

## **The Essence of Readiness**

Manjeet Yadav, *Research Scholar*  
Dr. Kapil Dhingra, *Assistant Professor*  
Jamia Millia Islamia, *New Delhi*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

A child is a natural learner and knowledge is the natural outcome of a child's own experiences and activities. Academic achievement is of utmost importance at each and every learning stage. And, it is imperative during the transition phases i.e. transition from lower primary to the upper primary stage and from upper primary to the elementary stage and from elementary to secondary stage and so on. The academic achievement needs to be maintained at an adequate level while the child is in transition stages. Literature says that often a decline in academic achievement has been observed during or following a transition stage (Barone et al., 1991). This decline in academic achievement, however, may have several causes other than those related to the transition phase. Some researchers have attributed it to the child's perceptual changes as they are entering the next higher level, considering themselves to be older and mature than the previous level (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Increased interest in non-academic activities and hence, decrease in interest in academic activities during their middle years may also be one of the reasons. Potter (2001) has associated the decline in academic achievement with the onset of adolescence stage. But these can't be defined uniformly as there is the disparity in the transition age in different countries, some have it at 10 or 11 years of age while other countries have it at around 13 or 14 years of age (Murdock et al., 2000). It is evident that any transition may cause a decline in academic achievement regardless of age (Suffolk Education Department, 1997; Wijsman et al., 2016; Malaspina & Kaufman, 2008).

The pedagogy should be creativity and exploration promoting exercises. It should aim at establishing relation between discrete things and events. It is thus required to organise the curricular knowledge in context of the following:

- Children construct their own knowledge based on their own experiences, which are unique to each one of them.
- Knowledge construction is possible with the active involvement of the child.
- Creating diverse experiences is important.
- Teacher-student interaction is important.
- Parental and society involvement is crucial.

In the light of the above creating readiness is important for the adjustment and development of the child. Age-appropriate readiness interventions are required to be implemented at each stage to ensure the appropriate development of child.

Draft National Education Policy, (2019) says, "The primary cause of the learning crisis is that a large proportion of the students that fall behind their elementary school years, in fact fall behind already during their first few weeks of grade I. Thus major cause of the current learning crisis is lack of school preparedness. The problem afflict most, the first generation learners and the learners who had no access to the pre-primary education."

### **Present Study**

The present study aimed at studying one such preparedness or readiness programme namely Class Readiness Programme (CRP). The programme in focus here is a readiness programme to prepare students for the new class and to assist them in the smooth transition from one class to another. The programme is being run by the Government of Haryana in its schools. The objectives of the programme are:

- To increase the strength of the students in the class.

- To know each child in terms of their minimum level of learning (MLL), strengths and weaknesses, interests and motivation.
- To adjust them in the new classroom environment with focus on familiarising them with the new environment and relating the previous syllabus with the present one.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study was undertaken in view of the certain objectives. These objectives are as follows:

1. To study the perception of the school principals about the current practices in Class Readiness Programme.
2. To study the perception of the science teachers of the schools about the current practices in Class Readiness Programme.

### **Delimitations**

Keeping in view the vast field of study and the limitations of the research the study was delimited regarding the following:

1. The study was conducted in Faridabad district of Haryana.
2. The study was conducted in Faridabad Block of Faridabad district.
3. The study was conducted for class VI.
4. The study was conducted for science subject.

The study focused on science subject only considering that at class six science is introduced as an independent subject for the first time for students. Before this they studied it as a part of environmental study with science which has very little reference and far from the nature of science which they are supposed to study further. This might cause illusion about the subject among the students. So, a catalyst in the form of a readiness programme which in addition to creating general readiness for the new class, also creates the readiness to study science at the onset of secondary level.

### **Population and Sample**

A sample of eight schools were taken from the population of all the government schools of haryana. These eight schools are chosen through stratified random sampling. As faridabad district was chosen to be studied. 10 percent of the total number of schools falling under the seven zones of faridabad block were selected to be the sample of the present study. School principals and all the science teachers of those eight schools constituted the final sample for the present study.

### **Significance of the Study**

Science should engage learners in the activities that nurture the curiosity and imbibe the creativity in them. The learning situations should provide for the inquisitiveness about their immediate environment. National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) says, “the content, process and the language of science teaching must be commensurate with the learner’s age-range and their cognitive reach.”

At primary and upper primary school stage students should be provided with the experiences of learning while doing, hands-on activities, learning through activities, demonstrations and experiments, while learning science. Science class and its contents should essentially carry cognitive validity, content validity, historical validity, process validity, environmental validity and ethical validity.

Any science curriculum should incorporate these six validities in order to be true to science. Hence, any science readiness programme should incorporate all these validities. It implies that any science curriculum should:

- Be age appropriate,
- Convey scientifically correct knowledge,
- Involve and engage the learner in methods and processes of science learning,
- Enable the learner to appreciate the evolution of science with time,
- Relate to and be contextual to the child’s surroundings,
- Promote values like honesty, objectivity, cooperation and concern for life and environment.

The findings of the present study conveys in this reference that the CRP activities and its curricular aspects needs to adhere to the above described validities. Still they are lacking in some of the validity areas like process validity and environmental validity as is analysed from the responses received from the school principals and science teachers.

Good science education should be true to science implying that it should be learnt logically, meaningfully and naturally. It should involve students making them responsible for their learning and should

motivate them removing the fear and phobia of science learning. Activity-based learning has been found to be addressing the above mentioned nature and purposes of science education. CRP is based on activity-based learning. Wherein activities involving students are used to create the readiness for new class, new curriculum and new learnings. Majority of the respondents in the present study reported that the activities are actually useful creating readiness among the students and they actually enjoy the CRP activities. Yet, some of the instances have been reported wherein the activities were reported to be lacking in certain parameters like too much practical work while less emphasis is given on theoretical aspect of the practical work sometimes making students disinterested in doing the theoretical work. Also, it was reported that the activities are less individualised suiting the needs of each and every students.

### **Methodology and Tools Used**

A qualitative study was conducted in order to evaluate the Class Readiness Programme (CRP) being run in the government schools of Haryana. There are various stakeholders when we talk of the school education. For the present study school principals and science teachers were chosen to be the stakeholders whose perception pertaining to the CRP practices in their respective schools was studied.

For this purpose certain self-constructed tools were used as none was available beforehand. The tools comprised of the questionnaires for the school principals and the science teachers teaching science to class VI. The tools were appropriately validated and reliability was established. Both the questionnaires were semi-structured containing both close ended and open ended questions.

Due permissions were taken from the concerned authorities and schools were visited personally. Principals and science teachers from all the eight schools were personally contacted to get the questionnaires filled.

## **II. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The data collected through the questionnaires was analysed qualitatively. A total of 22 questions were incorporated in the questionnaire for the school principals and 25 in the questionnaire for science teachers. Some of them were on three point scale- yes, no and can't say while, others were open ended seeking further response or clarifications. The questionnaires incorporated various dimensions like programme vision and objectives, nature of activities, evaluation procedures, material and resources, implementation difficulties and suggestions. Based on the analysis of the responses it was found that at majority of the areas the respondents are satisfied with the performance of CRP but there are some problematic areas which needs to be addressed immediately in order to reap the benefits of CRP to its full potential. These are reported to be the allocation of funds for undertaking the field visits, though the provision of visits are there but it requires funds to undertake such activities. Infrastructure was also reported to be inappropriate as per the requirements of CRP. Flexibility was desired to be provided to the teachers so that the programme can be implemented at more individualised level. One very important dimension pointed out by the respondents was the involvement of the parents as they are the crucial stakeholders in the whole learning process. It was reported that their involvement is not sought currently as a result the efforts are unable to furnish the desired effects. Though Class Readiness Programme (CRP) has shown positive and remarkable impact on the transition of the children from one class to another. It has proven to be true to its objectives, allowing the students to just tinker about the science around them. It is receiving positive response from the stakeholders. Scaffolding the learning incidents sometimes is required to overcome the challenges and the changes that a student undergoes. This scaffolding can be provided by family, community, school and education system. The present study reported that the all the constituents mentioned here are the stakeholders in the life of a child and they need to provide for the required scaffolding at one or the other level and stage. This helps them in dealing with the fear of failure also. The fear of failure is associated with the avoidance from doing work (Elliot and Thrash, 2004). The learning has become joyful especially the science classes involving a wide range of hands-on and practical activities for students to work with while assisting them in their transition to the secondary school stage and studying science as an independent subject. It works appropriately to hone their scientific skills imbibing curiosity in them and providing opportunities for developing the abstract skills crucial to the study of science. Also, developing inquisitiveness, inventions, creativity and competence for science as a field of study. With the suggested modifications from its stakeholders and users it would better assist in improving the readiness levels. The future of learning is in the vision that the students should be ready for future of work and should imbibe transferable skills on which the foundation of their becoming life-long learners is built (Hakkinen et al., 2016).

## **III. CONCLUSION**

A child goes through various transition phases in their life. Each transition stage needs to be supported appropriately while providing for the adjustment time period needed by them. School transition stages majorly includes entering the school during their first year of formal schooling, transition to a new school, transition

from primary to secondary school, secondary to senior secondary and transition from school to college. Each transition impacts a child and they need some time to adjust to the new environment, not every time assistance is required. Other transition include movement from known to unknown, from small primary schools to bigger secondary schools, having separate teachers for each subject, sometimes room changes for each subject requiring switching rooms (Bates, 1998). A readiness programme is meant to assist in these transitions. Various studies done in the field of readiness have supported its effects on the student's with better adjustment, enhanced achievement levels, reduced environment related anxiety during transitions and improved motivation levels. More such efforts (Class Readiness Programme) needs to be in place to better support the child during their critical points of development. "Having adequate information is a crucial factor in a student's ability to cope, and its absence produces a sense of bewilderment and entrapment in a new setting" (Cotterell, 1986). The transition is often accompanied by the stress while dealing with the new situation (Ward, 2005).

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