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**A CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT**

by

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## **A CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

Christian educators realize that for infants, age 0-6, the home is the best school. While the ideal educational environment still remains in the home, in the changing society of Asia today a great need exist for providing an appropriate early education for some children.

1. "Due to the socio-economic imbalance in today's world, a need may exist to provide alternative methods and a venue for basic foundational education; hence, preschool education."

Times are changing in Sri Lanka (Asia) in numerous house holds both parents seek employment. This means that the preschool industry is growing rapidly. There is a growing need to meet this new market in Seventh day Adventist School communities.

This process is part of a minder trend which reflects global social change.

UNESCO reports say that

"People in today's world live in a critical society. Tomorrow's world may be a very different one. Therefore, the main focus of eduction is to build a person who can face tomorrow's world." (1972)

## II. THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

### A. Rights:

In various civilization children have often been regarded as being a small adult. Therefore, they were assigned work that adults often did. Child labour was a common feature in Europe during the industrial Revolution. The poet WILLIAM BLAKE in his poem "LONDON"

.....

And mark in every face I meet

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,

In every infant's cry of fear

.....

In every voice, in every ban

The mind forged manacles I hear.

How the chimney sweeper's cry

Every black'ning church appalls....

Even today we find that most of the Asian countries still use children as labourers because the labour is cheap.

Jesus one who recognized children's rights, His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-14)

We also find that Plato, the Greek philosopher in 4 B.C. declared in the 'Republic' that the first five years (from the birth to five years) is the most important period of man's life and the beginning of education.

Jesus and Plato are both appear to indicate the rights of preschool children to be treated according to their development stage.

#### b. Needs

Regarding the first two years of life Dr. Ruth Murdoch says that in this stage the child needs much parental love to develop trust. Without love the child does not properly grow physically, mentally or spiritually.

"Love is the first foundation of all growth "

Naturally children need love at every stage of development.

The age of 2 to 6 years is the time to form habits. The habit shape, habit patterns which are very important to development.

Examples are **toilet-training, eating, sleeping and other basic skills**. Christian preschool teachers may also take every opportunity to teach them christian values too.

Especially important are **reverence for God, respect for others, obedience and self control**.

\* The best way for teachers to teach values is through their model. During this preschool stage the child forms much faith by borrowing from others. This fact requires teachers to be careful about what is transmitted to these little ones.

### **III. THE CURRICULUM**

#### **a. Principles of the Curriculum Development**

Firstly the curriculum is a needs based curriculum. This means that it is structured primarily around the needs of Sri Lankan (Asian) preschoolers.

In a general sense these needs encompass survival and confront but intend to basics such as the need for love and acceptance, for freedom to make choices, for fun, to be noticed and influence others, and to see meaning in life patterns. These last five needs have been identified by **William Glasser** in his description of the Quality School and the fifth is an aspect of faith. Other developmental needs **include development of sensory awareness, motor coordination, communication, positive identity, social group skills reasoning and aesthetic creativity**.

Secondly, the curriculum is to be developed around the concept of a positive accepting learning environment. The classroom atmosphere is made of faith oriented by the trust, love, acceptance affirmation and emotional warmth of its relationships. It is made stimulating by welcoming feel, clever use of space colourful visual aids, plenty of incidental learning, Bright displays and lighting and discrete areas of learning. The love component of the environment can be impressed in many ways in the school environment. The following stanza from a well known chorus illustrates one avenue of this impression.

My teacher loves me this I know

For she often tells me so

She picks me up and holds me tight

I am special in her sight

Yes, my teacher loves me

Yes, my teacher loves me

Yes, my teacher loves me

She often tells me so.

Thirdly, the curriculum should be educationally balanced. It is imperative that programme be planned to meet the needs of child's physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social development from birth through the years of formal schooling.

This concept is found in Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go."

### **B. Instructional strategies**

A number of strategies can be used to convey curriculum content. Firstly, teachers may use their relationships with students to develop the trust of faith.

Secondly, good teacher model is an essential strategy. John Fowler states the need this way,

"When a student sees in a teacher, a role model to emulate, a person in whom to confide, a rock of strength to lean on, he or she has found the meaning of christian education and the magnetic pull of christian relationship" (1996)

Through their model, christian preschool teachers can integrate faith in learning in Asia. Modeling is shown in the teacher's life style which may be an attractive living witness.

Thirdly, teachers may use the 3 "H" method that Jesus did 2000 years back in His teachings. The 3 "H" method involves,

**TEACHING THE TRUTH - HEAD**

**CHANGING THE ATTITUDES - HEART**

**LEADING TO ACTION - HAND**

Fourthly, teachers should focus same learning in the community.



### Home Visitation

It is important for teachers to visit the children in their homes to see them with their parents. This will help the children come closer to teachers.

### Parent-teacher relationship

Teachers need good relationship with the parents of their students. Teachers should try to understand them and talk to them with confidence and love.

### C. Teacher Qualities

\* Preparation for teaching is accepted and approved preschools (nursery schools) hopefully should include at least two years of post secondary preparation with emphasis on preschool education.

\* Those who are working in this field must enjoy working with children. They must be kind and understanding.

\* Teachers selected must be Seventh-day Adventists in good and regular standing. Teachers need a spiritual faith orientation.

\* "Teachers are more than motivators ... No amount of teaching can be substituted for the transforming touch that comes from an experience with God (1996)

Teacher moved by the spirit of God, can help students transform their life pattern to be an useful one for them, and to the society.

Teachers express their attitudes in response to their experience with God or both of it. They need to be **loving, positive, caring, smiling, encouraging, resourceful, prepared, active, energetic, cheerful, organized and happy.**

#### D. Aims

- a. Reflect an understanding of the principles of child growth and development.
- b. Make provision for achieving intellectual growth
- c. Include the concept of God as a creator of man at nature.
- d. Provide experience in dealing with feelings, with a strong emphasis on enhancement of self worth.
- e. Develop the ability to interact socially in a positive manner.
- f. Increase competency in motor skills co-ordination.

#### E. Curriculum Content

##### Suggested Content Areas

##### a. **Skills**

Reasoning

Creating

Communicating

**b. Attitudes**

A positive self-concept and attitude

A natural Curiosity

Motor Co-ordination

Social group skills

Value awareness

**c. Activities**

Singing

Playing

Drawing

Visiting

Listening to media

Story telling

**F. Evaluation****Evaluation of preschools**

It may be possible to evaluate preschools through a committee. This could include:

Education director

Ministerial secretary

A Pastor

Two teachers of good standing from the field.

The inclusion of teachers in the team should help the preschool teacher to feel more at ease with the process. Such evaluation should help to maintain the quality of preschools.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The prime goal of Seventh-day Adventist education is leading students to Jesus. The christian Seventh-day Adventist teacher can integrate faith and learning through the values, they teach the practices of their life style, and the way in which they relate to students in the school environment.

The preschool curriculum outlined in this paper has the potential to give students a head start in their quest for formal education, more important it can be used to pursue the prime goal.

### END NOTES

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