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Curriculum integration is not a new concept. Since the opening of the Dewey School in Chicago in 1898, there has been significant experimentation in curriculum integration, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom.

A number of excellent documents are available on the philosophy and general principles of integration. Unfortunately, there has been no detailed lesson planning in order to translate those principles into classroom teaching practices.

In Pakistan, The Book Group made a pioneering effort in October 1993, when a dialogue was initiated between several schools of various socio-economic backgrounds on the subject of objectives of education at the primary levels. Heads of some 11 schools, together with some teachers, shared the experiences of their own work in their respective schools.

They debated, brainstormed and agreed that in order to emphasise pedagogical considerations, curriculum integration would offer exciting possibilities and a model for future developments. They agreed that the element of rote learning is strongly in-built into the existing curriculum and textbooks. Children find learning a chore rather than an interesting and stimulating exercise. They also agreed that instead of preparing a research document for the purpose of an academic interest only, the objectives of education would be redefined.

Day by day lesson plans would be written so that the material could be used in the participating schools to demonstrate change. Typically, the Pakistani school child is burdened with seven to eight subjects even as early as in Class I. It was agreed that in order to lead children towards authentic learning, and teachers

towards purposeful teaching, curriculum integration would be the wise thing to do. English, Urdu, Maths, Science, Social Studies, Art and Music are integrated so that children can be taught from the perspective of developing concepts and skills in a holistic manner. The division or compartmentalization of subjects does not always help children to understand various concepts at the primary level. Therefore, integration often occurs as a practical necessity. For example, if children are to learn about any one theme at a time, like say, 'animals', they would:

- develop a certain vocabulary and language proficiency
- classify the various animals and understand some scientific concepts
- be alerted to the ecological and environmental concerns related to animals
- draw, paint and model
- rhyme and sing
- recognise the various animal shapes and sizes
- add, subtract, etc

The children would record the activities and experiments in various ways – one of them being the worksheets/ workbook used.

The Book Group intended to bring the schools together on one platform and begin a dialogue on curriculum, assessment and other related issues. As a result, it initiated the writing of an integrated curriculum that could be implemented in the participating schools and not only establish a working framework for integration of subjects, but also develop a system for its implementation. The actual writing of the integrated curriculum began after two or three months of brainstorming, and the implementation of the curriculum and

¹ This article was first published in the Daily 'Dawn', a Pakistani publication, on April 26, 1999.

methodology was started in August 1994 when the first few weeks of the Class I integrated curriculum were written. To date, the entire curriculum for classes I, II and III has been written, while work on the Urdu component of the curriculum is under way.

A comprehensive Teacher's Manual has been developed that carries not only the lesson plans for the entire year, but also serves as a training tool for the teachers. It spells out imaginative and purposeful lesson plans on a day-to-day basis. Together with the Teacher's Manual, a set of worksheets and some English and Urdu Readers have been printed, pertaining to the various themes around which the curriculum has been developed. These Urdu as well as English books have a local context and they serve as a vehicle to achieve the curricular objectives.

The major objective of all this remained the concern for a relevant curriculum which should help provide the young learner with a more coherent approach to understanding his/her environment, in building his/her confidence and analytical/creative skills. The other purpose was to train teachers through the development of the material as to how children learn best, and more specifically, to equip them with the techniques of good teaching methods.

Representatives (mostly heads of schools together with some teachers) and resource persons have been meeting on a weekly basis for the last five years at Nasra School. The proposed draft of the lesson plan is read out followed by a discussion and recommendations are thus made which are then incorporated into the next draft.

The heads of most of the schools involved initially had a tough time convincing parents that their child was actually learning a lot doing what seemed to them just fun and play.

Later, as the years progressed, parents could themselves observe how well their children developed in an overall sense as

the children in the integrated studies programme feel that the work they are doing is worthwhile.

Important lessons are being learned by The Book Group through this action research, and the material developed so far has been under continuous scrutiny and review. The feedback received from the schools helps the resource persons to further improve the material.

Curriculum integration can only be built on a solid understanding of curriculum statements and content. This emphasises the need for access to expert knowledge. At the request of the Book Group for help in reviewing the material for class I, the Goethe Institute arranged a visit of Dr Rainer Tempel – an environmental curriculum expert – who visited Karachi twice from Germany, for a period of one month each time and reviewed the curriculum for class I.

The New Zealand Government was next requested for similar help for class II. A curriculum expert, Jeff Buchanan, visited from Auckland for four weeks at the end of 1997. He reviewed the class II material. In the light of his input and recommendations, the Teacher's Manuals are at present being reviewed while the worksheets for class I are also being redone and compiled as a workbook for children.

Development is an on-going process, with implementation being classroom-based. Support is provided for teachers as they try out new pedagogical strategies. It is believed that one can of course increase the teacher's motivation in the short term but, unless ideas can be translated into action in the classroom, there will be little or no long-term gain for students or teacher.

The integrated curriculum also places teachers in the role of learners, and provides them with opportunities to move in and out of this role. Teachers are supported and valued by the school community, fellow teachers, school

management, etc. by providing a supportive environment for teachers and learners. The school community thus assists the teachers as they explore and expand their teaching repertoire.

During the course of the process, the key teachers progressively take on more responsibility and control, working with other link teachers. Also, the integrated curriculum project has offered an extensive opportunity for schools to develop relations between each other, and between levels within schools.

Answers to Fran Hanrahan's warm up activities on page 14.

Three pups

Variation of this;

4 pups.