

FACTORS HIGHLIGHTING CONCERNS REGARDING EARLY EDUCATION AND PROGRESSION

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research paper is to acquire an understanding of the factors highlighting concerns regarding early education and progression. When the children get enrolled in nursery schools and initiate learning, there are number of areas of concern, which they experience. These include, lack of infrastructure, facilities and amenities in schools, deficiencies in teaching-learning methods and teaching-learning materials, inadequate instructional strategies, inadequacies in extra-curricular and creative activities, learning disabilities in understanding academic concepts, inefficient evaluation methods, lack of technologies, materials and equipment, and inability on the part of the students to get engaged in effective communication processes with teachers and fellow students. These concerns prove to be barriers within the course of achievement of academic goals in up-gradation of the overall system of education. Therefore, it is vital for the educators and teachers to implement methods and approaches, which would contribute in alleviating the concerns and promoting student learning in an efficient manner. Furthermore, they need to implement the measures and approaches to overcome barriers. The main areas that are taken into account in this research paper include, understanding concerns in early education and progression, factors highlighting concerns regarding early education and progression, and measures to alleviate concerns.

Keywords: Concerns, Early Childhood Education, Progression, Schools, Students, Teachers

In the field of early childhood education, students are different from each other in terms of number of aspects. These include, personality traits, learning abilities, behaviour, attitude, conduct, age, gender and even factors such as, caste, creed, race, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. Some students are sharp minded, whereas others take time in understanding the concepts. Some students perform well in class assignments and tests, whereas, others experience setbacks in their performances. Some students find school pleasurable and develop interest and enthusiasm in learning new concepts, whereas some students feel vulnerable within the school environmental conditions and do not feel pleasurable in learning new concepts. Therefore, the natures and personality traits of the students render an effective contribution in influencing their learning. When the students experience setbacks, it is vital for them to obtain support and assistance from teachers as well as their parents in overcoming them.

It is comprehensively understood that teachers in nursery schools have the main objective of ensuring that learning, growth and development of the students takes place in an effective manner. It is vital for them to ensure that they not only acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, but also augment their competencies and abilities and emerge into good human beings and productive citizens of the country. In order to attain the desired goals and objectives, it is vital for the teachers to put into operation, effectual and meaningful teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies. Apart from worthwhile teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies, it is necessary to

encourage the participation of students in various tasks and activities, which would encourage them to develop motivation towards learning. When the students experience challenges and setbacks within the course of achievement of academic goals, their participation in different kinds of learning activities will help in overcoming them. The teachers need to possess an approachable nature and adequate educational qualifications and competencies to perform their job duties satisfactorily and achieve the desired goals and objectives.

UNDERSTANDING CONCERNS IN EARLY EDUCATION AND PROGRESSION

In the present existence, the meaning and significance of early childhood education is recognized in not only India, but in other countries of the world as well. The individuals, belonging to various categories and backgrounds have recognized the significance of education and aspire to make provision of early childhood education to their children. When the children are to acquire early childhood education and get enrolled in nursery schools, there are number of areas of concern, which they need to experience. These include, lack of infrastructure, facilities and amenities in schools, deficiencies in teaching-learning methods and teaching-learning materials, inadequacies in extra-curricular and creative activities, learning disabilities in understanding academic concepts, inefficient evaluation methods, lack of technologies, materials and equipment, and inability on the part of the students to participate in communication processes with teachers and fellow students. These concerns prove to be barriers within the course of achievement of academic goals in up-gradation of the overall system of education. Therefore, it is vital for the educators to implement methods and approaches, which would contribute in alleviating the concerns and promoting student learning in an efficient manner.

The students are different from each other in terms of number of factors. These include, learning abilities, behavioural traits, natures, attitudes and demographic factors. When the teachers are implementing the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies, they need to take into account these factors. Learning can be carried out in an efficient and well-organized manner, provided the teachers need to promote interaction between all students. It is vital for the students from the stage of early childhood to realise that they need to interact with fellow students and accept other cultures and backgrounds. This is comprehensively understood that in nursery schools, students do not possess any ill feelings against anybody. But the teachers are required to encourage their participation in various activities and encourage collaboration with each other. In other words, participation in various activities, interaction and effective communication are regarded as significant aspects in augmenting student learning and alleviating concerns.

The teachers employed in nursery schools are required to possess knowledge and competencies, which would enable them to carry out their job duties in an appropriate manner and attain the desired outcomes. They need to conduct research in terms of various aspects, which would enable them to impart knowledge to the students in terms of academic concepts. Research has indicated that in nursery schools, the job of the teachers is not easy. Within the classrooms, apart from putting into operation, the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies, they need to pay

attention towards the behavioural traits of the students. The teachers need to ensure that students adequately listen to what is being taught to them and treat others well. They need to be friendly with their fellow students and not get engaged in any conflicting situations. Early childhood stage includes the period of transition from home to nursery schools (Shaeffer, 2015). When the students go through this transition, it is vital for them to understand that besides home and family also there is a world, with which they need to interact. This understanding is regarded as vital in alleviating the concerns, particularly related to socialization and academic learning.

FACTORS HIGHLIGHTING CONCERNS REGARDING EARLY EDUCATION AND PROGRESSION

The factors which take into account the concerns in terms of early education and progression have been stated as follows: (The Preschool Curriculum, 2019).

Deal with Variation in Learning

Variation in learning takes place because the students are different from each other in various aspects, such as, natures, learning abilities, and demographic characteristics. Therefore, it is vital for the teachers to acquire an understanding of their needs and requirements and put into operation the methods and approaches that would enable them to perform their job duties well and facilitate student learning. The learning environment needs to be created in such a manner that would make the students feel comfortable. In order to create an amiable learning environment, the teachers need to possess an approachable nature. The reason being, they are ones, who would impart efficient understanding to the students in terms of academic concepts. The major focus of the teachers is upon what the students need to learn and how they would access the information.

The nursery school students will be able to acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, when they will participate in activities and are given assignments. Memorization is a rare technique of learning among nursery school students. They are able to understand the concepts when they get engaged in regular practice. It is necessary to encourage the participation of children in projects, so they are able to rehearse, apply and implement what they have learned. It is of utmost significance for the students to work in groups. In other words, teamwork should be promoted. This would allow the students to interact with others and enhance their communication skills and overall personality traits.

Another strategy that needs to be put into operation is, the whole class can be divided into two groups of varying abilities and ages of students. The younger age group of students with emerging abilities are engaged in free play. The teachers need to conduct the tasks and activities of students, who are younger in age with those of students of higher age group. In this manner, interaction can enable the students to overcome apprehensiveness and develop confidence among themselves. Thus, the teacher will be able to manage the different natures and abilities among students through encouraging their participation in the developmentally appropriate activities. Therefore, it can be stated that the teachers are the ones, who need to augment their knowledge and up-grade their competencies and abilities, so they are able to render a significant contribution in coping up with

differences, facilitating student learning, and bring about improvements in the overall system of education.

Manage Multi-Age Grouping

The multi-age groupings benefit the students, belonging to various age groups. In nursery schools, the students are within the age groups of two plus until five years. Research studies conducted on nursery schools have shown that students, belonging to various age groups do work and interact with each other, when teachers form groups. When they are playing, working or interacting with each other in groups, all students benefit. When they are playing a game or working on an artwork in groups, they usually feel pleasurable. In heterogeneous groups, students learn from each other and in this manner co-operative learning skills are facilitated. Therefore, the class of multi-age group may be managed to acquire the maximum benefits from them and for them. In order to handle multi-level learners, who are different from each other in learning levels, differentiation may be allowed to manage multi-age group students.

When the teachers are managing multi-age grouping, they are required to begin with the moderating learning environment for meeting the varied learning needs of the students. This is comprehensively understood that the learning environment should be created in such a manner that the learning needs and requirements of the students can be met satisfactorily. In the formation of the learning environment, it is vital to ensure that there are provision of infrastructure, materials, technologies, facilities, tools and equipment that would enable the students to develop motivation towards learning. As in the field of early childhood education, teaching-learning materials and technologies that would render a significant contribution in augmenting student learning are regarded to be of utmost significance in promoting student learning and managing multi-age grouping.

Another important aspect that need to be taken into account by the teachers are the concepts in terms of which knowledge should be imparted to the students. In the formation of learning environment as well as in the implementation of curriculum and instructional methods, awareness in terms of concepts are regarded to be of utmost significance, which needs to be imparted to the students. Another aspect is, how the students would access information is important. In other words, in schools as well as at home, they need to be provided with adequate learning materials. The teachers as well as the parents are vested with the responsibilities of providing learning materials as well as creating an environment that would be suitable to learning. Furthermore, they need to make provision of adequate support and assistance to them.

Encouragement of Gender Equality

In order to facilitate student learning and enhance the overall system of education, it is necessary to encourage gender equality. In the encouragement of gender equality, there are various factors that need to be taken into account. These are, demonstrating equal and appropriate expectations from both boys and girls by providing them equal rights and opportunities and treating them with respect and courtesy. The teaching-learning methods and materials that are put into practice by the teachers to promote student learning should be free from gender bias. In other words, both girls and boys should be able to learn from the materials without any gender bias. Communication is regarded

as one of the indispensable aspects that would encourage gender equality. When the teachers as well as the other members of the organization are communicating with the students, it is vital for them to make use of decent and polite language, which is free from any words that would lead to discriminatory treatment or gender inequality.

In the impartment of information to the students in terms of academic concepts and in implementation of teaching-learning methods and materials in an effective manner, it is vital to use stories, poetries, rhymes, songs and so forth. Research has indicated that when students acquire an understanding of the concepts through these means, they are able to develop interest towards learning as well as pay attention towards what the teachers are teaching. The parents are also provided with information that they need to treat their children, both boys and girls on an equal basis. In order to lead to effective growth and development of both boys and girls, they need to be treated with respect and courtesy.

In nursery schools, children are young, so in some cases, they tend to get engaged in a dispute with each other or tend to touch each other. In schools, it is the job of the teachers to impart information to the students in terms of the aspect that they need to be friendly and kind to their fellow students. They should inculcate the traits of morality and ethics within them. When the students will acquire an efficient understanding of this aspect, they will treat others with respect and friendliness. Possessing a friendly attitude and an approachable nature will contribute in the formation of social circle. Therefore, it can be stated that promoting gender equality is regarded to be of utmost significance in facilitating student learning and augmenting the overall system of education.

Limit Formal Instructions

Research has indicated that in nursery schools, when the teachers are focusing on development of knowledge, competencies and abilities of the students, it may prove to be disadvantageous to them. The unfavourable effects are in terms of the ability to develop a positive attitude, disposition to learn, being reflective and inquisitive, development of curiosity and willingness, inculcating the traits of diligence, resourcefulness and conscientiousness and development of problem-solving abilities. When the students are provided with too much information and are engaged in numerous activities, such as, play, singing, learning of academic concepts and so forth, it is apparent that they will feel pressurised. When the students feel pressurised or overburdened with tasks and activities, it is apparent that they will not take pleasure in acquisition of any kind of learning or even in attending schools. Therefore, formal instructions should be limited and students should be encouraged to participate in tasks and activities in accordance to their competencies and abilities.

The teachers need to put emphasis on the building of concepts and reinforcement of competencies and aptitude among students. In order to carry out this task, they need to limit the formal system of teaching and learning. When it is stated that the formal system of teaching and learning should be limited, the teachers need to make provision of opportunities for students, where they feel that participating in them would be beneficial to them in achievement of desired goals and objectives. When the teachers are formulating these opportunities, they need to take into account various factors in terms of students, such as, personality traits, learning abilities and demographic characteristics.

When the students benefit from these opportunities, it shows that the efforts of the teachers have been worthwhile. On the other hand, when the students are unable to benefit from these opportunities, then teachers would have to bring about improvements.

When the teachers implement rote based learning, which is devoid of meaningful framework with pressure upon the students to perform would impose detrimental effects. Therefore, it is stated that in nursery schools, learning begins with play. At the initial stage, students are engaged in play activities. The teachers put into operation teaching-learning methods and approaches, which may encourage the students to get engaged in play activities as well as learn academic concepts. Therefore, it can be stated that play-way learning methods are meaningful and beneficial to the students in nursery schools rather than formal instruction.

Encouraging the Participation of Students with Disabilities

In nursery schools, the students with disabilities are also enrolled. Research studies conducted on nursery schools have indicated that in some cases, students have speech disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments or are not ambulatory. The parents of such students as well as the students themselves form the viewpoint that they would not let the disabilities prove to be barriers within the course of achievement of desired goals and objectives and in bringing about improvements in their overall quality of lives. They have adequately recognized the significance of education. They are well-aware of the fact that acquisition of education will enable them to achieve personal as well as professional goals. In the present existence, when the students experience disabilities, they make use of assistive devices to overcome them. In other words, various forms of disabilities should do not impose any kinds of barriers within the course of learning and achievement of educational goals.

The teachers are vested with the authority and responsibility of putting into operation, the teaching-learning methods, teaching-learning materials and instructional strategies that would be beneficial to these students. Early intervention minimises learning difficulties and accelerates student learning. It includes the system of services for the students with disabilities. Early intervention can be given in various forms. These include, speech and language therapy can help in improving hearing through making use of hearing aids, physiotherapy can help in the development of motor skills, such as, balance, crawling, walking and sitting, development and work therapy can help in the development of motor skills and making provision of technologies, so students can acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts.

Inclusion makes provision of opportunities to treat the students with disabilities. When effective growth and development takes place of students with disabilities, it is vital to take into account various areas, such as, infrastructure, resources, technologies, materials, tools and equipment. When emphasis is put upon the development of these factors, they need to be well-ordered and it needs to be ensured that students with disabilities are able to benefit from them in number of ways, particularly in the attainment of desired goals and objectives. Success for the students with learning disabilities require the focus on individual achievement, individual progress and individual learning. In order to attain success, it is necessary to implement specific, directed, individualised and intensive remedial action for these students. Furthermore, it is necessary to focus on the activities on assessing

individual students to monitor their progress through curriculum and instructional strategies (Successful Strategies, 2020).

Measures to Alleviate Concerns

The measures that need to be formulated to alleviate the concerns have been stated as follows: (The Preschool Curriculum, 2019).

Implement Early Developmental Screening – The implementation of early developmental screening helps the parents to identify what strategies and measures they need to put into operation to make sure that learning, growth and development of their child takes place in an effective manner. The implementation of early developmental screening helps the individuals to take a closer look at how the child is developing. The child will get a brief test, or the parents or caregivers are required to complete the survey questionnaire. The tools that need to be used for developmental and behavioural screening are formal questionnaires or checklists, based on the research that ask questions regarding the child's development, including language, emotions, movement, thinking and behaviour. The doctor or the nurse are required to carry out the function of developmental screening. There are other professionals as well, who carry out this function in health care, community and school settings (Developmental Monitoring, 2019).

Understanding Significance of Early Identification and Intervention – Early identification and intervention helps in keeping the children on the right track to make the most of the competencies and abilities, developed during the early years. Early intervention services are supportive and assisting to the parents as well as the siblings of children with special needs. When the students experience problems and challenges in terms of various aspects, then it is the primary responsibility of the parents to identify them and put into operation the measures and strategies that would provide solutions to problems. When the problems are identified at an early age and solutions are provided, then the students are able to overcome all the setbacks and acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts. When they are unable to do well in class and experience problems, this is disappointing to the teachers. In such cases, the teachers usually discuss the problems with parents and it is the responsibility of the parents to understand the significance of early identification and intervention. When they are able to implement early intervention, they feel contented.

Making Adjustments in the School Environmental Conditions – It is comprehensively understood that the school environmental conditions need to include infrastructure, amenities and facilities, which would not only contribute effectively in making provision of knowledge and information to the students in terms of academic concepts, but also make them feel comfortable within the school environment. Research has indicated that in rural areas, there is lack of proper furniture and students are made to sit on the floor within the classrooms. Apart from this, the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies too are also not in a well-developed state. Whereas, in urban schools, these factors are in a well-developed state and students are able to learn and understand in an appropriate manner. Due to these factors, students experience setbacks within the course of achievement of academic goals. Therefore, it is vital for the educators to make adjustments within the school environmental conditions and make provision of infrastructure, amenities, equipment and

teaching-learning materials that would facilitate student learning and augment the overall system of education.

Making Curriculum and Instructional Strategies Flexible – It is comprehensively understood that teachers need to make sure that curriculum and instructional strategies are implemented in accordance to the needs and requirements of the students. When the teacher implement the strategies, which have not proven to be beneficial to the students in acquiring an efficient understanding of the academic concepts and in achieving the desired goals and objectives, then it is apparent that they would have to modify the curriculum and instructional strategies. In making curriculum and instructional strategies flexible, the teachers need to work in collaboration and integration with other teachers. Flexible curriculum and instructional strategies imply that school adapts to the use of resources and materials. The combination of different strategies, instructional strategies and curricular approaches allow the students to have access to what they need (Why Flexible Learning Environments? 2018).

Providing Support to Students with Disabilities – In nursery schools, there are students, who experience various types of disabilities. These include, learning disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech disabilities and physical disabilities. When these disabilities are severe, it is apparent that the children get enrolled in special schools. On the other hand, when the disabilities are less severe, then the students may get enrolled in nursery schools. In the case of visual impairments and hearing impairments, the students are provided with assistive devices, which enable them to learn appropriately and achieve academic goals. In the case of learning disabilities, it is vital for the teachers to make use of effective teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies. Furthermore, they need to pay special attention to these students. In the case of physical disabilities, particularly when the students are not ambulatory, they need to be provided with facilities and assistive devices, which enable them to remain ambulatory. In the case of speech disabilities, the students need to seek counselling and classes need to be organized in such a manner, which would enable them to overcome the speech disabilities and get engaged in verbal communication.

Implementing Evaluation Methods – Evaluation methods are regarded to be of utmost significance in the system of education in not only the field of early childhood education but at all levels. These methods enable the teachers to identify whether teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies have proven to be beneficial in promoting student learning and enriching the overall system of education or not. The effectiveness of the evaluation methods is identified in the performance of the students. When the students perform well, it shows that the teaching-learning methods, materials and curriculum and instructional strategies have been favourable. On the other hand, when the students experience setbacks in their performances, it indicates that improvements will have to be made in teaching-learning methods as well as curriculum and instructional strategies. The common methods that are being put into operation to evaluate the performance of students are, class assignments, homework assignments, tests, competitions and quizzes. The principals or head mistress also observe the teaching of teachers, particularly when they are recruited. This enables them to find out how the teachers are teaching and promoting student learning. When they are teaching well, they

are appreciated and encouraged, whereas, when they experience problems, they are guided and directed.

Building Knowledge and Capabilities among Teachers – Teaching is a difficult job. In the present existence, not only in India, but in other countries of the world as well, individuals are developing interest and enthusiasm in the teaching profession. There are number of individuals, who aspire to acquire doctoral degrees, so they are able to obtain jobs of professors in higher educational institutions. Whereas, there are women, who acquire nursery teachers training and aspire to find employment opportunities as teachers in nursery schools. The teachers need to work towards building knowledge and capabilities on a regular basis. They need to conduct research and generate awareness in terms of modern and innovative methods, so they are able to carry out their job duties well and incur job satisfaction. Apart from building of knowledge and capabilities, the teachers need to possess an approachable nature. Furthermore, they need to be supportive and helpful to the students, particularly in understanding of academic concepts and achieving educational goals.

Using Appropriate Teaching-Learning Methods and Instructional Strategies – At all levels of education, the teachers need to make use of appropriate teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies in accordance to various factors. These include, grade levels of students, academic subjects and concepts and educational goals. In the field of early childhood education, the teachers need to make sure that teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies are implemented in such a manner that build the foundation for the children to learn. It is comprehensively understood that not only in formal schools and higher educational institutions, but in the field of early childhood education as well, the educators need to make use of technologies to facilitate student learning. Nursery school students cannot make use of technologies, thus, the teachers make use of them in providing knowledge and understanding to the students in terms of academic concepts. Therefore, it can be stated that using appropriate teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies will render a significant contribution in augmenting student learning and up-grading the overall system of education.

Promoting Counselling Facilities – In nursery schools, there are provision of counselling facilities as well. Apart from building of foundation of learning and participation in extra-curricular and creative activities, it is necessary to provide counselling facilities as well. These facilities are provided by professional counsellors, principals or teachers to the parents of the student. In nursery schools, students experience number of problems in terms of which their parents are required to seek counselling from either educators or professional counsellors. Some of the problems include, learning disabilities, introversion, bashfulness, vulnerability, apprehensiveness, and so forth. The parents as well as the teachers want that students should acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, perform well in school, augment their competencies and abilities and emerge into productive citizens of the country. Therefore, in order to achieve these objectives in an appropriate manner, it is vital for the parents to carry out the task of upbringing of the children satisfactorily and seek counselling facilities, particularly in the case of any problems, challenges and setbacks.

Encouraging Interaction among Parents and Teachers – The parents and teachers have one common objective, i.e. to lead to effective growth and development of the children. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary for them to interact and exchange ideas and perspectives. In order to lead

to upbringing of the children in an appropriate manner and ensure that they are able to augment their knowledge, skills and abilities, it is vital to encourage interaction among parents and teachers. When the child does well in school and achieve good grades, this is pleasing to the parents as well as the teachers. In such cases, the teachers and parents usually communicate with each other in terms of the traits of diligence and conscientiousness on the part of the child and how he or she pays attention towards learning. On the other hand, when the child experiences setbacks in class performance and do not achieve good grades, then the parents and teachers need to discuss with each other the ways that need to be implemented to bring about improvements in the academic performance of the students.

CONCLUSION

In the field of early childhood education, there are number of concerns in terms of students, which are overwhelming to the parents, teachers and students. These concerns usually prove to be impediments within the course of performing one's tasks and activities in a well-organized manner and achievement of academic goals. The students in nursery schools need to obtain support and assistance from their parents and teachers to alleviate the concerns. Factors highlighting concerns regarding early education and progression are, deal with variation in learning, managemulti-age grouping, encouragement of gender equality, limit formal instructions and encouraging the participation of students with disabilities. The teachers in nursery schools are primarily the ones, who need to pay attention to the factors highlighting concerns regarding early education and progression. They need to generate awareness in terms of methods and strategies that are necessary to implement these factors in a satisfactory manner.

The measures that need to be formulated to alleviate the concerns are, implement early developmental screening, understanding significance of early identification and intervention, making adjustments in the school environmental conditions, making curriculum and instructional strategies flexible, providing support to students with disabilities, implementing evaluation methods, building knowledge and capabilities among teachers, using appropriate teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies, promoting counselling facilities and encouraging interaction among parents and teachers. It is necessary for the principals and teachers in nursery schools to generate information in terms of these measures and implement them on a regular basis. When they will be able to put into operation the measures, they will be able to overcome the concerns, facilitate student learning and promote effective growth and development of the students. Finally, it can be stated that in order to lead to enhancement of the overall system of education, it is necessary to implement the measures, which would alleviate concerns.

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