

CURRICULUM



सीता देवी चौकी पंचपुर
सीतापुर

Aspects of rural life

पता -
सीता देवी
D/o Sdya चौरी लाल कर्मा
ग्राम - पंचपुर
पोस्ट - उरदौली
जिला - सीतापुर
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The Prashika curriculum forms the core around which the other aspects of the programme have been built. The process of curriculum formation took into account the physical conditions of the school, the annual cycle of seasons, agricultural and forestry work, and festivals, the cultural and socio-economic background of the children and the teachers, and the inevitable presence of the administration and government. The other inputs into the curriculum were in the form of current thought on various aspects of education: child development, language learning, mathematics, etc.

Between the years 1986 and 1992, Prashika evolved a class-wise curriculum for Classes I to V. This falls into 2 distinct parts, with the curriculum of Classes I and II forming the first part, and that of Classes III, IV and V comprising the second. Both these parts have been conceptualized differently, and the materials used in the two parts are different, too, in terms of their content and form. Perhaps the most complex problem that Prashika faced was the designing of the curriculum in terms of skill areas on the one hand, and relating them to establishing discrete disciplines on the other. Though there is undoubtedly a set of fundamental skills that cut across subject boundaries, each subject also has its own specific paradigm to

understand its universe.

CLASSES I AND II CURRICULA

The central problem in the development of a curriculum for Classes I and II is to isolate skills and abilities that would lead to the development of specific concepts.

The basic objectives in these classes are

1. to help children overcome their inhibitions and encourage them to actively participate in the classroom activities;
2. to make all possible efforts to enhance their levels of understanding;
3. to develop skills and concepts that form the basis of basic language and mathematics skills; and
4. to provide rich exposure to the language used in teaching poems, stories, role play, puzzles, etc.

The curricula for the two classes is designed phase-wise; Class I has three phases and Class II has two. These phases are sequential and are loosely based on a hierarchy derived from a Piagetian framework of the development of logical and mathematical abilities. It was clear that the child will move only gradually to the formal operational stage through a variety of interactions with concrete materials.

Some of the basic tenets were:

1. self-discovery approach;
2. learning by doing and experiencing;
3. working from the familiar to the unfamiliar; and
4. sequencing of basic knowledge structures.

There are certain abilities which must precede the acquisition of such abstract skills as reading and arithmetic. Before a child can begin to read and write meaningfully he needs to be exposed to a great deal of linguistic material which he finds interesting and which motivates him to use it in its spoken form to interact with his classmates. Similarly, the acquisition of preconditions for logico-mathematical thought such as sorting and comparison, one-to-one correspondence, classification on the basis of one or more attributes, the concept of 'one more' and conservation of number, length etc. must precede the learning of such abstract operations as addition, multiplication etc. If information is stored without any comprehension, it will be difficult for the learner to draw any useful generalization since he will not be able to relate different bits of information that he has stored.

Initially conceived in a month-wise format, the curriculum was then spaced out into phases in order to allow a more flexible implementation. Thus the curriculum is only a skeleton, to be fleshed out by the teacher according to the circumstances in his school

and the needs of his students. In this context, it is possible for a village and a town school to have different aspects emphasized at different times, according to their circumstances.

In addition, the first phase of Class I specifically addresses the issue that 'school' and attending school is new to the community where the programme seeks to intervene; that there are no strong external motivations to ensure that children attend school regularly. The curriculum itself therefore attempts to provide such motivations. There is also a recognition of the fact that the mores and requirements of participating in school activities require a level of socialization not already available in the community. Therefore, in the first phase of Class I, the intention is to help the child develop an interest in coming to school regularly,

A PRASHIKA ASSOCIATE OBSERVES . . .

The whole programme is designed to work in harmony with the world of the child and the community by, for example, including drawing, pictures, songs, stories and riddles of and by the local people and by encouraging the child to relate the content of the text to the environment often involving activities that would necessitate observation and analysis of the environment.

understand the classroom framework and reach a situation where s(he) can take part in classroom activities.

The curriculum lists a number of activities ranging from fine motor control over hands to using concrete objects to add/subtract, or to relate with written material.

A major aspect of this effort is to discourage cognitive overloading of the learner. Curriculum goals have been kept at a level that can reasonably be achieved rather than what we feel children should achieve. Hence, it is not really expected that Class I children will go beyond 20 in counting. Nor are they expected to be able to learn to read in Class I.

Apart from concrete, oral and observational activities there is also a workbook called *Khushi-Khushi*. However, it is not used till nearly half of Class I is over. In fact there is an attempt to undermine the primacy of the textbook and the printed medium in initial schooling so that skills other than reading, writing and arithmetic also get incorporated into the early school curriculum.

CURRICULUM FOR CLASSES III TO V

The alternative conceptualization becomes more apparent in the second part of the programme – for

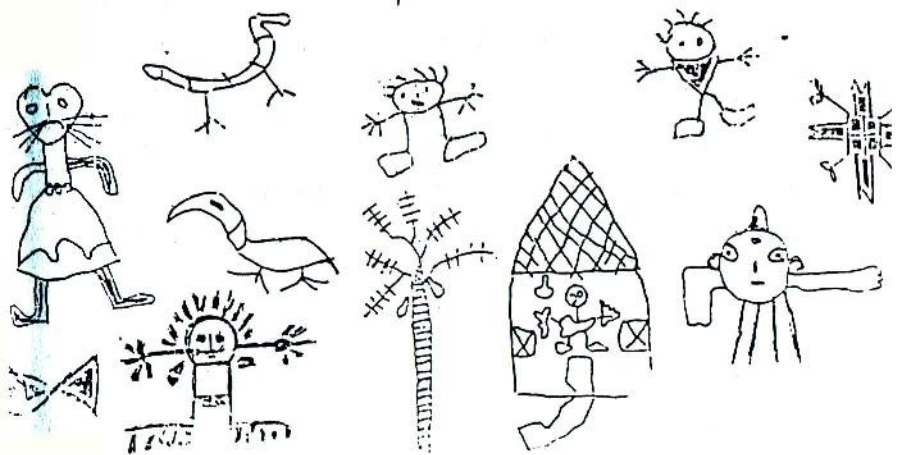
Classes III, IV and V. This is defined in terms of skills rather than subjects. They are

1. comprehension,
2. expression and recording,
3. observation,
4. problem solving and analytical ability,
5. spatial skills,
6. creativity,
7. mathematical skills,
8. social skills, and
9. manual skills.

In this skill-based curriculum it is expected that all these skills would have been 'practised' by the time the child is at the end of Class V. End-levels, too, are presented as *processes*, and *activities* rather than as items of information or 'knowledge'. In fact there is no expectation that children "will know that . . .".

A PRASHIKA MEMBER WRITES . . .

What we have done is to follow a curriculum that is not categorized according to information to be acquired by the child but one that concentrates on the skills to be developed. Skills that would help the child to continue learning through observation, classification, analysis and reflection.



परम्परेज शासन के आदेश क्रमांक एफ. १००२/१००/पी-३/२०, दिनांक १ जून, १९८८
 तहत परामर्शित शासन की कृपया पत्रों के द्वारा तैयार यह शैक्षिक सामग्री, परम्परेज
 पुस्तक विभाग द्वारा प्रकाशित एवं सततकालीन ऑफिसर, भोपाल द्वारा मुद्रित।
 इस सामग्री को बेकार करने में कोई फिलानों की मदद ली गई है। आवरण पृष्ठ
 "परमिटर क्राफ्टिंग" में साक्षर।

Creative use of language and visuals
 (Inside cover of KHUSHI-KHUSHI)

The creation of materials, training designs and implementation in schools have been informed by questions such as what is considered more 'relevant' information, how much information should come from 'outside' and how much should be 'self-generated', and whether the various methods of inquiry within specific disciplines demand specific information.

In the Prashika approach, there is a distinct bias against information for information sake. Memorized but little understood information is not seen as an index of achievement. Information and descriptions are important to the extent that they provide opportunities to sharpen skills of observation, comprehension and analysis. These abilities will also help children to pursue more abstract ideas in higher classes. They will also help those who cannot continue school after Class V to acquire more knowledge on their own. This approach also helps children to appreciate the relationship among different subjects.

In this sense, Prashika is far from being a programme for functional learning. There is an attempt to develop creative and 'non-functional' capabilities or skills, be it fantasy in stories or discovering number patterns. More importantly, the element of thought and reflection on the part of the learner is greatly emphasized,

and is subsumed in every aspect of the curriculum as well as the materials designed.

There is a shift away from 'information' and the specific bodies of knowledge as represented by traditional school 'subjects' to the skills, abilities and purposes which underlie and unify them. Thus the section on expression and articulation includes not only written language but also oral language, expression through gestures, actions, role play, acting, drawing, etc. Similarly, observation and recording may involve nature, or social phenomena or experiments/activities. It should be obvious how the nine categories given on page 50 will also accommodate 'subjects' such as language, mathematics, science and social science.

However, it must also be noted that a single unit of the workbook or an activity like observing one's surroundings may have different kinds and levels of skills, different kinds of information, as well as their interconnections, all emerging from the same source and woven together. For example, making a map of the school and its neighbourhood might include measurement of length, rudimentary concepts of scale, of representing three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane, plotting the different kinds of trees, insects and other life forms around, the different

sections of society that occupy different kinds of *mohallas* in the village, the different kinds of land nearby and to whom it belongs, etc. This perhaps is the nearest we can get to Prashika's concept of integrated learning, though this is by no means the only kind of learning taking place in Prashika schools. (The specific treatment of 'subject areas' is given later.) The integration is at the following levels.

1. The boundaries between subjects are weak. With primacy being given to skills, traditional boundaries between areas of knowledge become fuzzy. For example, the abilities required to translate into sentences the parts of the process in a schematic diagram, for example, water cycle, food cycle, factory process, etc. could be regarded as language, or science, or even mathematics (flow diagrams in computing);
2. The boundaries between school knowledge and out-of-school or everyday knowledge are also weak. The skills are practised on things 'that are immediate to the child and relevant to the present context of their society'.

The Prashika curriculum for Classes III to V, then, is a skill-based and integrated one which, while refusing to give primacy to information, nevertheless, seeks to provide meaningful content to children.