

Teachers' Workshops.....

A stagnant knowledge is no knowledge. This is true of any profession. And this is perhaps more so for those involved in academics, particularly in the area of teaching. A teacher is expected to possess not only a thorough knowledge of the subject but also be up-to-date on the latest development in the area of teaching, both in form and substance including style, methods and techniques. A teacher must be able to create a liking and generate interest among the students for the subject taught and develop their comprehension, linguistic ability and competence. It is a tough job. So it is important that teachers keep abreast of the latest developments relating to their vocation like changes in curricula and new innovations in teaching to advance their skills, be effective in the job and grow professionally.

Workshops provide one such avenue where people can discuss about the subject matter, on-going developments in the related field, share ideas and experiences and broaden their understanding and widen their scope of innovation. Such workshops are frequently held at Gyanodaya; in fact, internally every month within each faculty and also at the general level among the various faculties. Very often such workshops are arranged by the School exclusively for its teachers with experts hired from outside. The emphasis here is on the growth of the individuals with the institution. So workshops are an essential feature of academic life at Gyanodaya. Besides in-house workshops and trainings with expert trainers and professionals from within and outside the country, no opportunity is lost to second teachers connected with the work to any in-country training programmes organised by any organizations to help them improve their professional competence. The individuals are also encouraged to take personal initiatives to hone their skills and

advance their proficiency in teaching. And some of them relate here their workshop experiences at the British Council and the Oxford University Press :

British Council Workshop :

Sarita Lama

I was lucky to be chosen by my School to participate in the workshop organised by the British Council at the DAV School, Jawlakhel, on 6 December 2006. Some fifty plus teachers from different Schools in the valley were there for programme. It was conducted by a British national Cassandra Wye, a renowned international story teller.

This workshop was preceded by a story telling performance for kids a day earlier by her on 5 December 2006 which was attended by ten of our primary children accompanied by our colleague Jitendra Kariamagaria. The main thrust of the programme was to develop in children, parents and teachers alike the habit of reading for pleasure. The objective was to help improve the overall academic performance of the young listeners.

The workshop was about telling stories through action; a medium developed by Cassandra Wye with an animated style of her own. It was, in fact, combining elements of circus, dance and theatre into story telling. It was, indeed, **'Stories in Motion'** as the event was billed. It was a wonderful experience being a part of the exercise.

One learnt how to use a story in the classroom to draw students towards the story teller, how to keep their interest alive, how to make the narrative interesting and effectively communicate the story. Narratives, she said, exercise the children's imagination and the medium helps them learn vocabulary and actions. Essentially, her technique involved **sounds, movements, gestures, actions,**

One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.

Maria Montessori

characters, audience participation, facial expressions, suspense, humor, voice pitch, repetition and evocative language. One learnt that it is these techniques that capture the attention of children, even the very young ones. Once their attention is drawn, they gather round us to hear stories. This can build a very powerful rapport between us and the children. It helps to reinforce memory and help children who may struggle with spoken language to give expressions to their creativity through story telling.

On the whole, the programme was interesting, informative and enjoyable. It was useful in educating us that story telling is a vivid and entertaining medium to show how it can create a lasting impression in young minds, influence children and encourage them to read.

(Ms. Lama is a Grade Teacher)

Oxford University Press Workshop :

**Sita Phuyal
Rosemary Patton
Taranath Sharma**

A one day workshop on English language teaching was organized by the Oxford University Press of India on 17 February 2007 in the plush Hotel Annapurna in the heart of Kathmandu. Its Managing Director Prof. Paul Gunashekar was the resource person. More than 100 teachers from different Schools in the valley participated in the workshop. We, Sita Phuyal, Rosemary Patton and Taranath Sharma, were privileged to represent the School at the workshop.

It may be mentioned here that this particular workshop was preceded by two other workshops arranged by the School with the OUP specifically for teachers of Gyanodaya – one on English Language Teaching on 17 December 2006 which was about how teaching of English has evolved over the years, and another on 10 February 2007 relating to accessing the OUP Website on English

language teaching and learning. It involved surfing the net, browsing the site and downloading necessary information and materials concerning the latest developments on English language learning and teaching methods and techniques, particularly relating to their Learning to Communicate series.

Let us now come back to the workshop. The main aspect of the workshop, as its title suggests, was teaching English language skills. Although English is widely taught and spoken, how best to teach and learn the language has today emerged as a major challenge. The workshop dealt at length on the nuances of grammar, vocabulary and methodology of teaching poetry. Such basic issues involving testing and evaluation were also discussed. It also focused on the basic philosophy of communicative language teaching where the message, function, appropriateness and fluency rather than its form, correctness and accuracy were more emphasized. Reading skill also featured prominently in the workshop for its capacity leading to better writing, listening and speaking ability. It emerged during the workshop that communicative competence in the language, which is considered an important goal to achieve, can be improved and realized through exposure based on class room activities where children work in pairs or groups with the teacher's role limited to being a facilitator, organizer, conductor and so on.

Indeed, the workshop was educative in giving us a better insight into the finer points of English language teaching and how best to translate it into practical application in terms of classroom teaching. We believe that the workshop was useful in helping us explore and find enough scope for innovation with ideas and resources to build an activity based classroom teaching thereby making learners receptive and learning an experience that is interesting, enjoyable and filled with fun.

(Ms. Phuyal, Ms. Patton and Mr. Sharma are Teachers in the English Department.)

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

B.F. Skinner