

Reports

Workshop on Material Development

June 25-30, 2012

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Background

The Sansarg group comprises a team of people working together on different aspects of education ranging from theatre to teacher education. In collaboration with University School Resource Network (USRN), the team has successfully created a functional network between schools, teachers, education colleges and the Department of Education (CIE) of the University of Delhi, an outcome of which is a series of material development workshops in the past few years. These workshops focus on understanding the use of the current material, as well as developing new material for pedagogical use in schools. The material developed in these workshops has been 'tried' in some schools that were part of the USRN project. It is theme-based and most of these themes cater more to the areas of Language and Environmental Studies.

This six-day workshop on Material Development, conducted at District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Daryaganj from 25 to 30 June 2012, was a continuation of the previous workshops but with a more focused goal—reviewing the material developed till date, and improving upon it. During the course of the workshop there were numerous discussions on the theoretical foundations of material use in classrooms, particularly in light of NCF 2005 and the syllabus based on it. The participants included trainee teachers from various courses such as B Ed, DIET and ETE.

Objectives

The sessions of the workshop were planned in such a way that 'Material Development' was not seen as a solitary process, unrelated to the basic philosophical and psychological tenets of the teaching-learning process. Another underlying objective was to counter the prevalent notion of material being limited to something concrete, as well as limited by the particular pedagogy areas. With these objectives, the sessions were basically of three kinds: 1) Theory-based (discussions around NCF, CCE, etc.); 2) Activity-based (material development); and 3) Review and analysis (film-screening, material review, etc.). These sessions were not restricted to any specific category.

Sessions

Day one began with the participants sharing previous teaching experiences, along with the resource material/teaching aids used by them. The discussion brought out many assumptions and expectations that the teaching-learning process is based on. This was followed by a discussion on some of the basic tenets of the NCF, such as 'local to global', 'home language to school language', 'spiralling of curriculum', etc., along with an understanding of a broader concept framework. Finally, there was a 'hands-on' session where the participants took up different pedagogical themes/areas and worked in pairs to chalk out a lesson plan and select the appropriate material required for it, based on the discussion.

This discussion, anchored in the link between theory and practice, continued on the second day as well. Day two also included debates on the components of CCE, and the scope of the use of material other than just paper and pencil, in the CCE system of assessment.

The Arts faculty of DIET, Daryaganj conducted a session in which the participants learned how to use paper, pencil and paint as powerful tools to represent abstract ideas.

Day three and four were mostly spent in the review of existing material that had been developed in the earlier Sansarg workshops. The participants made presentations on the gaps in the existing material, and how these could be eliminated by adding more content. The sharing of material review brought up many interesting issues and ideas that helped to enrich it further. For instance, many participants, while reflecting on the language used in some of the stories taken as material for various themes, changed it to more a child-friendly and familiar language. They also included the addition of local language words wherever possible. In some text-based material, participants even added pictures.

Different types of writing -descriptive, analytical, narrative, etc. were also discussed, keeping in mind the basic philosophy of considering reading and writing a medium of learning rather than skills to be learnt separately.

On the fourth day, the Science faculty and the Principal of DIET, Daryaganj, jointly demonstrated how a simple, workable Science kit could be developed out of waste material. Participants prepared a pool of material that could be used effectively in the teaching of scientific concepts, and developed easily by the students themselves.

The Arts faculty from DIET, Daryaganj conducted a session on mask-making from 'papier mâché' and plaster of paris. This was followed by a discussion on how masks could be used as a resource in classrooms for the

purpose of story-telling, enactment, or dramatization of various concepts.

Picking up on the previous day's discussion on the use of masks, the role of material in motivating students was explored further on day five. There were debates on how various materials could reduce the negative competitive spirit between students, and lead to healthy group work and peer-learning. The experiences shared by the participants brought up once again the differences between assessment and evaluation in CCE. Participants discussed the tasks and activities that could be used for assessment within the teaching-learning process rather than designing tasks especially for evaluation. Thus, the difference between assessment and evaluation was also addressed.

On the last day, a film was screened, and feedback on the workshop was collected from the participants. The film, entitled 'A teacher's journey', was based on the life of a school teacher in a rural, single-teacher school. It presented the struggles faced by the teacher in handling multigrade classes without much support from the system, and the gradual success in developing effective ways of dealing with the situation. The post-screening discussion centred on the effectiveness of locally-available, cost-effective material; use of childrens' knowledge and repertoire as resources; positive use of peer-learning in a multigrade class; and the integration of knowledge across different subject areas.

Feedback and suggestions for future endeavours

The feedback and suggestions from the participants provided a valuable learning experience for the Sansarg team. A large number of participants suggested sharing the material that they develop in their teacher-education courses, across colleges where Sansarg could provide a common platform and

space. Participants from Jamia expressed the need for more workshops, particularly those related to language pedagogy, and the screening of films pertaining to educational and social issues. Some participants asked for a focused workshop on major educational psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner.

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Workshop on Language and Language Teaching in Schools at SCERT, Patna

July 19-21, 2012

Amresh Chandra

Introduction

A workshop on language and language teaching in schools was held from 19 to 21 July 2012 at the SCERT, Patna campus. It was organized by SCERT in collaboration with Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur. It was attended by the faculty members of DIETs and Primary Teacher Training colleges, people from Gyanshala, team members of Vidya Bhawan, faculty members of SCERT and an education specialist from UNICEF.

The purpose of the workshop was to present to the language teachers a platform on language teaching that was innovative, in tune to innate and natural ability of the child (however, it also focused holistically on the entire gamut of the learning process of the child at the school level). The event was unique in the sense that for the first time, teacher educators and all other participants got opportunities to think on different dimensions of language and its teaching process in the schools that till date are largely archaic and not willing to give 'space' to the child in the whole activity.

Proceedings

The workshop began by a brief introduction of the guest experts, Prof Rama Kant Agnihotri, renowned linguist and Prof A L Khanna (both formerly at University of Delhi). It was followed by the introduction of participants wherein they were also asked to mention the language/ languages they knew. More importantly, the participants also mentioned what they expected from these types of workshops and the kind of difficulties they faced in language and in its teaching. It was also reiterated by the experts that the workshop was not on Hindi language but on language and on language teaching.

Multilingualism is natural and inseparable was evident in the introductory session of the workshop when attendees mentioned their ability to write and speak these languages - Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika, Bangla, Urdu, Punjabi, Maithali, Santhali, Himachali, Vajjika etc. It reflected that generally one person knows more than one language and multilingualism is quite natural. This factual revelation emphatically underlined the fact that all countries of the world are multilingual. There is no regional language but there is a region of language. The other things which prominently surfaced in the introductory session were the mistakes a child normally commits in *matra*, *varna*, *ucharan* (pronunciation), *linga* (gender). To them these mistakes are due to environment, society they are/ were in. They were also willing to know mechanism to overcome these problems.

After the completion of the introductory session, a sheet was given to each participant containing 10 statements about different aspects of language. A few are reproduced below:

1. Hindi is not the national language of India.
2. India has over 1500 languages.
3. There are 18 languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution.