one of the most important part of an academic field. It enhances the student's habit of reading and improves the academic skills also. In upper age group, students fail to attempt the full length questions because of the reading habits. Even they did not understand what they have been reading.
- ❖ **Motivation:** It is one of the psychological factor which enhance the students to move ahead in life. By motivating a child, helps to increase the initiation and persistence in their work. They tend to learn their content

interestingly and participating in the group activities. It helps the teacher to engage the student in the classroom easily.

McFarland (1974) “ Motivation refers to the way in which urges, drives, desires, aspiration, strivings and needs direct, control or explain the behaviour of human being.”

- ❖ **Assessment for learning:** Assessment for learning is done by the teacher during teaching, so as to know the performance and achievement of the students. It can be done by using two ways:

Formative assessment should be done in the classroom as it helps the teacher to customize his instruction according to the needs of the students. It also help the students to improve and excel. The continue cycle of feedback and improvement makes learning useful and effective.

Summative assessment is done at the end of the session or year. Students have learnt. Some students who are weak in studies, lacks behind. To tackle this problem, teacher can evaluate the children while teaching by using various techniques for example slate work, observations, questioning strategies, classroom discussions, peer assessment and self-assessment etc.

Conclusion

Above approaches and techniques can be benefitted to all students, if teacher must know ‘how, what and where’ to use. This will be more helpful, if attention is given to needs of the diverse group. Being an effective teacher, it is challenge for him to tackle the small world as every small world has something unique in itself and we have to find this uniqueness and fill the colours according to the need of the hour.

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