

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

An Outline on Pedagogical Practices in Pre-Primary Classes in Nepal

Dr. Shobhakhar Kandel

Associate Professor, Central Department of Education
Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Abstract:

The purpose of the pedagogical research work is to interpret the pedagogical practices that pre-primary teachers do in community schools. The present study is carried out through an intensive review of previous literatures, open-ended interviews with the teachers of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Pre-primary Classes (PPCs) and class observations which are assumed as the base of information about the current pedagogical practices. The study was conducted using qualitative method based on interpretive perspective. The data were interpreted using inductive data analysis approach. The research work findings show that Montessori and Kindergarten approaches are used in observed classes. The findings also show teachers involved are to be orientated with modern pedagogical approaches like Multiple Intelligence approach of Howard Gardner, Reggio Emilia's approaches, Five Principal Activities of the human being, Seven Principal Activities of human being, human development theory of Hurlock, Social Learning theory of Albert Bandura and Socio-cultural Learning theory of Lev Vygotsky to conduct pre-primary classes in accordance with 21st century educational skills of Collaboration and communication instead of traditional type of strategies.

Keywords: Pre-primary, early childhood, reading, writing, arithmetic, critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, coordination, computing

1. Introduction

Having both teaching and administrative experiences from primary level to secondary level of schools in Nepal and also being an expert of pedagogical studies and a teacher educator in Tribhuvan University (TU), the researcher realizes the significance of interpreting current position of pedagogical practices in pre-primary classes applied to enhance the goal of curriculum. The study has used Pragmatist Idea as theoretical tools interpret the pedagogical practices (Creswell W., 2014). Early Childhood Education (ECE) refers to education initiatives provided to children from the age of 3 to 5 before they enter into Primary School i.e. from grade one and beyond (Karmacharya, 2015).

Early childhood education is launched with different names by different countries like Pre-primary Education (Pre-school Education), Early Child Development Education and Early Child Education. However, Montessori education propounded by Maria Montessori and Kindergarten education system by Fredric Froebel are well known.

In international practice at about the age of seven or eight, children enter the age of reason; they begin to review the world differently. Before that period, children are not prepared for school level education. Thus, they are enrolled in child care centers or ECD program and get basic knowledge and skills to care themselves and prepare for school. The international definition of early child includes pre-natal development and continues through the early primary school years (age six to eight years) because of the importance of the continuity of the experience for children (Gautam, 2065 B. S.).

In Nepal, the concept of pre-primary education was introduced in 1951 with the dawn of democracy by establishing Montessori school in Kathmandu ([History of education.in.nepal.html/](http://Historyofeducation.in.nepal.html/)). Nepal Children's Organization (NCO) imparted child care education in its *Balmandir* (children school) in the district headquarters beginning in 1962 (Karmacharya, 2015). International practice of pre-school education has also been in vogue in Nepal since 1951 in the name of ECD, Child Care center, Day Care Center and child friendly teaching learning strategies being applied in classes, but not being integral part of education.

In 1980s, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) started funding Early Childhood Development (ECD) as their priority and the ECD classes flourished both the in the urban cities and in the remote areas of the country (Karmacharya, 2015). The government of Nepal launched ECD education programme (*Shishu Kaksha*) under the project of Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) in 1991/ 1992. Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) 1956, known as Wood's Commission mentioned about Montessori school for the first time to suggest activity method of learning to be incorporated into the new plan of education and prescribed following skills for pre-primary classes to be included in the pre-primary class curriculum.

- Social studies- how mankind lives, Science-nature study, health, and physiology, Language other tongue, leading to Nepali, Arithmetic-fundamental processes and skills,
- Crafts - (a) Feeding ourselves growing, preserving, and cooking food (b) Housing ourselves-shelter and accessories (c) Clothing ourselves, rowing, preparing cloth, an making garments,
- Aesthetic arts – (a) Fine arts—painting, drawing, sculpturing (b) Music and festivals (c) Folk-dancing (d) Literature
- Personal development- (a) Physical training (b) Moral and spiritual training (NNEPC, 1956).

All Round National Education Committee (ARNEC) 1961 recommended Kindergartens to establish all over the country with adequate provision of play way method and recreation. The provision of early childhood education was ignored by National Educational System Plan (NESP) 1971-1976. The importance of ECD was followed by Nepal government only after the recommendation of the basic and primary education project (BPEP). High Level National Education Commission (HLNEC) 2054 B.S.), recommended the objectives of pre- primary education to develop habit for nutritious food and good health, to develop school going habit, basic skill, habit and attitude for primary education (Gautam, 2065 B. S.).

According to Early Child Development Directory 2062 B. S., Primary Education Curriculum 2062-65 B. S., and National Curriculum 2065 B. S., the objectives of pre-primary education are to develop child's all round development through recreational teaching learning activities, prepare them for primary level education, create conducive environment for intellectual, mental, physical, emotional, social, moral, creative development, language efficiency, make them aware of body cleanness and keep them secure, show moral behavior and prepare for primary level education to develop positive view towards school to prepare for basic education (Sharma, 2016).

The importance of ECD was realized by Nepal government only after the recommendation of the basic and primary education project (BPEP) in 1999 (Karmacharya, 2015). The Department of Education has been involved to make curriculum and extend community based Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDC). ECD program is mixed up with the concept of Kindergarten of Froebel and Montessori of Maria Montessori. Under this concept, children attend kindergarten to learn to communicate, play, and interact with others appropriately. A teacher provides various materials and activities to motivate children to learn the language and vocabulary of reading, mathematics, science, as well as music, art, and social behaviors (Gautam, 2065 B. S.).

National Curriculum Framework 2007 had emphasized on conducting explorative, interactive and innovative teaching learning activities. Priority on local environment (social, economic and cultural) and project oriented teaching learning activities, and experimental teaching learning activities are an integral part of teaching.

Likewise, problem solving type of teaching learning activities like community work, case study, and observation, familiarize vocation oriented knowledge and skills to promote positive attitudes towards labour, development and distribution of educational materials, inclusive policy for the development and use of teaching learning activities and educational materials. An emphasis is given to mobilize local resources and give special attention for the all-round development of students by linking co/extracurricular activities with teaching learning activities. Additional support is provided if required to special need children to remove the difficulties of teaching learning activities for the children with special need. Finally, a mandatory provision of allocating time for extracurricular activities from school hour, annual working days and working hours is fixed and brought into a system by taking into account of the nation's geography in implementing the curriculum and counseling service provided to the students at risk by developing a system of student counseling service in each school are the main teaching learning activities policy (Khanal, H. B. 2007).

In 1997, Ministry of Education (MOE) launched pre-primary classes under its Basic and Primary Education Program. In 2000, Nepal adopted Education for All (EFA), Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000). In 2003, National Plan called for a provision of training, curriculum development, and monitoring for community based ECD centers (MOE/UNESCO 2003). Furthermore, in 2004, National Strategies for ECD provides operational guidelines for ECD centers, a framework for an Effective Parent Service Programme, and goals for national ECD programming (MOE/UNESCO 2004). In 2009, SSRP set enrollment targets for ECD centers, called for expansion to disadvantaged areas, and promoted community based approaches to ensure equitable access to programming (MOE 2009) (Karmacharya, 2015).

The government launches ECD classes before the primary level. Likewise, private schools run Montessori; Kindergarten, playgroup and day care classes as nursery, LKG, and UKG before enrolling children in grade one. Private schools employ teaching methods designed by the government and additional teaching learning strategies created by themselves. Pre-primary education is given to infants and toddlers from the age 0 to 3. Children from 4 to 5 years are called preschoolers and later they are called scholars. Department of education has defined early childhood center's student age as 3 to 5 years. However, in practice, it is seen that children from 2.5 years and above until 5 years of age or beyond go to ECED center (Karmacharya, 2015).

The prime goal of early childhood development education is to bring about holistic development of children and to facilitate them to have smooth transition to primary education. More specifically, ECD education has the following objectives: to provide an opportunity to develop physical, emotional, social, mental, moral and creative aspects, to develop habit for personal hygiene, to cultivate habit as per social norms and values, to develop positive behaviour and attitude towards school and to prepare for basic education (Khanal, 2007).

The prescribed age groups for these levels are 3-4 years for ECD/PPC. The EFA goal regarding the ECD activities is in line with the Dakar Framework for Action for EFA (2001-15). It also aims to improve the internal efficiency of primary and

basic education. ECD/PPC is also regarded as instrumental for physical, social, intellectual and emotional development of children and to ensure access for the most vulnerable and marginalized children. The major goal of EFA strategy is to increase the number of ECD centers. These ECD/PPC institutions take different forms including school-based ECD centers, community-based ECD centers and privately managed preprimary classes and schools (named variously as Nursery, Kindergarten and Montessori). There are 33,404 ECD/PPC institutions operating in Nepal (Sharma, M. 2012)

The main objective of the PPC is to prepare children for school education and make them able to care their health and keep neat and clean themselves. Playing, drawing, singing and dancing in the child friendly environment are the teaching methods are the theoretical part of the research guideline.

Knowledge and skills are acquired by the human experiences struggling with nature. There are various kinds of knowledge and skills that every individual can observe and make a thought over the living and non-living things. There are some theories regarding ECD like Cognitive Development Theory, Behavioural Theory, Psychosocial Stages Theory, Ecological System Theory, Attachment Theory, Milestones of Development Stages Theory, Social Learning Theory and Socio-Cultural Theory (Karmacharya, 2015).

Educational pedagogy in the western society of ancient Greek kept slaves for pedagogues. The slaves were even caretakers of children taking them to school and back home. They were in the charge of children ranging from 7 through late adolescence. Children had more intimacy with the pedagogue than the school master (Smith, 2012).

Pedagogy needs to be explored through the thinking and practice of those educators who accompany and care learners, and bring learning into life. Educationists and researchers have also been searching the best way of teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. Especially, in pre-primary level of schools teaching learning strategies, Montessori by Maria Montessori (Montessori (n. d.) is famous approach in the globally. Likewise, Kindergarten of Froebel, Rousseau's Natural Learning Environment and Individual Care, Pestalozzi's Child Initiative Learning and Gradation of Knowledge and Hurlock's Development of Child are in vogue in the western schools as well as in the other part of the world (Smith, 2012).

In eastern society educational pedagogy, they have their own history of educational development of pedagogy. During the *Vedic* period, memorization was the dominant pedagogical methods. Meaning, interpretation and creation were also important. In *Upanishadic* time, these methods were less important. In the *Dharmashastric* period, routing and imitation became the significant pedagogical methods. In *Puranic* period discussion was applied. In non-Vedic era, instruction became rare (Clarke, 2001).

Gurukul teaching and learning system was launched from the ancient time. Nevertheless, there was no formal education. In Nepal, formal education system was introduced in 1853 by the Rana government for their elite family members. It was a breakthrough in the history of formal education in Nepal. It was opened for public in 1951.

In the history of Pre-primary education in Nepal, ECD class started in the name of *Shishu Kaksha* under the project of Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP) in 1991-1992. Nursery, Kindergarten, ECD classes, Day care centers are operating in Nepal (Gautam, 2065 B.S.) but it could not be an integral part of education yet (historyofeducation.in.nepal.html/).

With the opening of Gurukul and formal education system in Nepal, the teaching learning pedagogies are being searched by the educationists as well as teacher researchers. Especially researchers of Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) under Tribhuvan University are working on ECD. A Resource Centre established at CERID with the support of UNICEF Nepal has been undertaking research activities and publication of ECD journal and ECD newsletter since 1997. (Educational-innovation-and-development)

In short, there are different types of teaching learning strategies like playing games, singing song, making toys with the use of clay, cotton, many other low cost materials and pictorial drawings. Guiding children on the daily life activities like cutting the nails, brushing the teeth, washing hands and legs, cleaning the utensils used for tiffin or kitchen accessories are also the teaching and learning methods.

Likewise, small project work, gardening, taking care of goods, displaying the drawings made by themselves and others, telling stories, demonstrating, modeling, reinforcing, giving feedback and questioning strategies enable a teacher to transform children's ongoing activities and coincidences with their environment into learning experiences. Early childhood education, play better role to prevent problems when it focuses not on scripted teacher-directed academic instruction rather on child initiated learning activities (Gautam, 2065 B. S.).

2. Methodology

The purpose of this research work is to interpret the pedagogical practices implemented by pre-primary school teachers in Nepali community schools.

This research work describes the pedagogical practices in pre-primary classes in Nepal specially based on Kirtipur Municipality. Two community schools of Kirtipur Resource Center (RC) in Kirtipur Municipality are chosen as a study site. Two Pre-primary teachers from two community schools and a Resource Person (RP) of Kirtipur (RC) of District Office of Education (DOE) Kathmandu, working in the research area, are as the key informant of the study. The literatures, online portal searching, open-ended interview and observation schedule have been used as tools of data collection. Electronic voice recorder has also been used as a tool.

The information has been interpreted with the inductive approach (Thomas, D.R. (2003) of data analysis system like preparation of raw data files, removing overlapping, discussion and summarizing into segments, and writing the findings.

3. Discussion

This research article depends on social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1977) which agrees behaviourist learning theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning nonetheless, he adds to ideas of meditating process occurring between stimuli and response and behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. The individuals being observed are called models. In society, children are surrounded by many influential models such as parents within the family, characters on children's TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school (McLeod, 2016).

The study also depends on socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky, which stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. This theory suggests that human learning is largely a social process. Furthermore, it focuses not only how adults and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how instruction and learning take place (Cherry, 2016).

As Bandura, children learn by meditating process between stimuli and responses, and process of observation that teachers have to create such a situation that they can observe, meditate then learn. The teachers themselves could be model and create a situation of learning by imitation. According to Vygotsky, the teachers have to create a situation where children can do more interaction with cultural activities.

During the research work, the researcher was centered on the theories of human development, social learning and socio-cultural learning that teachers are integrating or not in their class activities. The discussion was conducted on three themes: how do teachers of pre-primary classes teach their subjects? How do the students of pre-primary classes learn their subjects? And what are the dominant methods and strategies being used in the pre-primary pedagogy?

In the first theme, what teaching learning strategies do pre-primary teachers apply in their classes? The first teacher informant told that pedagogy is to let play and second teacher informant said it is a study about education or those methods using in the teaching learning class room.

In researcher's observation, it is a science of teaching, an art of teaching or craft of teaching. It is an environment created by a teacher where learning can be flourished. Pedagogues have to learn the needs, working habits and styles, interest and talents of the children, child care, simulation and learning are the main objectives of the pedagogy.

As above mentioned, an effective pedagogy includes three components of animation (live): bringing life into a situation through offering new experiences; inspire and acting with learner, (reflection): creating moment and spaces to explore lived experiences and (action): working with pupil so that they are able to make change.

In the second theme how do the students of pre-primary classes learn their subjects? The first teacher informant told that playing, storytelling, singing and dancing with gesture and showing the pictures are main strategies. Whether, second teacher informant told that Kindergarten Play way method including singing and dancing, outing, art and graphic, plantation and involving children in the kitchen activities are the best strategies.

Actually, Montessori, Kindergarten approaches are being used in the classroom, but other alternative methods like Rousseau's Natural Learning environment, Pestalozzi's Child Initiative Learning and Graduation of Knowledge, Hurlock's Child Development Theory, Multiple Intelligence Approach, Regio Emilia Approach, Five Principle Activities of the Human and Seven Primary Learning Styles, Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Lev Vygostky's Socio-Cultural Learning theories are not introduced to the teachers.

Teaching learning activities depending on eastern philosophy, are also not conducting. The teacher can develop methods and strategies according to our eastern philosophy of Gurukul system of education to explore overall development of the children in the homely environment.

In the third theme, what are the dominant methods and strategies being used in the pre-primary pedagogy? The first teacher informant told that showing materials, role playing, storytelling, singing and dancing, playing games, and seeing and drawing pictures are the major methods and strategies. Likewise the second teacher informant told that singing and dancing, art and craft, storytelling, using audio-visual materials and involving students in the learning activities are dominant methods and strategies in the classroom.

First informant responded that most of the children learn by proper singing and dancing, storytelling and clapping hands. Likewise, second informant said proper involvement in the class activities, singing and dancing, outing, making art and craft and storytelling are the children preferring strategies.

In the question of why do pre-primary teachers apply those teaching learning strategies in the classroom? The first teacher informant told that she uses these strategies because they are student centered. Whatever she is facing the problems of proper place or field, narrow room and lack of teaching learning material for conducting student centered methods and strategies. Likewise, the second teacher informant also told that these methods are student friendly to involve the children in teaching learning activities.

In the question about the extra methods and strategies they are using beyond the curriculum, the first informant replied that she has not any curriculum and does not apply any extra activities except her class routine. Whether, the second informant told that she has curriculum made by them and she wants to include parent's awareness programme as extracurricular activities. She invites the parents and tells them about the pre-primary class and purpose and importance of the ECD/PPCs.

Actually as the second informant told, those methods and strategies which participates the children in the activities of listening, watching, touching, smelling, and tasting develop their sensory organs and they learn better in practical manner. Likewise, an environment of interacting among the children and; children and society that they learn and able to live there is the best strategies for preprimary schools. Children also learn by imitation. Thus, the teacher should create a role modeling atmosphere where children can learn by imitation.

4. Conclusion

From above literature and discussion, it is concluded that ECD classes are being run in schools without trained teachers. There is a lack of proper management in accordance of the pre-primary class environment. This is caused by reluctant of thinking and enhancing ability of handling the management authorities. Teachers are trying to impart the knowledge and skill learnt from school or university classes without being formally trained. The current mechanism of the government is disinclined to supervise classes and give feedbacks. Some schools divided ECD class into different grades like play group, nursery, LKG and UKG before grade one nevertheless; some schools are being run a single ECD class. Children are kept in one class irrespective of age groups.

Trained teachers, well equipped library, proper management and uniformity of policy regarding pre-primary education must be required because preprimary class is the base of the national education system. For this, theoretical and practical knowledge and skills about teaching methods and strategies; and construction of teaching learning materials regarding ECD/PPC teachers and educational planning and management for school managerial team should be conducted through training, workshop and refresher training.

To manage ECD/PPCs of the global standard, ECD classes are to be divided into three groups. Before being enrolled in grade one, children are to be grouped separately in accordance with their age of three, four and five years. Without instructional planning the teacher cannot perform in accordance with the nature and characteristics of children, teachers are encouraged to make lesson plan before entering to the classes which, includes activities to be done before entering the class, during the class and after the class.

It is also concluded that besides Montessori and Kindergarten approaches, other alternative approaches like Rousseau's Natural Learning Environment, Pestalozzi's Child Initiative Learning and Graduation of Knowledge, Hurlock's Child Development Theory, Multiple Intelligence Approach by Howard Gardner, Regio Emilia Approach, Five principle Activities of the Human and Seven Primary Learning Styles, Bandura's Social Learning and Lev Vygostky's Socio-Cultural Learning Theories are to be implemented.

The pre-primary teacher has to identify the characteristics and developmental tasks of the child that occur during the life span of children. The teachers are to create the teaching learning environment through touching, listening, smelling, watching and tasting the things to develop children's sensory organs which ultimately develops the creativity and critical thinking skills of the child.

Likewise, group working, proper interaction among the children, among the children and social elements in the society have to be focused as teaching and learning process which develops collaboration and communication skills as well as Problem Based Learning (PBL) methods and Problem Solving Strategies. The teachers themselves can be the role model that children can learn by imitation.

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