

TLM Importance and Needs

Introduction

In the traditional classroom teaching there is hardly any scope for the children to interact with the teacher, teaching –learning materials and the teaching-learning environment. Therefore, teaching becomes very monotonous and students have to mostly rely on rote learning. Most often classroom teaching is dominated by the lecture method of teacher. Except some essential aids like chalk, duster, blackboard, Teaching-Learning materials are hardly used in the classroom. When used it may not be context-specific. One of the major aims of NCERT is designing, providing for, and enabling appropriate teaching-learning systems that could realise the identified goals. Learning has shifted from response strengthening to knowledge acquisition to construction of knowledge. In this context, the duty of the teacher is to provide appropriate environment where the child will construct his knowledge by interacting with his physical and social environment.



In this context, there is a need to orient teachers and develop appropriate context specific teaching learning materials useful to enhance the quality of teaching-learning process.

Effective Teaching Learning Materials consists of the following phases:

- Development of contextualised Teaching-Learning Material
- Field-Testing of contextualised Teaching-Learning Material

Children with special needs need special attention, care and strength. Ample and sufficient opportunities are required to uplift them to a higher pedestal. Thus, it is important to educate a child with special needs in an environment most appropriate to their learning general needs.

Definition of TLM



Teaching and learning is a process that includes many variables. These variables interact as learners work toward their goals and incorporate new knowledge, behaviours, and skills that add to their range of learning experiences.

TLM is an acronym used for Teaching Learning Materials. The TLM is a spectrum of educational materials that teacher uses in the classroom to support specific learning objectives, to help students improve or reinforce special skills and sometimes to make learning fun. In short, we can say Teaching Learning Materials are must for constructive knowledge.

Here are a few examples of Teaching Learning Materials – maps, charts, diagrams, books, overhead projectors, TV and videos, slide projectors, blackboards/chalkboards/flip charts, chalk/felt pens/markers.

Teaching materials is a generic term used to describe the resources teachers use to deliver instruction. Teaching materials can support student learning and increase student success. Ideally, the teaching materials will be tailored to the content in which they're being used, to the students in whose class they are being used, and the teacher. Teaching materials come in many shapes and sizes, but they all have in common the ability to support student learning. Teaching materials can refer to a number of teacher resources; however, the term usually refers to concrete examples, such as worksheets or manipulatives (learning tools or games that students can handle to help them gain and practice facility with new knowledge e.g. counting blocks). Teaching materials are different from teaching 'resources', the latter including more theoretical and intangible elements, such as essays or support from other educators, or places to find teaching materials.

Learning materials are important because they can significantly increase student achievement by supporting student learning. For example, a worksheet may provide a student with important opportunities to practice a new skill gained in class. This process aids in the learning process by allowing the student to explore the knowledge independently as well as providing repetition. Learning materials, regardless of what kind, all have some function in student learning.

In addition to supporting learning more generally, learning materials can assist teachers in an important professional duty i.e. differentiation of instruction. Differentiation of instruction is the tailoring of lessons and instruction to the different learning styles and capacities within your classroom. Learning materials such as worksheets, group activity instructions, games, or homework assignments all allow you to modify assignments to best activate each individual student's learning style.

Getting your hands on valuable teaching materials is not nearly as difficult as it can seem at first. The internet has many resources for teachers, most of them free that can significantly increase the contents of your teaching toolbox. You can also make your own materials. Every learning material you develop will be an asset to you when you next teach a similar unit. An investment of time or money in good teaching materials is an investment in good teaching.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) states that “The pluralistic and diverse nature of Indian society definitely makes a strong case for preparing a variety of not only textbooks but also other materials, so as to promote children’s creativity, participation and interest, thereby enhancing their learning. No one textbook can cater to the diverse needs of different groups of students. Both the use of supplementary TLM and small group work can be effective mechanisms to engage students from different classes and ability levels.

Relevance of TLMs for Learning Styles



Humans have different ways of learning. Some can assimilate in a better way the knowledge received visually, auditory or through a certain sense.

Students preferentially take in and process information in different ways: by seeing and hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically and intuitively, analysing and visualizing, steadily and in fits and starts. Teaching methods also vary. Some instructors lecture, others demonstrate or lead students to self-discovery; some focus on principles and others on applications; some emphasize memory and others understanding.

When mismatches exist between learning styles of most students in a class and the teaching style of the professor, the students may become bored and inattentive in class, do poorly on tests, get discouraged about the courses, the curriculum, and themselves, and in some cases change to other curricula or drop out of school. If the balance is achieved by appropriate use of TLM’s, all students will be taught partly in a manner they prefer, which leads to an increased comfort level and willingness to learn, and partly in a less preferred manner, which provides practice and feedback in ways of thinking and solving problems which they may not initially be comfortable with but which they will have to use to be fully effective professionals.

Types of Learning Styles



Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning. There are three basic types of learning styles. The three most common are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. To learn, we depend on our senses to process the information around us. Most people tend to use one of their senses more than the others.

Visual Learning



This indicates learning through seeing. These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. other people sitting in front of them). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

Auditory Learning

This indicates learning through listening. They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

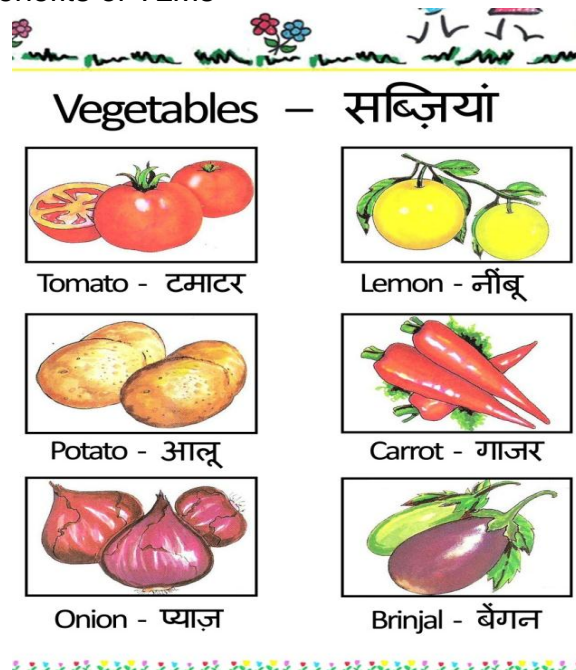
Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning



It indicates learning through moving, doing and touching. Kinesthetic / Tactile persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

It is necessary for a teacher to organize resources including effective TLMs to support the learning process in a way that it not only suits the characteristics of a few, but that it adapts to the characteristics of each student.

Importance and Benefits of TLMs



Besides teacher qualifications and school facilities, another important determinant of quality of education is the teaching and learning materials. It is essential for quality materials to be made available to the teachers and students in adequate quantities to support the teaching and learning processes.

Text books

Ideally, every student in every class should possess his/her own copy of the textbooks required by the school for each grade and each subject. The textbooks may be new or previously used by other students. Textbooks may be provided by the school, their parents, friends or other bodies such as NGOs.

Improved textbooks that are carefully written and designed professionally edited and tested, offering not merely factual information but also interactive spaces for children are important.

Teaching Aids



Teachers use teaching aids such as maps, wall charts, flip charts, flash cards, scientific models, kits and toys to support teaching and learning activities at school.

Schools produce or purchase teaching aids for either shared use among the teachers or provide them to individual teachers. Every school should keep an inventory of available teaching aids by quantity and conditions of use. The teaching aid inventory should be able to track how frequently each resource is used on a weekly or monthly basis.

Teaching aids are important in how well a student can learn. Teaching aids can assist students to learn and understand material faster and better. Some of these aids consist of, audio and/or visual aids and hands on aid.



Supplementary Learning Materials



The school can acquire a variety of supplementary learning materials that students can use to reinforce their learning. The most common among these materials are books, newspapers, magazines and other reading materials that supplement the textbooks. Students can borrow various charts, kits, models and equipment or instruments for science, sports, music and arts. For schools that are equipped with audio-video equipment and computers, the range of supplementary learning materials can also include audiotapes and videotapes, CD-ROMs and DVDs, access to computers and access to the internet.

Benefits of TLMs



TLMs should be simple and adaptable to local situations/conditions. Some of the advantages of Teaching and Learning Materials:

- Make lessons interesting
- Make learning easy
- Help learning (i.e. what has been learnt) to remain in the minds of the students for a longer time
- Help teachers to deliver their lessons successfully and easily
- Enables teachers to express intended concepts of learning effectively
- Can be found locally and therefore, are cheap
- Are usually easy to carry (portable)
- Enable everyone in a classroom situation to participate effectively
- Helps students to relate what is being taught to real life situations

Principles and Guidelines for Selecting TLMs



Teaching and learning materials, whether purchased or donated, should be selected appropriately.

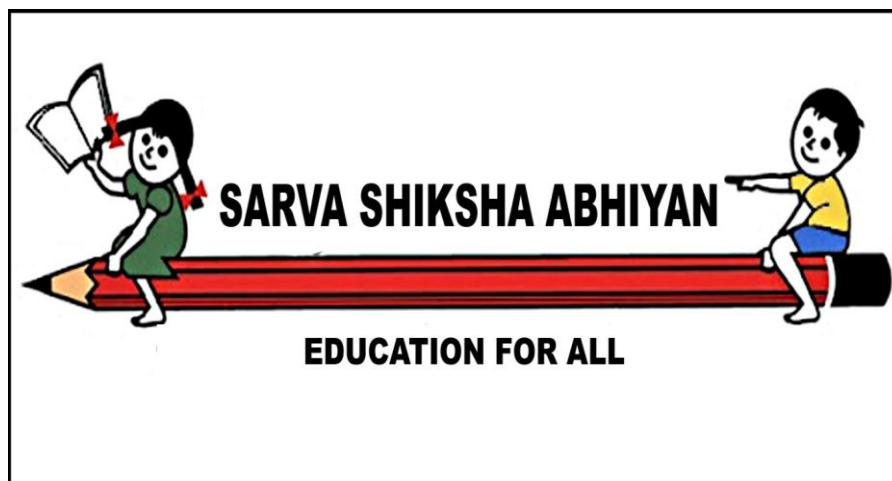
Principles for Selecting TLMs

The TLMs should be selected which ensures that they:

- Are directly related to a preschool's or school's curriculum policy and program, based on the department's framework of standards and accountability, and include, where relevant, support for the recreational needs of children and students
- Support an inclusive curriculum, thus helping children and students to gain an awareness of our pluralistic society and the importance of respectful relations with others
- Encourage understanding of the many important contributions made to our Indian heritage, people from diverse cultural and linguistic groups, people with disabilities and minority groups
- Motivate children, students and educators to examine their own attitudes and behaviour and to comprehend their duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges as citizens in our society
- Are relevant for the age of the children or students for whom they are selected and for their emotional, intellectual, social and cultural development. This includes the assurance that children and students will not be exposed to offensive materials; that is, materials which describe, depict, express or otherwise deal with matters of drug misuse or addiction, crime, cruelty, violence or revolting in a manner that a reasonable adult would generally regard as unsuitable for minors of the age of the relevant children and students
- Provide opportunities for children and students to find, use, evaluate and present information and to develop the critical capacities to make discerning choices, so that they are prepared for exercising their freedom of access, with discrimination, as informed and skilled adults
- Represent a range of views on all issues.

A teacher should determine the most appropriate teaching strategy and course material. Different approaches can be used. A recommendable approach consists in clustering students with similar learning styles and using the appropriate teaching strategy and material for each of the groups. Usually, the teacher is not able to implement such an approach, due for example to course time constraints, unavailability of the appropriate resources, etc. Should this be the case, another plausible approach consists of the identification of the “group average style” and the selection of the material accordingly. A third alternate approach (and perhaps the most recommendable one, should the resources allow it) consists of the use of different types of materials (thus targeting different styles) for a set of two or three learning units at a time. The selected material would be used on a rotational basis. This can be done with the integration of teams or groups of students having different learning styles. The adoption of this third approach allows the creation of team group skills for the students. This analysis can result in having a list of suggestions (on teaching strategies to employ) that is too long/complex to really serve as a guide for the teacher. In this situation the teacher might want to focus only on the teaching strategy that is representative of each category of learning style.

Activity Based Learning by SSA



The Activity Based Learning (ABL) approach by Sarva Shikshana Abhiyan (SSA) is unique and effective to attract out-of -school children to schools centres. 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.

The ABL concept has been in the Corporation Schools of Chennai. 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. After a close study, the team identified the following as the malady of conventional process.

- Teacher dominates the classroom always.
- Rare use of teaching learning materials.
- Most of the time the lecture method was followed.
- Importance was given to rote learning.

- Teacher assumes uniform learning pace and uniform level of achievement among children.
- Focus given on teaching rather than learning.
- No scope to cover the loss of learning during the period of absence of children.
- Traditional way of evaluation.
- Absence of joyous based extra activities.
- Absence of play way and learning by doing activities.
- Classroom with fewer facilities for learning activities.
- Instructional materials neither intensive nor attractive.

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

The ABL approach was experimented for one year in selected 13 schools in 10 zones during (2003) the experimental phase.

Since printed cards were not available at that time photocopies of the same were used in the classrooms as learning materials. Learning cards for classes I & II (4 subjects) and teachers manual were prepared, printed and distributed. Workbooks for classes I & II for four subjects were prepared, printed and distributed during 2004-2005.

Benefits of ABL Approach

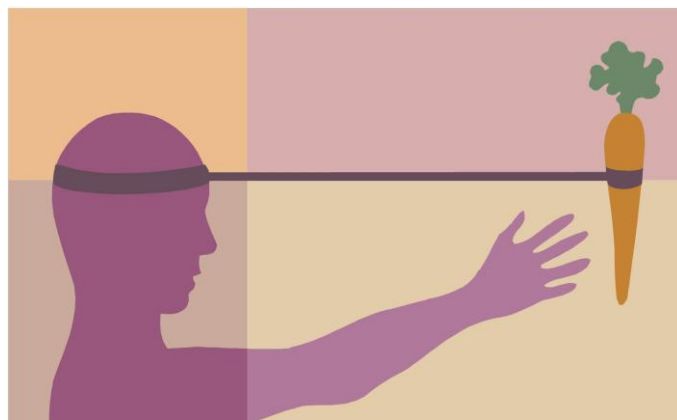


- Children learn on their own pace
- Provision of more time for self-directed learning and teacher directed learning is reduced considerably. Group learning, mutual learning and self-learning are promoted.
- Teachers teaching time is judiciously distributed among children. Only needy children are addressed by teachers.
- Children's participation in every step is ensured in the process of learning.
- Evaluation is inbuilt in the system it is done without the child knowing it.
- Rote learning is discouraged and almost no scope for rote learning.
- Classroom transaction is based on child's needs and interests.

- Freedom to children in learning as they choose their activity.
- No child can move to the next higher step of learning unless attains the previous one.
- Sense of achievement boosts child's confidence and morale.
- Attractive cards and activity create interest among children.
- Scope for child's development in creative and communicative skills.
- Children are allowed to move in the classroom as they choose their activity. 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 apart from 6,000 AIE (Alternate Innovative Education) centres. After field-testing of the ABL modules and Self-Learning Material kits are to be used in other schools.

Conclusion



Findings obtained from studies have indicated that teaching and learning resources create motivation in learning by supporting the learning process. Findings obtained from pre-school teachers revealed that pre-school learners seem to enjoy learning when teaching and learning materials are used resulting in achievement.

The selection of teaching and learning materials is an integral part of curriculum planning and delivery in preschools and schools. Children and students come into contact with a vast array of print, visual and multimedia materials in their daily lives. Educators also have a duty of care to ensure that the teaching and learning materials with which children and students are presented, or towards which they are directed, are appropriate to their developmental growth and relevant to the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes.

Teaching and Learning Materials should take into account the diversity of value and belief systems in the general community and the range of media and multimedia materials to which today's young people have access via, for instance, television, videos, computer games and the Internet.

We can conclude by saying that Teaching Learning Materials:

- Must be used often
- Teachers must be familiar with the TLMs
- Each student should have an opportunity to handle the TLMs
- Much as the TLMs are there to enable the teacher to teach well, they are also there to ensure the learners as well
- Proper use of TLMs facilitate learning