

United Nations Children's Fund  
Regional Office for South Asia



# HAPPY LEARNING!

A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISES FOR ACHIEVING THE  
POTENTIAL OF CHILDREN

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY



# Cover Inside

# **HAPPY LEARNING!**

**A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISES FOR ACHIEVING  
THE POTENTIAL OF CHILDREN**

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## FOREWORD

When sacrifices are being made to get a child into the classroom there is nothing more discouraging than finding that the school is not providing an atmosphere where the children can achieve their potential. We know that this is one of the greatest barriers in South Asia to getting children into education and keeping them at school. Parents can not be expected to appreciate societal benefits or the principle of the right to education when their own child finishes five years of schooling and can barely read or write.

This booklet assumes that children are natural learners who want to achieve. Outlined in its pages are the basics for quality primary education as well as guidelines, principles and activities that have been proven over a number of years. It is the belief of all of us in UNICEF that a child who is happy will learn better and faster. Harnessing a child's curiosity, encouraging dialogue and the application of principles is the best way to ensure that lessons are learned.

In the course of the next two years UNICEF in 25 countries around the world, six of which are in South Asia, will be concentrating resources on and building partnerships and forcefully advocating for the goal of achieving gender parity at primary level. If fully implemented, the practises outlined in this booklet will help teachers and pupils get the most from their schooldays and assist policymakers with priorities. The result will be happier children bringing knowledge and demonstrable future potential into the family home. There could be no better argument for the right to education.



Sadig Rasheed  
Regional Director

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## INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the quality of education is inextricably linked to children's learning achievements. Focusing on what children have acquired from the learning process has emerged as a critical challenge as well as a priority for UNICEF. The demands of expanding learning opportunities have often obscured attention from the quality of learning and most importantly, what children have acquired from the learning process. Yet, getting children to school without focusing on their completion and achievements unravels the efficiency and effectiveness of resources and efforts devoted to ensuring children's access to schools. As we sharpen efforts towards ensuring that children master the skills and values that enable them to address the challenges and choices in their lives, there has been an increasing demand for information and resources on how best to do it.

This 'booklet' provides an overview of the key components that comprise an integrated approach towards ensuring a learning environment that nurtures the values, understanding, skills and experiences for children's cognitive, emotional and social development. In particular, it sheds light on how learning opportunities and resources can be translated into meaningful and effective learning experiences and outcomes for children. Of importance is the need to establish systematic linkages between the different components that comprise 'quality', which are aligned along the overarching goal of ensuring children's learning. While this 'booklet' is not exhaustive, it summarises the key messages on quality education with respect to the various components that reinforce each other to ensure children's learning achievements within the classroom.



## SOME FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND LEARNING

- All children have an eagerness to learn.
- Each child brings a different set of abilities, expectations, experiences and attitudes to school.
- Children use their existing experiences and knowledge to construct new understanding and skills. What they are able to learn will depend to some extent on what they already know.
- 'How' and 'what' children are encouraged to learn are inseparable as the learning opportunities, activities and support affects their responses, experiences and attitudes to learning and what they gain from the learning process.
- Harnessing children's curiosity and eagerness to learn is critical. Children learn best when they can be active and when they understand what they are learning. Young children's knowledge and interests are stimulated through the chance to engage practically with the activity provided.
- The most valuable methods for student learning are those that correspond to their individual developmental stages and needs. These methods cannot be uniform across students.
- Learning is a social process and planning must take into consideration the social context in which learning takes place. As children will not realise their intellectual potential in a vacuum, they should be encouraged to learn through collaborative groups with peer interaction in as natural as possible settings.
- Learning should give emphasis on the application of learning rather than covering materials/syllabus and repeating back what the teacher has said.
- Adults play a crucial role in the learning process of children. Teacher as facilitator, planner, instructor, mediator and explainer provides a non-threatening context for learning to take place.





## CORE COMPONENTS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING

What do we expect children to learn from schools? How can we support each child to develop the skills to be able to read, write, understand numerical concepts, to be analytical, to become independent thinkers and efficient communicators? Do we support curriculum development? Do we invest in teacher training? Do we develop educational materials? Do we adopt new teaching methods?

Ensuring that each child acquires the basic learning competencies highlights the importance of informing all education endeavours with an understanding of how children develop and learn. In particular, it calls for the alignment of curriculum goals, content, teaching learning methodology, assessment measures and teacher support to meet the learning needs of the individual learner – girl and boy. It entails addressing an integrated set of mutually supportive components which compose a coherent child centred teaching learning approach. These are:

- Child-centred Curriculum
- Classroom organisation and management
- Child Centred Teaching Learning Process
- Adequate and Appropriate Learning and Instructional Materials
- Teacher Support
- Supervision
- Effective Linkage between Schools and Families

While experiences have revealed tendencies to pick up one or two of the above mentioned components, it is important to note that each component complements the other in transforming classrooms to child centred teaching learning centres. No 1 single component is the 'missing link' in ensuring the basic learning outcomes of children.

# CHILD-CENTRED CURRICULUM



Primary curriculum is often divided into subjects and each subject is allotted a prescribed amount of time in which teachers are to deliver the curriculum. In most curriculum the content is decided by means of a national curriculum.

The content of the curriculum generally includes the core subjects (usually the Mother Tongue, a Second Language, Mathematics and Science), the foundation subjects usually comprises Geography/Environmental Studies, History, Religious Studies. While some of the other subjects such as Art and Design, Music, Physical Studies or even 'Information and Communication Technology' or Computers constitute an integral part of the national curriculum in many countries.

However, many believe, that '**what we learn**' is as important as '**how we learn**' them. Today, the term "curriculum" is a broader framework that encompasses the structure/content, the processes of teaching and learning, the learning environment and the learning materials, which the school provides in accordance with the educational objectives and values.

The goal of the curriculum should be to provide meaningful and realistic educational experiences for all children. The aim of the curriculum should not be to just cover the content set in the curriculum, but the amount of material or content actually learned by the students. It is therefore, a key variable shaping the quality of learning for children.

## Key features of a child-centred curriculum are:

- **Developmentally appropriate:** All children progress through a series of systematic and successive changes in the cognitive, emotional, physical and social domains that enhance their overall adaptation to the environment. The particular stages of development, which reflect the social, cognitive, emotional and physical capacities of a child play a critical role in shaping children's learning. Curriculum content must be responsive to meet the developmental needs of children at different developmental stages and ages.

- **Relevant:** Learning content and processes that are meaningful, relevant and capture the interests of young children facilitate children's learning.
- **Gender sensitive:** The curriculum also plays a key role in addressing gender issues. It should not reflect or reinforce the gender stereotypes of women and men.
- **Competency based:** Learner outcomes in the different curricular areas should be clearly defined. It is critical that the curriculum focuses on 'mastery' rather than 'content coverage', combining both knowledge and practical skills.
- **Well linked:** The key learning areas are clearly defined and linked to complement each other. In particular, it should ensure a learning process that is continuous and progressive, linking to and building on the foundation of children's acquired knowledge and skills.
- **Well spaced:** Specifying adequate time for instruction to cover the different learning areas accompanied by a clear description of achievable learning outcomes makes a tangible link between curricula goals and learner outcomes. This should be responsive to the reality that while 'all children may not accomplish learning at the same speed, they all need the same skills'.
- **Regularly reviewed and updated:** Consultations with local community regarding language of teaching learning, school calendar are important for community support for the values and skills being imparted.
- **Assessments must be linked to curricular goals and objectives:** With practical guidance to teachers on what to look for, how to document what they see and how to use assessment findings for supporting the learner.

Child-Centred Approach involves:

- 'Curricular materials' and 'learning and teaching strategies' are responsive to the needs and interest of the child.
- The teacher is viewed as facilitator and guide.

## Main Areas of Curriculum Focus

**Language development:** Language development comprises of the following set of closely related and complementary skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

### Why is it Important?

- All children are eager to communicate. Language skills are central to communication which enables children to negotiate with and navigate the world around them. It helps children to maintain social relationships, and participate in the various activities where learning takes place.
- Language is the medium through which learning takes place and therefore sets the foundation of all learning.
- Language skills facilitate the understanding and creation of new meanings enabling children to understand, respond to and cope with the demands of classroom interactions, as well as life outside the school.

### Underlying Principles: How Children Learn to Read and Write:

- Learning to read and write begins at birth and builds on children's basic need to communicate.
- Children learn to read and write at different rates and in different ways.
- Children acquire literacy through key experiences in speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Reading and writing are best learnt in contexts in which literacy skills are tied to meaning and comprehension.
- Learning to read and write is an active, constructive process. This is based on the premise that children are not passive learners but are actively engaged in constructing meaning, ideas and concepts about how the world works.
- Children learn to read and write because they enjoy it and want to emulate adults.

## Enhancing Listening and Reading Skills:

- **News session** - children relate current or recent events in their lives to their peers.
- **Story session** - reading stories to children using books with colourful illustrations and simple sentences in large fonts. Children's participation is encouraged by using their assistance in turning the page or asking them questions which make the exercise more interactive and enjoyable for them.
- **Individual reading** – one to one reading session with a teacher or an adult.
- **Shared reading** - where two or more children read to each other.
- **Word/alphabet games** - games using cards with alphabets, words or sentences that encourage children to read texts while gaining the ability to decipher alphabets and words.

## Some Key Activities to Enhance Writing Skills

- **Early writing** - children's early form of writing, such as 'scribbles', 'drawings', 'randomly putting alphabets together to form a word' or 'invented spellings of sounds' should be treated as children's active explorations of the writing systems.
- **Creative writing** - children are involved in selecting a topic, generating and synthesising ideas and thoughts which they present on paper.
- **Personal journals** - children can make a personal journal in which they write about their daily activities, events and feelings.
- **Writing texts that differ in structure and purpose** – E.g., making lists, stories, letters, poems, writing about books read and writing about feelings.
- **Books** - children can make their own books with papers and glue in which they can write stories.

I WL g to mi fns hos

*I will go to my friend's house.*

Invented spelling should be valued as an early form of writing.

## Mathematics:

Mathematics is more than the rules and operations one learns in school. It is about connections and seeing relationships in everything one does. The four thinking math standards are problem solving, communication, reasoning, and connections. Being numerate incorporates the ability to use numerical, spatial, graphical, statistical and algebraic concepts and skills in a variety of contexts. It involves interpreting, applying and communicating mathematical information in a range of practical situations.

## Working Mathematically includes five key processes:

- Questioning – to ask questions in relation to mathematical situations and experiences
- Applying strategies – to develop, select and use a range of strategies to solve problems
- Communicating - to develop appropriate language and representations to formulate and express mathematical ideas
- Reasoning – to use processes for checking solutions and giving reasons to support their answers
- Reflecting – to reflect on their experiences and to make connections with existing knowledge and understanding

## Some Issues:

- Children construct an understanding of new mathematical concepts through their own active experiences that build on what they know.
- Certain base skills have to be learnt in mathematics for children to master more complex concepts and skills. The sequencing of logical-mathematical concepts shapes children's understanding and mastery of mathematical skills and concepts.
- Grouping, sorting, comparing, ordering and part-whole relationship lays the foundations for mathematical understanding.
- For children to be confident in mathematics, to enjoy it and apply it within the classroom and outside, it is essential that as many connections are made between math learnt in the class and the ordinary everyday situations.
- Children's attitudes to math are formed early. It is imperative that children enjoy math as much as possible.

## Activities to Support Mathematics Development

- **Explorations:** Explorations are hands-on, student-centered, small-group activities in which students are introduced to various math concepts.
- **Structure lessons:** It is therefore important to structure mathematics lessons and maintain a good pace so that children can be provided daily written and oral work.
- **Problem solving:** Problem solving should be a focus in developing the children's mathematical abilities. Children learn best when mathematics is used to solve real life problems. It is more important for students when mathematics is called for, and what needs to be calculated than to simply master the mechanics of the calculation.
- **Cross-Curricular Projects:** These cross-curricular projects extend mathematics throughout the curricula. Because mastery of many curricular areas from geography and social studies to science and vocational training requires numeracy. Many mathematics educators advocate teaching numeracy skills in an integrated way rather than as an isolated subject in mathematics course.

## Science

Science, at all levels, is concerned with exploring and recognizing features of living things, objects and events in the natural and man made world and looking closely at similarities and differences, pattern and change (Schools Council and Assessment Authority- 1996:4).

The features of effective science teaching and learning in the primary classroom focuses on:

- Good learning which is motivating, experiential, interactive and focused.
- Good teaching in which the teacher is a good role model for learning and facilitates learning with focused interaction (Johnston 2002: 99).

Children develop scientific skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding through both formal and informal experiences.

The scientific skills include:

- Observations
- Explorations
- Investigations
- Data handling
- Research from secondary sources.
- Recording and reporting

**The key to effective teaching and learning in science is to facilitate acquisition of the above skills through practical experiences.**

- Through practical work, young children observe, raise questions and then attempt to answer through exploration.
- Young children, for example, can explore mixing salt or sugar with water and watching it dissolve.
- The children then can investigate what affects the rate at which salt or sugar dissolves. Investigative work helps children to clarify their ideas, make sense of the world around them and develop basic and more advanced skills in science.
- Children should be given the opportunity to reflect on their observations, explorations and investigations and interpret from them.
- The children should be encouraged to share their findings and discuss interpretations with other children.
- Children should be given opportunities to find ways of recording their findings and to present their evidence.
- Children can present scientific information in a number of ways, through drawings, tables and charts, and in speech and writing. In this way, the children are developing valuable scientific skills and understanding of the scientific process.





# CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

As formal learning mainly takes place inside the classroom, the organisation of classroom space, activities and time are vital in ensuring that children are supported to achieve the expected competencies.

**Space** – A 20ft. by 20ft. room is a minimum requirement to accommodate 30 children.

**Teacher Learner Ratio** - As the teacher must attend each child individually, a ratio of 1:30 to 35 is considered adequate to provide personalised attention and guidance for the learning of each child.

**Seating Arrangement** - The opportunity for interaction and sharing, between teacher and learners as well as among learners is a central aspect of a learner centred education. This requires abandoning the conventional row-by-row seating arrangement where children face the teacher at the front of the classroom.

There are many possibilities for arranging the classroom. Chairs and tables may be arranged to accommodate small group work, large group activity and individual activity. Chairs and tables can be grouped in three or four clusters so that six to eight children can sit in each group. These arrangements provide settings for small group instructional activities. This helps to create an informal, interactive, participatory atmosphere, conducive to the involvement of all children.

Large group or whole class activities can be done even in the cluster seating arrangement as long as all children can position their seats to face each other and the teacher. However, many large group activities, such as story reading, singing, reviewing and sitting in large circles may be conducted on the floor, or in the veranda or in the courtyard of the school.

**Activity Corners/ Areas** - The classroom can be divided into activity areas, each activity area is designed around a particular curriculum topic. The suggested activity areas/corners for primary schools are reading and writing area for language development, math area for developing numeracy skills, science area, computer area and another area for art. In each area, materials are stored in consistent locations that are accessible to children. Teachers are free to develop activity areas around other themes as well. Teachers can also change the activity areas if needed. Once the areas are selected the students or the teacher must label each corner/area and the labels will reflect the materials the areas contain and the activities for which they are intended.

### **Book Area / Corner**

- Books written in children's home and foreign language are included.
- Books depict a variety of racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, focusing on modern lifestyles and including natural-looking illustrations of people.
- References to colour in books are nonstereotyped, for example, pink clothes can be worn by a boy and blue clothes for girls. Girls can have dark complexion.
- Books represent a variety of family situations, including single-parent families, two parent families, biracial couples, step parents, children cared for by extended family members.
- Books portray women and men in realistic situations, with both girls and boys playing active roles, and both women and men seen as independent problem solvers.
- Books show children and adults with various disabilities. Disabled characters are portrayed as real people who happen to have handicaps rather than as objects of pity.

### **House Area / Corner**

- There are multiracial girl and boy dolls with appropriate skin colours, hair textures and styles, and facial features.
- Contents and arrangement of house area reflect homes found in community.
- Kitchen utensils, empty food containers reflect what children see their family members using.
- Dress up clothing is reflective of the community, including occupations of the children's parents.
- Whenever possible, child-sized wheelchairs, crutches, glasses (with lenses removed), and so forth, are available.

## Art Area / Corner

- Paint, crayons, and paper mirror skin colours of people in the school community.
- Other art materials representing the art and crafts of the community are available (for example, weaving, supplies, clay).

## Toy Area / Corner

- Toy people are multiracial and without sex-role stereotyping.
- Animal figures simulate those found in the child's area.
- Toy vehicles represent those found in the community.
- Multi-coloured blocks for developing motor skills.
- Manipulative materials, such as playdough.

## Music and Movement Area / Corner

- Music tapes and instruments are reflective of children's cultures.
- A variety of instruments are available for children's use.
- Movement games that are characteristic of the culture are played.
- Musical instruments made with locally available materials, such as two coconut shells which can be used as cymbals, or a bottle containing rice grains can be used as percussion.

## Toy Area / Corner

- Puzzles reflect the community atmosphere.
- Puzzles represent occupations of the parents and others in the community.
- Puzzles and so forth, depict multiracial people and avoid sex-role stereotyping.

## Storage Space

Storage space is needed for keeping the materials and books for the students' use. The location of storage units such as bookshelves, trunk, cabinets, and cupboard is another consideration for arranging the classroom. Children must feel that they should put back the materials that they have taken out of the storage and the teacher may sometimes need to assist them.

## Wall Decorations and Displays

Decorations for walls should be selected primarily from children's creative work. Printed posters and teacher bulletins should not dominate the classroom. There should be a balance between displays of materials given by the Education Department and displays of children's work. The teachers should select children's work for display not on the correctness of the work or the neatness but because they represent individual's best efforts and hard work.





# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## Time Management

Maximising learner's 'time on task' facilitates the learning process for children. Effective time management in the classroom is vital to ensure that both teacher and learner are able to optimise the given time period. This may be done through:

- Precise planning of teacher time and student time for group work, individual work and whole class work. This plays an important role in fostering active learner engagement during activities and smooth transitions between them.
- Organising a variety of creative and purposeful activities so that each child is occupied meaningfully all the time, while minimising disruptions due to boredom or distraction.
- Each child covers different areas of the curriculum every day.

## Lesson Plan

Supporting each child's individual learning needs should be the focus of the lesson plan. The objective is to meet specific learner outcomes rather than delivering a body of information and knowledge. Lesson plan requires:

- Making weekly lesson plans based on the fortnightly learners' assessment.
- Planning the next day's activities based on the day's work, results and challenges – this enables teachers to identify learning barriers and plan accordingly to address these needs.
- Accommodating individual differences in lesson plan, focusing on the development of certain outcomes where students have limited opportunity to demonstrate achievement. This also entails providing extension and enrichment tasks for more able pupils and additional support for those who are less secure with the work.
- Including a variety of learner assessments to provide multiple sources of information.

# TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS



Child's active engagement within the learning process is critical for learning to take place and a significant part of what one learns in classrooms depends on how it is taught. Teaching approaches that are oriented towards ensuring child's participation in the learning process, maintaining learner interest, enhancing confidence and nurturing a positive orientation to learning provides an environment where 'learning' is most likely to flourish.

Ensuring a learning environment that encourages and supports children's learning focuses on the followings:

## Creating Social and Emotional Environment

The social and emotional environment of the classroom and the interactions among children and teachers are critical to creating a quality learning environment. Within classrooms, a welcoming and non-discriminatory climate is essential for effective learning. Attitudes encouraging participation of girls, disabled children and children from other marginalized groups are essential to realise the learning potential of every child.

## Establishing Non-threatening Teacher-Pupil Relationship

The relationship between the teacher and the student plays a key role in facilitating the learning process of the learner. Close and non-threatening relationship must exist between the teacher and the learner, which transcend gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disabilities and other individual differences. Creating trust and respect for others enable children to be confident and enables children to take new challenges. Children learn best in an atmosphere of caring, where they have the opportunity to take risks and make mistakes - where risk taking and learning through experiences are effective learning strategies.

## Creating Active Learning Environment

Young children learn best when they continuously act on objects, interact with people, ideas, and experiences rather than being engaged in receptive or passive activities.

Active learning adopts a learner-centred approach where curricular materials and learning and teaching strategies, are responsive to the needs and interests of the child and where the teacher facilitates and guides children's learning.

Active learning involves:

- Creation of opportunity inside the classroom for each child to take the initiative to engage in an activity independently or in groups.
- Providing the learner with opportunities and activities to experiment, investigate and manipulate objects.
- Creating an environment where the students have the opportunity to solve problems, question, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class.
- Allowing cooperative learning, in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both positive interdependence and individual accountability.

Through the use of active learning approaches students develop the ability to think, analyse, communicate and use problem-solving skills.

## Teachers Responsive to Learner's Needs

Children are different from one another and are likely to respond differently to different approaches and treatment. Any group of children, however, homogeneous, is a collection of very different individuals. In selecting teaching methods one needs to consider the different learning abilities and stages of development of children. It is also important to recognize children's experience, their interests, their language, knowledge and skill and to identify what is likely to motivate the child.

When a single teaching method is used for a diverse group of children with differential learning needs, a significant proportion of these children are likely to fail.

## Organisation of Events/Activities in the Classroom

As a significant part of what children learn depends on how it is taught, a mix of learning options addressing the diversity of learning styles in a classroom engages students in learning activities and helps to raise learner achievement. This may consist of:

- Whole Class Activity
- Small Group Activity
- Individual Work
- Peer Learning

**Whole Class Activity:** Whole class activity has two main advantages. It allows for quick transfer of information to a large number of children and it enables everyone to be engaged in the same activity at once. It also provides a socialising function, offering safe context in which children can share an experience with others and present individual ideas to a supportive audience. This is desirable during opening exercises, story reading, singing, movement, and dance activities. It is particularly useful for starting a new topic and for reviewing and sharing of children's work and experiences.

In a classroom of children with different learning abilities, lessons may be too advanced for slow learners or too repetitive for the quick learners in whole class activity. This may be offset by group activities, which are also valuable methods of engaging students in meaningful learning. A combination of personalised and small group learning ensures that children learn on their own, with guidance and task related feedback from the teacher, as well as with others, building on both cognitive and social skills through co-operation, sharing and negotiation. It also allows each child to learn at her/his pace and ability.

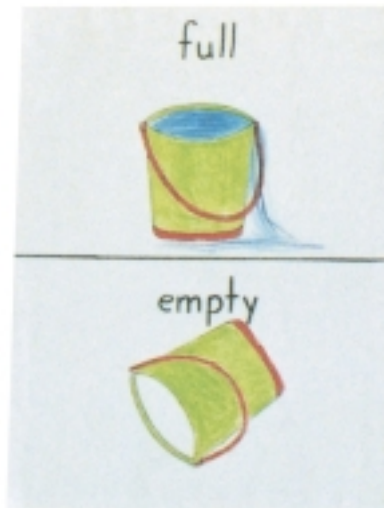
**Small Group Activity:** The class can be divided into three or four groups. Each group works at a table or an activity corner/area on a different instructional activity. Students should be able to work in small groups dispersed around the room, or even the veranda, porch or the schoolyard. Teachers will choose to have each of the groups working on the same activity, or they may have the small groups work on different topics at the same time, e.g. language in one group, mathematics in another, science in another and computer or art in the fourth group. The teacher rotates around each group, spending more time in the groups, which require greater support.



Small groups can be of same ability or mixed ability or based on friendship. Ability grouping consist of individuals at the same developmental stage of learning. They are given work to match their ability. However, research indicates that ability grouping leads to lower expectations and lower outcomes for the children in the lower groups (High/Scope 1992 p.42). In fact, working with mixed groups, teachers can provide highly individualised attention to children with varied strengths and interests. Sometimes friendship groups can be formed but in such cases the groups may consist of single sex. Research also suggests that mixed groups tend work better than single sex groups (Dean 2001 p. 177). Moreover, group membership should be flexible, changing periodically to provide varied work interactions.

**Individual Work:** At times a child will work at individual tasks that may be chosen by the child or the teacher. The task could arise from topic work or a class activity or be a development of child's own ideas. A child can work at her/his own pace.

**Peer Learning:** This is more effective when children work in pairs, where children can be encouraged to help each other, discuss how to tackle a problem, plan together for written work, teach each other and so on.



# LEARNING MATERIALS



The use of appropriate and adequate teaching learning materials has been significant in supporting and sustaining children's learning abilities and outcomes. There is a positive relationship between pupil achievement and the availability of textbooks, supplementary reading materials and other learning materials. While supporting learners in their learning process, supplementary teaching learning materials, such as storybooks, workbooks, and charts can also contribute to effective classroom management by relieving pressures on teachers. The primary aspects of teaching learning materials are:

- Age and developmentally appropriate
- Challenging
- Interesting
- Colourful and attractive
- Relevant
- Diverse range of learning materials, such as, books, charts, games, and manipulative materials to allow different activities.

Children in the early primary school years are attracted to books that have large font size, simple sentences, colourful, minimum text with maximum illustrations and vocabulary familiar to young children with supportive illustrations. Content in the textbooks should also be culturally sensitive, free from gender stereotyping, portray minority groups and ethnic cultures, and include children with disability. The content of textbooks needs to be relevant to the life and environment of children. The topics must be age-appropriate, interesting and stimulating to the children.

Even if published materials for learners are available, some of the most effective materials that facilitate pupil learning are teacher-made products from local materials. (UNICEF Working Paper: Curriculum). Teachers can prepare flash cards for words, syllables, characters or mathematics by writing on dried banana leaf bark or similar substance. The learners can also produce their own reading materials. The teachers and children can collect materials that are readily available in their homes or in the environment- bottle caps, plastic bottles, twigs, pebbles, stones, seeds, plants and sticks.



# LEARNER ASSESSMENT

## Why Assessment?

Assessment should be used as a tool to improve education quality and systems. Assessment of student performance should be used to provide teachers with the information they need to improve student learning.

The purpose of assessment include the following:

- to improve the quality of teaching learning inside the classroom;
- to help children to set targets for future learning;
- to report on children's progress and provide summative information on their achievements to parents, researchers and decision makers; and
- to enable teachers to evaluate their own practice and performance.

## Forms of Assessment

**Continuous Assessment:** Teacher needs to assess and record each child's progress continuously in order to ascertain what the child knows, understands, and what s/he can do and where s/he needs to go next. Such informal assessment helps the teacher plan her lessons on the basis of the actual needs of each individual child. Each child is different with unique capabilities. Each child needs special attention so that s/he can proceed according to her/his ability and pace. Continuous assessment, thus, ensures progression and continuity. It helps the teacher to plan based on not only what the child knows but also on how learning needs to be organised in the next stage.

**Summative Assessment:** Summative assessment determines what a child has achieved at the end of planned period or course. Currently, mid term and/or end of year examinations form one of the only assessment tools marking the learning process of every student. Such assessment techniques are used as tools for 'selection' rather than 'support'. Furthermore, performance on such exams are inadequate to demonstrate the level of competence and knowledge of the learner.

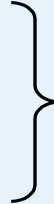
## Some Principles of Assessment

1. Establish precisely why you are assessing children. Enabling them to progress should have a high priority in this decision.
2. Make sure the assessment allows pupils to demonstrate the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes.
3. Ensure that your method of assessment is going to be able to capture not only what the child does not know, but more importantly what s/he knows and is able to do.
4. Do not limit assessment to academic attainment alone. The assessment should capture the social and emotional developments of the child.
5. As far as possible, try to make assessment an integral part of teaching and learning process.

### Learner Outcome

Measurable learner outcomes in terms of Knowledge and Skills in:

- Independent reading/writing
- Problem solving capacity in real life situation using mathematical concepts
- Ability to think critically
- Ability to take decisions
- Ability to record and report
- 
- Change in attitude and behaviour
- Increase in self confidence
- Increase in self-esteem





## TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers are the primary agents in translating child-centred teaching learning in the classroom. Teachers must have mastery of both their subject matter and pedagogical skills. Teachers also require support to develop the understanding and skills for child-centred teaching learning. Furthermore, opportunities for upgrading knowledge and skills of teachers are important for teachers to continuously meet the diverse learning challenges of students.

### These include:

- Building a unified teacher education and training system, which views pre-service and in-service learning as a continuum.
- Practice oriented teachers training, with sufficient training materials, hand-outs, teaching aids and reference books.
- Making in-service training a continuous process of educational renewal. Teachers need to be trained in a real classroom situation so that they can translate their theoretical knowledge into practical realities of classroom interactions.

Teachers need supportive working conditions to provide quality education. The condition of infrastructure, availability of textbooks and other learning materials, and class sizes influence teacher to maintain positive attitudes towards teaching and learning. Teachers' remuneration also matters- it increases motivation and are likely to prevent many teachers to take up other jobs.

Teachers should have the opportunity to work with colleagues to improve schools and advance knowledge and practice in their schools. Teachers from neighbouring schools can meet regularly each month to share experiences and classroom techniques, solve problems and provide mutual support and in-service training. Teachers can also learn from each other in developing learning materials or adapt materials to local circumstances.

# SUPERVISION



The Head teacher (or Headmaster/Principal) is in the best position to undertake the supervision responsibilities of her/his school. Schools should no longer be 'inspected' instead they should be 'supervised'. The focus should no longer be administrative efficiency of the school but more importantly, primacy of learning.

## The purpose of supervision is to ensure that –

- the defined process of teaching learning inside the classroom is in place;
- the environment outside the classroom is safe and friendly; and most importantly;
- that each child is learning;
- efficient and rationale implementation of school rules both for the teacher and the learner;

## Principles of supervision

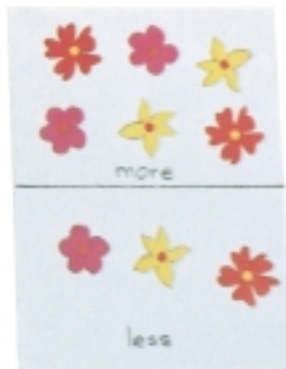
- A Headmaster/Principal should spend half a day five days a week supervising teaching learning inside classrooms.
- Do not find fault of the teacher, instead, work alongside the teacher so that s/he could see what was not being done correctly.
- Focus on the teaching-learning process inside the classroom.
- Supervise and record progress made by each individual child in each area of the curriculum.
- Supervise availability and effective use of wide range of learning materials and resources inside the classroom.
- Supervise availability of wide selection of developmentally appropriate reading materials inside each classroom.
- Ensure that each child is safe and healthy.
- Ensure sustained professional development of the teacher.



## COMMUNITY

Linking schools with the community is crucial, as schools do not exist in a social vacuum. Active local participation in the governance and management of schools has been important for the success of schools. Consultation with local communities leads to efficient planning where schools are located in areas that will not encourage children to attend schools. Where education is not valued by parents and communities, engaging local stakeholders in mobilizing support is important. As many families in rural areas depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods community participation in the management of schools and the development of the school calendar is critical to children's attendance. School year should have the flexibility to allow children who have had to drop out for short periods of time to rejoin and continue learning.

Furthermore, greater participation of parents builds closer contact between school life and family life - as the home environment exerts a powerful effect on what children learn within and outside school. Families that provide stimulating, language-rich, supportive environment defy the odds of socio-economic circumstance. Family's relationships, practices and patterns of life- are more powerful predictor of academic learning than the family's status. Schools can work with families to improve the curriculum of the home, regardless of the family's economic situation.



# FINALLY



Bringing together the many dimensions that contribute to educational quality is not a difficult task. It requires knowledge, resources, commitment and willingness to change. It needs political and administrative support of quality education system. This will ensure reallocation of financial and human resources towards education that realizes the full potential of every child.







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