New Initiatives and Projects / Special Efforts towards Quality Improvement

Activity Based Learning (ABL) / Activity - Based Learning (ABL) Modules (Joyful Learning)

The ABL approach is unique and effective to attract out-of -school children to schools/AIE centers. The teachers who are involved in implementing this method have developed activities for each learning unit which facilitated readiness for learning, instruction, reinforcement and evaluation. ABL has transformed the classrooms into hubs of activities and meaningful learning.

ABL – An innovative approach

The ABL concept has been taken from the Rishi Valley practices. This has been introduced in the Corporation Schools of Chennai with slight modifications. Seeing the success of the scheme this has been introduced in the Panchayat Union Schools.

Initially, a core team was asked to investigate the current practices of classroom process and find out the reasons for the low achievement of children. As the team members had rich exposure in the field of primary education they had strong faith on children, parents, teachers and the government that they would not be responsible for low achievement of children. Then, after close study in some of the schools in the corporation area, the team identified the following as the malady of conventional process.

Ø   Teacher dominates the classroom always.
Ø   Rare use of teaching learning materials.
Ø   Most of the time the lecture method was followed.
Ø   Importance was given to rote learning.
Ø   Teachers are under the assumption that they know everything and children do not know anything.
Ø   Teacher assumes uniform learning pace and uniform level of achievement among children.
Ø   The gap between teacher and children are more.
Ø   Focus is given on teaching rather than learning.
Ø   No scope to cover the loss of learning during the period of absence of children.
Ø   Multigrade and multi level is not addressed.
Ø   Traditional way of evaluation.
Ø   Absence of joyous based extra activities.
Ø   Absence of play way and learning by doing activities.
Ø   Less chance for mutual and self learning.
Ø   Coverage of syllabus by the teacher and not by the children.
Ø   Classroom with fewer facilities for learning activities.
Ø   Instructional materials neither intensive nor attractive.
Ø   Lack of learning freedom - more of time restricted environment.

To overcome the above malady in teaching learning process a suitable strategy called Activity Based Learning (ABL) was evolved to be implemented in the Chennai Corporation Schools.

Implementation of ABL approach

Implementation of this approach was divided into four phases viz. I) Preparation Capacity Building Phase II) Experimental Phase III) Extension Phase and IV) Evaluation Phase.

Ø During capacity building phase a core team consisting 4 programme coordinators and selected 26 Practicing teachers were trained by Rishi Valley Project people three (or) four times repeatedly during 2003 and 2004. The four co-coordinators with I to V and experience in the background along with the teachers developed the module.
Ø   The ABL approach was experimented for one year in selected 13 schools in 10 zones during (2003) the experimental phase.
Ø   Since printed cards were not available at that time photocopies of the same were used in the classrooms.

Ø   During this stage, only classes I & II were integrated. The ultimate idea is to integrate up to class IV.
Ø   As the results were encouraging, this approach was extended to all 264 schools in Chennai Corporation during 2004.
Ø   During this phase, learning cards for classes I & II (4 subjects) and teachers manual were prepared, printed and distributed.
Ø   In the year 2005, class III was integrated with class I & II.
Ø   Workbooks for classes I & II for four subjects were prepared, printed and distributed during 2004-2005.

Training of classroom teachers and other Staff

Ø   Experimental school teachers handling class I & II were trained initially and recurrently with reasonable time in ABL methodology during 2003 and 2004 under capacity building phase.
Ø   Appraisal and review meetings were conducted periodically for smooth conduct of the programme.
Ø   To enhance resource support a team of 100 members ten in each zone / block were trained sufficiently in the ABL methodology (Teacher instruction) who in turn trained all the classroom teachers handling classes I to III and other teachers also who are handling IV to VIII.
Ø   For effective monitoring and supervising of the ABL, all BRTEs, HM's, DEOs, CEOs and ADPCs, Supervisors, AEEOs were trained by core team members in various cycles during 2004-2005.
Ø   Teachers and Headmasters are also trained and oriented by visiting model schools and other schools of appreciable performance and interaction with successful teachers.
Ø   Apart from these, teachers were provided on the spot support by expert team periodically and regularly.
Ø   A resource centre was functioning to offer all time support to teachers at Corporation Middle School, Ranganathan Street, Nungambakkam.

The Process of ABL approach

Ø   Competencies are split into different parts/units and converted into different activities.
Ø   Each part/unit is called a milestone.
Ø   In each subject, the relevant milestones are clustered and linked as chain and this chain of milestones is called LADDER.
Ø   Each milestone has different steps of learning process and each step of learning process is represented by logo.
Ø   Milestones are arranged in a logical sequence from simple to complex and also activities in each milestone.
Ø   To enable the children to organize in groups group cards are used.
Ø   Evaluation is inbuilt in the system. Separate cards / activities are used for this purpose.
Ø   Each child is provided with workbook/worksheet for further reinforcement activities.
Ø   Children's progresses are recorded through annual assessment chart.
Ø   Each milestone has different type of activities such as introduction, reinforcement, practice, evaluation, remedial and enrichment activates represented by different logos.

Benefits of ABL approach

Ø   Children learn at their own pace.
Ø   Provision of more time for self-directed learning and teacher directed learning is reduced considerably.
Ø   Group learning, mutual learning and self learning are promoted.
Ø   Teachers teaching time is judiciously distributed among children. Only needy children are addressed by teachers.
Ø   Children's participation in every step is ensured in the process of learning.

- Ø Evaluation is inbuilt in the system it is done without the child knowing it.
- Ø Rote learning is discouraged and almost no scope for rote learning.
- Ø Periodical absence of child from school is properly addressed.
- Ø Classroom transaction is based on child's needs and interests.
- Ø Freedom to child in learning as he chooses his activity.
- Ø Multigrade and multilevel in learning is effectively addressed.
- Ø No child can move to the next higher step of learning unless attains the previous one.
- Ø Sense of achievement boosts child's confidence and morale.
- Ø Attractive cards and activity create interest among children.
- Ø Scope for child's development in creative and communicative skills.
- Ø Children will have a feel of security as they sit in rounds in the groups.
- Ø Children are allowed to move in the classroom as they choose their activity.
- Ø Moreover the distance between the teacher and the child is largely reduced and the teacher acts as a facilitator rather than teacher.

The ABL concept is used in selected regular schools in the State apart from 6,000 AIE centers. The ABL cards which can match the pace of learning have been placed permanently in Block Resource Centers. This ground–breaking approach has been tried out experimentally in a few schools (10 schools per block). After field-testing of the ABL modules and Self Learning Material kits are to be used in other schools. The Directorate of Teacher Education, Research and Training and Directorate of Elementary Education have been involved in implementing this programme including imparting training for the same. Yet another silent revolution in Innovative Education.

I hear; I forget,   I see; I remember,   I do; I understand.

Activity websites

http://www.vernier.com/cmat/abp.html
http://www.hasanathighschool.com/ActivityBasedTeaching.htm
http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/795
http://www.ssa.tn.nic.in/CurrActivities-A.htm
http://www.migs.edu.my/eca.htm
http://www.edutopia.org/project-learning
http://www.ncsall.net/?id=1084
http://www.pbs.org/teachers/
http://www.eurekachild.org/eslc-home.php
http://www.unicef.org/india/resources_1546.htm
http://www.auroville.org/education/avschools/New_Era/New_Era_Secondary.htm
http://www.pearlseducation.com/
http://www.gurukulkerala.org/school_ranking.html
http://www.creativeeduaids.com/
http://www.indiamart.com/topsunenterprises/educational-aids.html
http://www.hobbyengineering.com/CatEEKIDS.html
http://www.delta-education.com/   (important site for activity)
http://sciencekit.com/cool-science/c/1689/