

# PANACEA FOR WHAT AILS PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

A study on Child Centered Play in  
Government Primary Schools



Play is the most effective tool helping in the overall development of children, without much need of involvement of adults. Play promotes development in physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social and moral domains. This natural medium is paid scant attention in our schools. Most schools adopt teacher-centered un-directional instructional method relying entirely on rote memory. The child's individuality and developmental needs are completely overlooked. The present study adopted an evidenced based approach and evaluates the outcome using psychological tests as well as observation.

The aim of the study was to promote overall development and basic academic skills through Child Centered Play Way in selected Government primary schools in Bangalore.

## Execution of Child Centered Play in Selected Government Schools

### Methodology

Activities under taken for promoting psychological development and enhancing academic skills using child centered play way method. Some of the activities are Indoor and Outdoor Games, Drawing, Art and Craft using waste materials, Clay work, Paper Craft, Singing, Dancing, Drama, Reading, Basic concepts of Mathematics using Chinese Abacus, sharing Jokes-Riddles-Proverbs, Story Telling and Story Building, Puzzle solving, Enactment of Stories, Group Play and Discussions, etc. All the above activities enhance the interest in learning, creativity, motor and eye-hand coordination, logical thinking, vocabulary and verbal communication in children. They also help the children hold their attention, teach them to wait for their turns, work in team, learn from each other and seek help when needed.

**539 children of Six Government Schools participated in the above programme. These were children from class 1 to class 7. The total number of teachers in these schools was 34.**

### Procedure

Each group/class had around 20-25 sessions of activities. Total of around 650 sessions were conducted in the six schools. These were conducted, whenever an hour of free time was allotted to one class. Sometimes the classes were combined or split into two depending on the number of children.

### Our Approach

#### For Languages (Kannada and English) and Number Concepts

For English, grade in Lady Bird book series was used as it uses the graded difficulty level. In Kannada, primers using stories with illustrations in Kannada were used. The focus was on reading skills in Kannada and English instead on script and writing. The method used was a TOP DOWN story reading method. The idea is that a story whether told or read out, obviously appeals to children most and NOT the letters, words, syllables or alphabets. Comprehension of the story is the key to the child's enjoyment of the child.

We begin with an entire story in large letterings, reading to the entire group, running fingers

below each word. At the end of the page, asking questions, pointing to the illustrations and explain the word in English or Kannada as required. This ensures that the child has understood the entire page. Then rest of the pages to read out the same way. One reading may take 15 minutes at the first instance. Then you do the second reading in the similar manner, and children to join in reading along. By the 5th reading, the children would repeat the story almost by rote. At this point you ask a child to come forward and read to the class. When he does it, others too volunteer. Along with this we ask the children to enact the story taking the roles of characters objects in the story. We don't tell them how to dramatise the story. The children themselves work on it. Often their presentations improve with each effort.

#### For Math

Fun Math: In the different games played math components are there, for example, snakes and ladders, Ludo, Chess, Abacus, Shop keeper's game, songs and dances with numbers/colours, jigsaw puzzles. They also learn from the other children new skills and concepts.

**Be it art or craft we simply provide the material and do not instruct what they should do.**

## Teaching Geometric Shapes through Art and Craft

The children were given A4 size papers and asked to make whatever they wish. Some made boats, airplanes or simply made different shapes with. One child was having trouble even in folding the paper. Lakshmi who was quick to make a boat called him and said she will help him to make one. She patiently guided him how to fold and fold again. Then she started showing, "This is a rectangle, fold it you will get two squares, fold the square across, you get a triangle...". The other children too were observing and listening to her with rapt attention!

**Peer teaching-learning is a contrast to the way adults teach geometric shapes. In fact, the NCERT syllabus requires that children of class 1-5 are required to know 9 geometric shapes. Peer learning can be effectively used.**



## Outcome Evaluation

The children were administered psychological tests before and after the intervention. The tests were tests of attention, intelligence and tests of English, Kannada and Maths skills. All the children could not be administered all the tests before and after the intervention. 47 children of class 1 and 2 and 97 children of classes 3-7 were administered Seguin Form Board.

The average score of children of class 1 and 2 was three points higher in simple and complex attention tasks. The average IQ increase was of 20 points. Reading skills in Kannada and English improved by 1 point while on Math improvement was by 3 points. For classes 3-7, children showed three-point increase each in simple and complex attention and 20 percentile points in Intelligence on Raven's Progressive Matrices (coloured) and one-point increase in English and Kannada reading and 3 points in Math. Majority of the children showed improvement on attention, intelligence, Kannada, English and Math on tasks.

**Qualitative improvement was observed in speaking, writing and reading skills in Kannada and English. More pro-social behaviour and enhanced self-esteem were observed. Disruptive and aggressive behaviour were noticed to be much reduced.**

**Teachers' Feedback** - According to school teachers, children are showing better interest in academics – reading, writing and clarifying their doubts. They ask for books to read and do not complain about writing. Children are more confident, expressive, work in team with co-operation. The programme has helped teachers in teaching the curriculum in a more effective way where the students take part actively like indoor and outdoor games, singing and dancing.

## Implications

- ▶ Child Centered play way method when introduced in the regular class rooms in government primary schools, just an hour a day over 20 sessions, shows positive outcome in attention, intelligence, language and number skills
- ▶ When children lead their own learning, any adult, teacher or an older child to monitor and just provide the materials to them works. Hence it lessens the burden on the already over-burdened teachers
- ▶ To become a panacea, it needs change in teacher mind set to become Child Centered. Even an hour every day goes a long way and can be introduced like Physical instruction at the end of the day or during free time

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