



**Special Issue of First International Conference on Advancements in Research and Development
Need For Learning Materials at Early Grades as Per Nai Talim in J&K –
An Empirical Study**

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Abstract

Learning materials undoubtedly enrich teaching in every stage or grade of learning. Such materials keep children engaged in the multi-faceted learning, thereby helping to build their abilities for the application of knowledge. Teaching and learning materials have proven to be strong forces to support learning of children. Quality learning materials are developed in accordance to different curricular frameworks that connect various disciplines of teaching and learning with big ideas, themes, and concepts. As such they are the result of the field testing and refinement carried out carefully. Various curriculum frameworks and policies have given due consideration to the supportive materials vis-à-vis learning outcomes, selection, content, area, grade/ level appropriateness, age appropriateness, access and storage etc within constrained environments. Keeping the importance of Learning materials in view the study on the topic was carried out in District Ganderbal of J&K with a sample size of 30 teachers working in KG sections.

Keywords: *Cone of Experiences, Experiential Learning, J&K, Learning Material, Nai Talim*

1. Introduction

The main aim of education is over all development of child. The focus is to provide joyful, child centered, play and activity based learning environment. Education must emphasis on the holistic development of children and prepares them for challenges in life. The demands of the curriculum set by the formal schools are expected to be provided through necessary maturation and readiness. In order to achieve goal of happiness, concern and expression of own self, children need space to be vigorous, to be alone and/ or to be part of certain active group. He or she needs materials, which are appropriate to his

or her size, age, ideas and feelings. The education of children under the age of six years was not given any due care. The development of all their faculties was taken for granted by the school teachers, the parents and the community both at schools and at homes. In 1937, Gandhiji proposed for new education system, Nai-Talim or Basic education, based on sound ideology and hands on experience. Initially, it was silent about preschool education, but later on he advocated pre-basic education, covering the children less than seven years. According to Gandhiji education can be termed as good if it addresses the spiritual, intellectual and physical development of the

children. Pre basic stage of education is divided according to the needs of the four sub stages, viz;

Stage1- Conception to birth;

Stage2- Birth to two and half years;

Stage3- Two and half years to four years; and

Stage4- Four years to Seven years.

After four years of age, children can participate in various activities of daily living, like cleaning, watering plants, washing utensils, measuring and weighing, fetching water, drawing and painting etc. At this stage, individual likes and dislikes of children must be understood by the teacher. The curriculum must lay emphasis on craft, activities and construction of knowledge during preschool level. Correlation in teaching methods and approaches is important in basic education as it binds education with child's life. He discouraged the use of many books, especially books with formal writings. Especially the first year in primary school should be completely without books and the teacher should use oral method to save the child from a "Tyranny of words". The teacher has to play the role of a mother. She has to nurture the child, live with him and bring him to the level of greater maturity. He further emphasized classical principles of ethics and maturity in general rather than religious teaching. In carrying out the effective education of children, cooperation between the teacher and parents is a must. Since majority of the children are from poor or middle class income group, preschool education must not be expensive. Only then it can address the majority of children. Development of self efficiency in children is to be taken care of as play is the medium of learning and demands a child to be active, creative and playful. So, a teacher having clear understanding is needed to help children explore and learn the lessons of life from their immediate environment. The more exposure children receive at this stage, the healthier will be the outcome in the long run. The source of such exposure is the school with sound management, capable personnel, enough space and proper learning materials.

National Curriculum Framework, 2005 also emphasizes to make learning an exciting experience by adopting constructivist approach in teaching-learning processes and to move away

from the textbooks and four walls of classroom. This directs the attention towards key aspect of constructivism i.e availability of diverse forms of learning materials (LMs) to support teachers during pedagogic activities. Learning materials (LM) are tools used by teachers to help children to learn concepts easily and efficiently. Learning materials (LMs) are such effective tools in the hands of teachers which help children to learn concepts easily, effectively and efficiently. As Lal (2011) points out that in our educational system the presence of LMs have been observed since ancient times. LMs make our classroom learning real, practical and full of fun thereby helping teachers to illustrate and explain a skill, fact or idea in a better way. It helps in relieving learners from anxiety, fear and boredom and so brings novelty and freshness in teaching learning process. Learning takes place in active and exciting environment and as such range of learning experiences are provided to children from direct to indirect. Use of learning materials prepared out of household waste, trash or from the ones readily available in our immediate surroundings like, bits of paper, cardboard, thermocole, scissors, glue, old newspapers, magazines, metal, wood, plastic, rubber, clay, plaster of paris (POP) etc. has been found out to be effective. Once teacher brings a situation to use learning material, it proves to be an achievement as children come up with newer ideas to create more. Wider use of learning aids helps to keep our immediate environment clean apart from giving a boost to creativity and involvement of children.

As has been arranged by Edgar Dale (1969) 'Cone of Experiences', the learning experiences shift or raise from direct to indirect, known to unknown and concrete to abstract. The most effective method being direct, purposeful and concrete learning experiences like hand on experience or field experience is kept at bottom while as use of verbal and textual symbols like reading or listening is the least effective method, so stands at the top. As activity based learning results in 90% retention, teachers should strive for direct and first hand experiences during classroom transactions. For example, If a teacher wants to teach parts of a plant, he or she can bring a real plant to the class, which children can see,

smell, touch, and handle. He or she may also bring a model or chart of plant or explain with the help of diagram on chalkboard/ smart board, mobile phone etc. Since all the strategies of the example cited above are not similar and therefore, learning will not be similar as well. So, learning outcomes are highly dependent on the learning experiences met through learning materials.

Education Officer, Principal DIET and District Resource Group extended pre-school concept to District and Zonal model schools. The teachers of these schools were trained in district level training programmes regarding curriculum transactions, material development and exploration apart from innovative practices. The number of teachers trained in these ten schools is 30.

2. Need and background of the study

Early grades are the foundation years for the development of child in every respect. In other words we can put it as, the holistic development of children is based upon the exploration and experimentation in early years . Since these are the crucial years and more than 80% brain development takes place at this stage. The stage prepares children for the formal schooling and can be effective only if sound and healthy experiences are provided to the children. In light of this need to study the effectiveness and proper usage of learning material at this stage is felt.



Fig.1.DALE’S Cone of Experiences

In 1945, pre-basic education was started in the village of Sevagram, Wardha, in the state of Maharashtra, based on the ideas of Gandhiji as the first experiment in preschool education. In the state of J&K, after thorough study of various programmes for this age group, an initiative on pilot basis was taken by the Department of School Education, Kashmir wherein 60 model KG schools (5 in each district) were set up. Initially a team of State Resource Group , Early Childhood Care and Education, formulated a road map in this regard. After a series of meetings and discussions with experts in the area the state government took initiative so as to build strong foundation. After the identification of schools, necessary infrastructure was established and teachers were trained in the required set up. This gave kick start to two years of pre-schooling. Community mobilization programmes helped in the enrolment of children in these schools. As per orders 3 teachers and one helper out of existing staff of the school or neighbourhood school were exclusively spared for this section with target enrolment of 50 children per school. In district Ganderbal, Chief

3. Review of Literature

Availability of literature review in this area summarises when the needs are fully satisfied, children feel comfortable and encouraged. Understanding of concepts takes place in place of rote learning. Non - utilisation of available resources by teachers make children only master concepts without in-depth understanding. But when the teachers use learning material, children are able to relate their learning with the real life. Learning materials (LM) enable children to open up their mind, explore their creativity as well as thinking besides the participation of children in classroom transactions. It also improves teacher-self learning and the work become regular and Joyful for the children. It depends upon the teacher effectiveness, competence and talent that he or she can use Learning Material effectively. Montessori comments that the use of concrete learning material results in learning enhancement among children besides proper development of five senses.

Dewey J (1959) reports learning ought to be both active and constructive as it is a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It also develops

social contacts through a joint activity within which people consciously refer to materials, tools, ideas, capacities, and applications of peers. He further laid emphasis on interaction and curriculum designing in such a manner that would enable children face challenges of a community he or she lives in. He favours democracy, independence and real experiences in and outside classroom.

Fukkink and Lont (2007) in one of the studies concluded that teacher competencies are improved through specialized training. Such trainings also have positive effects on their attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Rich and Drummond (2006) opine that when children get engaged in such activities that attract them the most or arrest their attention, the first hand learning experiences takes place. Such learning helps to fuel imagination of children and quench their thirst for understanding.

Smith, Cowie and Blades (2003) express that the children ask questions and form concepts when they get a chance to explore, touch, manipulate and experiment with different materials. As such it is the responsibility of teachers to provide rich environments to their children.

Joyce and Showers (2002) state that the trainings provided in disciplined training settings result in opportunities for trainees to practice key skills effectively.

Martinez-Beck and Zaslow (2006) are of the opinion that professional development of practising pre-school educators is considered critical indeed to the quality of experiences afforded to children.

Ministry of Education in 2008 reported that children learning mature holistically in Early Childhood Development Education centers. It further states that children needs, enjoyment and satisfaction during play should be met through their immediate learning environment associated with the use of learning resources like toys, dolls, charts and pictures. These resources help children relate the real life aspects with what they learn. Learning resources enable children to open up their mind, explore their creativity as well as thinking for which the teacher ought to ask them questions leading to the related resources.

Muithungu (2003) expressed that through collection and donation materials can be made

available by parents and the community as a whole within the locality. This can be successfully achieved by organizing different programmes like material making day in schools. NCCA, (2004) published that outdoor and indoor learning environments should be motivating and inviting to all children so that they are encouraged to explore all the possibilities for fun adventure, challenge and creativity. Ibrahim (2017) states everyone has right to receive quality education – the form of education that fits best to cater present and future needs of the society. Education is a unique kind of exchange between a teacher and a student that contributes to the development of both, simultaneously.

4. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the present study are designed in a way:

1. To study the availability of learning material at early grades in schools.
2. To evaluate the views of teachers regarding learning material at early grades.
3. To assess the use and involvement of learning material by teachers in pedagogical transactions as per Nai Talim.

5. Hypothesis

It is hypothesised that teaching learning material used at early grades stage in the schools of District Ganderbal is relevant to Experiential Learning – Nai Talim.

6. Research Design and Methodology

6.1 Sample

The universe of the study taken was School teachers of Ganderbal district working in the schools having KG sections. This included 5 Model kindergarten Schools, 4 zonal model schools and 1 District Model school.

6.2 Sampling Method

Selective sampling method was utilised where teachers of the above listed schools were contacted individually.

6.3 Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used to collect data regarding the use of learning material by school teachers at early grades. The study was

conducted on the 100 teachers of government schools in Ganderbal district of J&K.

7. Tool Used

The researcher developed 24 statements questionnaire as per Experiential Learning Concept which was then divided under three headings, viz, availability, involvement and usage. The tool devised was distributed among 137 teachers but only 113 teachers responded out of which 13 tools were found irrelevant. The tool helped to collect the information in accordance to the demand of the study. The data, thus collected, is analysed and interpreted using statistical techniques.

8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The aim of the study is to explore the accessibility and availability of TLM, level of involvement of teachers in use of learning material, to assess the utility of same during early grades teaching stage. Table 1 reveals the availability of LM for early grades in their schools. Higher percentage (more than 50%) of teachers said that they don't have sufficient amount of learning materials for the children in early grades while about less than 50% teachers report availability of such material in their schools. 75 % teachers recorded that there is no expertise for preparation of learning materials in the school while 25% teachers agreed regarding the availability of such teachers. 30% teachers are not trained regarding the use of learning materials for the early grades while 70% agree to have undergone trainings of such kind. 89% teachers feel that there is any requirement of special training for administering teaching learning material at early grades against 11% teachers who do not feel any such kind of need. This shows that the teachers are not fully aware about the basic underlying principle of education at early stage, though 99% teachers feel that the learning material stimulates learning in early years.

Table 1: Availability of LM at Early Grades in Ganderbal (N=30)

S.No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Is sufficient teaching learning material available at early grades	47	53

	to carry out pedagogical processes?		
2	Is there any expert teacher for preparation of learning materials readily available in the school?	25	75
3	Are teachers trained in use of learning materials?	42	58
4	Do you opine the requirement of special training for administering learning materials at early grades?	89	11
5	Do you feel learning materials stimulate learning in early years?	99	1

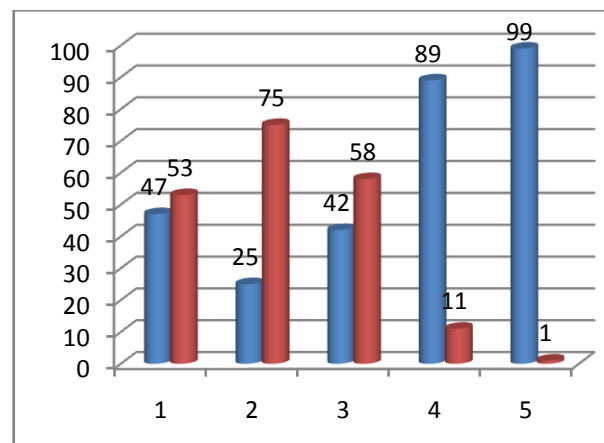


Fig.2. Availability of LM at Early Grades in Ganderbal (N=30)

While interacting with teachers on one to one basis it was revealed that availability of LM helps children understand a particular concept effectively, joyfully, without burden and has long lasting impact. The burden of work and effort on teachers is also reduced. In short, appropriate use of learning materials results in an activity based and learner centered class. It also came up that most of the teachers are unaware about the importance of usage of learning materials for the children as it needs special and minute observation of the teachers. It further was felt that a long term or need based training should be imparted to the teachers of the early stage on usage different teaching learning materials so that they can prepare the same at the low cost or no cost level.

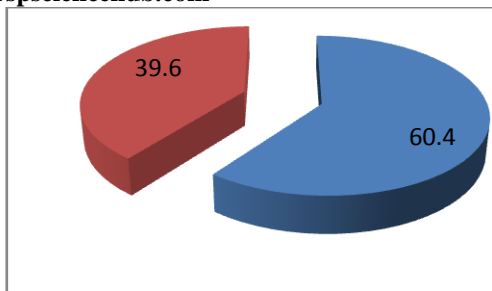


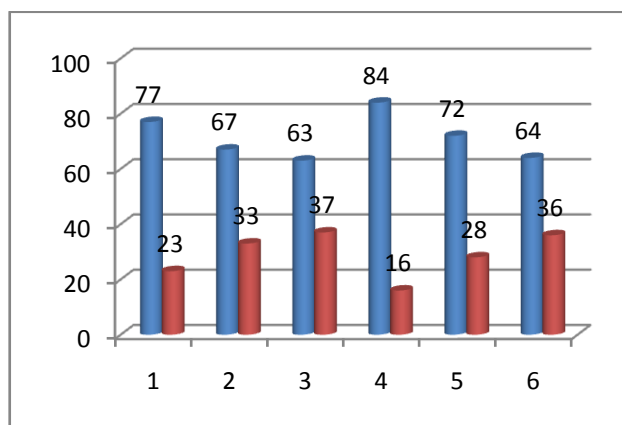
Fig.3. Pie Diagram Of Availability of LM at Early Grades in Ganderbal (N=30)

Table 2: Availability of Domain Appropriate LM at Early Grades in Ganderbal (N=30)

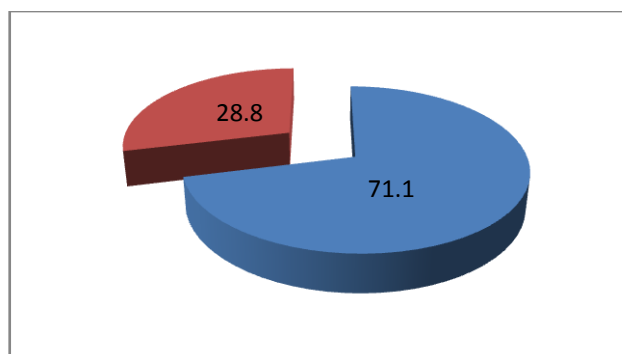
S.No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Is cognitive development learning material available at your school?	77	23
2	Is physical development learning material available at your school?	67	33
3	Is fine motor development learning material available at your school?	63	37
4	Is pre number skills learning material available at your school?	84	16
5	Is language and emotional development learning material available at your school?	72	28
6	Do you feel your school has sufficient material available for the formation of different concept at early year's stage?	64	36

Table 2 shows availability of LM in schools as per developmental domains. 77% teachers agree regarding the availability of LM for cognitive development in their school while only 23% report against it. Regarding the availability of LM for physical development 67% teachers report about the availability while 33% teachers say that the same is not present in their school. LM for fine motor development availability is reported by 63% teachers while 37% teachers are of the opinion of non-availability of any such kind of

material. As regards availability of LM for pre-number skills 84% teachers replied in positive while 16% teachers negated the question. 28% teachers have shown negative response regarding the availability of LM for language and emotional development whereas 72% teachers have responded positively. Agreement of 64% teachers has been recorded with respect to the question regarding availability of material for the formation of different concepts at early year's stage as against disagreement of 36% teachers.



Bar Chart of Table 2



Pie Chart of Table 2

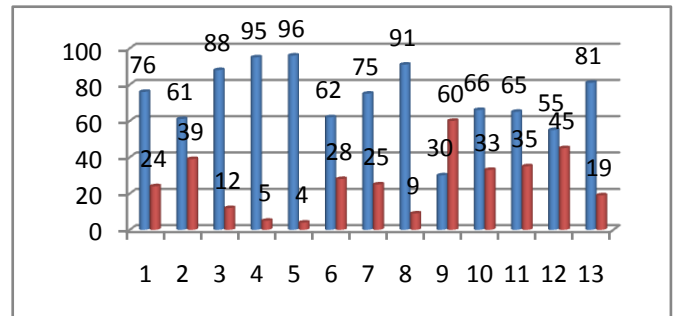
When personal interviews with the respondent teachers were analyzed on the availability of learning materials as per different developmental domains (Table 2), it was observed that although there are different learning materials available at the early grades supplied by the Directorate of School Education Kashmir, still most of the learning materials were absent and teachers were motivated to use whatever possible they could arrange in the classroom interaction. Although higher percentage of the teachers responded that they have learning materials for cognitive development, physical and motor development,

pre number skills, language and emotional development concept but the teachers were not confident enough to specify the learning materials as per developmental domains, when asked to. The reasons may be inadequate training regarding use of learning materials and clarity of concepts among teachers regarding this age group. 36 percent of the teachers felt that the learning materials available in the classroom are not sufficient for the formation of different concepts at early grades but discussion with the teachers reported that teachers were given to understand the use of available local resources as LM for different domains, so no need of special LM was felt. It also came out during interaction with teachers that Mathematics Kits and Science Kits have been supplied to these schools by the Chief Education Officer of District Ganderbal which is seldom put to use at this stage.

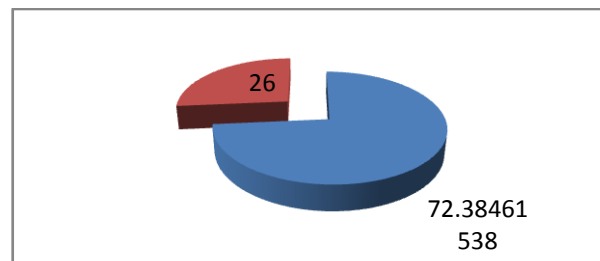
Table 3 : Involvement/Usage of LM at Early Grades in Ganderbal (N=30)

7	Do you ensure learning material not to be expensive, so as to reach the majority of children?	75	25
8	Do you feel children learn things through the medium of play and activities?	91	9
9	Do you attempt to develop self-efficiency in children?	30	60
10	Do you understand likes and dislikes of child regarding learning material?	66	33
11	Do you lay emphasis on constructivism rather than rote learning?	65	35
12	Do you prefer oral method over written one?	55	45
13	Are opportunities being provided to give vent to emotions of children through creative drama, role play, music and movement and creative activities?	81	19

S.No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you feel attention can be given to children in inclusive way when learning material is used?	76	24
2	Are you sure that learning material available in the classroom is used by all the children?	61	39
3	Are you sure that use of learning material makes environment joyful and learning effective?	88	12
4	Are you sure that by use of learning material children learn faster rather than traditional methods?	95	5
5	Do you feel by the use of learning material children learn songs, rhymes and stories more easily	96	4
6	Do teacher and parents cooperate in provision of learning material?	62	28



Bar Chart of Table 3



Pie Chart of Table 3

Table 3 shows involvement/ usage of LM in early grades to carry out pedagogical processes. 76% teachers agree regarding the inclusive attention

given to children while using learning materials while only 24% report against it. Regarding usage of learning materials available in the classroom by all the children 61% teachers are sure about it while 39% teachers say that they are not sure in about it. By the usage of learning material environment becomes joyful has been reported by 88% teachers while 12% teachers are not in favour of the opinion of any such kind. As regards children learn faster by use of learning materials rather than traditional methods of teaching 95% teachers replied in positive while 5% teachers negated the question. 4% teachers have shown negative response regarding children learn songs, rhymes and stories more easily by use of learning materials whereas 96% teachers have responded positively. Agreement of 62% teachers has been recorded with respect to the question regarding cooperation of teachers and parents in provision of learning material as against disagreement of 28% teachers. 75% teachers agree regarding the learning material not being expensive reaches the majority of child population while only 25% report against it. Regarding learning through the medium of play and activities 91% teachers are sure about it while 9% teachers say that they are not sure in about it. Attempt to develop self-efficiency in children is reported by 30% teachers while 60% teachers are not in favour of the opinion of any such kind. As regards understanding likes and dislikes of children regarding learning material 66% teachers replied in positive while 33% teachers negated the question. 35% teachers have shown negative response regarding laying of emphasis on constructivism rather than rote learning whereas 65% teachers have responded positively. Agreement of 55% teachers has been recorded with respect to the question regarding preference of oral method over written one as against disagreement of 45% teachers. Regarding opportunities being provided to give vent to emotions of children through creative drama, role play, music and movement and creative activities only 19% teachers are of negative opinion while 81% teachers have positive opinion regarding the same.

Discussion and interaction with teachers is summed up in the following lines. Teachers believe learning of activities like songs, rhymes,

stories, numbers, colours and shapes is faster and quicker by use learning materials. It was observed during the survey that the teachers are personally involved in these activities, only some of them hesitate to sing/ recite the rhymes with action and have rigidity to their body movement. A wise teacher has a wide acquaintance of songs and rhymes which they enjoy with the children. They encourage the use of music and rhymes through spontaneous expressions both inside and outside the classroom rather than follow a stereotyped procedure. The teachers use personal android phones for such activities so that children learn better through repetition. A good learning programme offers many learning opportunities for the children. Only about 50% of the teachers could confidently say that they are competent enough to use the learning materials for children. It was observed that only model Kindergarten Schools were provided expensive equipments and materials on pilot basis. However, much depends on the imagination, resourcefulness and creativity of the teachers. If resourceful, the teachers can have a good collection of learning materials for children from the immediate environment. Instead of selecting sophisticated and expensive material. The trained teachers are always in search of the indigenous material available in surroundings. Teachers also find it difficult to implement Experiential Learning and National Curriculum Framework 2005 in real sense because of the difference in the opinions of Head of the Institutions and other officers of hierarchy. Stress is given on written work and maintenance of notebooks which is against the principles of learning.

Conclusion

The above interpreted data can be concluded under the following three headings:

9.1 Availability of LM in early grades

- 47% teachers report sufficient learning materials available at early grades to carry out pedagogical processes.
- 75% teachers say no expertise is available for preparation of learning materials in the schools.

- 70% teachers say they are trained in use of learning materials.
- 89% teachers feel that there is requirement of special training for administering learning material at early grades
- 99% teachers feel that the learning material stimulates learning in early years.

9.2 Availability of domain appropriate LM at early grades

- 77% teachers agree regarding the availability of LM for cognitive development in their school.
- 67% teachers report about the availability of LM for physical development.
- 63% teachers say LM for fine motor development is available.
- 84% teachers replied in positive as regards availability of LM for pre-number skills.
- 28% teachers have shown negative response regarding the availability of LM for language and emotional development.
- 64% teachers have positive response regarding availability of sufficient learning material in the area of formation of different concepts at early years.

9.3 Involvement/usage of LM at early grades

- 76% teachers agree regarding the inclusive attention given to children while using learning materials.
- 61% teachers are sure about usage of learning materials available in the classroom by all the children.
- 88% teachers say learning is joyful when the learning materials are being used.
- 95% teachers replied in positive as regards faster learning among children by the use of learning materials rather than traditional methods of teaching.
- 96% teachers have responded positively regarding use of learning materials help children learn songs, rhymes and stories.

- 28% teachers disagree regarding cooperation of teachers and parents in provision of learning material.
- 75% teachers agree regarding the learning material not being expensive and so reach the majority of children.
- 91% teachers are sure about learning through the medium of play and activities.
- 30% teachers report attempt to develop self-efficiency in children.
- 66% teachers replied in positive as regards understanding likes and dislikes of children regarding learning material.
- 35% teachers have shown negative response regarding lying of emphasis on constructivism rather than rote learning.
- 55% teachers have agreed with respect to the question regarding preference of oral method over written one.
- 81% teachers have positive opinion regarding opportunities being provided to give vent to emotions of children through creative drama, role play, music and movement and creative activities.

It is evident from the above results that there are still some teachers who feel that they are not yet competent enough in use and involvement of learning materials for early years. It also reveals that almost all the teachers feel that learning materials are very important and stimulates learning at the initial stages. Therefore majority of the teachers showed interest in advanced training and exposure visits for effective use of learning materials. At the same time they also feel that some adequate quantity of learning materials must be prepared or purchased for creating a child centric environment. The study concludes learning materials help the children develop holistically hence smooth transition to formal schooling. This is because children get attracted to them, hold the interest and facilitate development in all domains. During the absence of the teacher in class children can be kept busy thereby developing their psychomotor skills. A comprehensive curriculum that covers domains of language/literacy, math, science, socio-emotional skills, cognitive development, health, physical development etc is in place but has not been circulated to all the schools, yet.

Suggestions and recommendations

- ❖ The present study recommends that the availability of learning material should be increased for enhancement of the learning levels of children.
- ❖ There is need to increase the involvement of teachers in preparation of learning material.
- ❖ Need to motivate teachers to use age appropriate and indigenous learning material for the development of critical thinking and scientific temper.
- ❖ Head of the institutions need to ensure the teachers use appropriate teaching learning material during their teaching learning process,
- ❖ Need of timely and random monitoring mechanism by the ECCE expert
- ❖ Holistic On-the-job training and exposure visits in this area should be devised by DIET Ganderbal to reduce loss of time.
- ❖ Dissemination of comprehensive curriculum in place in the state needs to be implemented effectively
- ❖ Maximum class size less than or equal to 25 children as per norms ought to be put in force.
- ❖ Child teacher ratio of 10:1 is to be ensured.
- ❖ At least one free meal or snacks be served on daily basis.
- ❖ Timely health screening/ referral for children should be undertaken.
- ❖ Co-ordination and convergence with Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and Health Department is necessary at this level.
- ❖ The individual interests of child to be taken into account.
- ❖ Social relationship and freedom to choose any local craft should be put into force.
- ❖ Variety of learning to be ensured through special activities like painting, pasting, science and nature experiences.
- ❖ Children should be put in challenging situations to ensure the domain of life skills for which teachers must be in constant updation of knowledge.

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