

Family, children and education

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The family is generally regarded as a basic social institution that has considerable impact on children's socialization and development. The family influences several facets of children's acquisition of communication skills. The most important source of influence in the family are the parents, along with the home environment they provide. Home environment is a complex concept that includes simultaneously the family's socio-economic status, the actual living conditions, interaction patterns and activity structures in the family, and other factors such as parental attitudes, goals and orientations.

Success in achieving the goals of primary education can only be ensured by the cooperative efforts of parents. Parents are the first teachers to the child. Children speak the language of their parents. They imitate the pronunciation and accent of their parents. They also acquire the social behaviour and bearing habits from their parents. So, the role of parents is important in this regard.

Many children drop out from school after attending classes for a few days. Parents beat, scold and frighten their children when they avoid school. This does not solve the problem, but only complicates it. Parents have to study the psychology of children and take steps accordingly.

As home is the first school for the child. So parents have to provide learning experiences to their sons and daughters right from childhood. Educated parents should guide their children from the very beginning. Parents need to tell the children frequently that the school is a place for happiness. Parents should give a good picture of the school to the child. Other members of the family must also try to give a pleasant feeling about school. Then only will children develop a positive idea of a school and go to school.

Parents need to take the child to the school premises. First the school

has to be shown to the child from a distance. A few pleasant things have to be told to the child about the school. The child needs to be enlightened about the students and their learning from teachers. The child has to be taken places near the school in the evenings, preferably after school hours. This is the time students play in the play ground in a friendly atmosphere which has to be observed by the child.

Parents should stop for a while near the school when they go along with their child to the school. Children observe the classrooms, playground, school garden, staff rooms etc., in the school premises. Parents also tell a few words about the school atmosphere its importance and visit the child during the middle of the working hours or at a convenient time. By doing this, there is every possibility of developing the right attitude in developing children to go the school without any extra efforts. The child will attend school and will not drop out.

An average parent would expect his son or daughter to absorb knowledge at school that would ensure a vertical mobility towards prestigious professional courses with prospects of employment. A teacher of science could take children on a field-trip to regions far from the madding crowd on a walking tour to study the fauna and flora. It is an exercise of the brain and brawn.

Many more instances could be cited to drive home the benefit of incidental learning. Teachers need to extricate themselves from their self-imposed duty of imparting bookish knowledge within the four walls of a classroom. They need to let in fresh air of exuberance and excitement that

would ignite the inherent curiosity of children and make many an incidental and insightful learning experience.

Parents socialise their children by providing the example of their own actions, attitudes and beliefs in ways that allow the children opportunities to learn. Willingly and unwillingly, children imitate parents' behaviour. In the same way, parents reward and punish children, provide direct instruction, and structure their environments.

While the "case" may be a Yeats poem or an eighteenth-century census or a Reagan speech, the discussion process is similar and works by the

same rules.

I do not, of course, contend that discussion teaching is the only, or even the best, pedagogical method available to college teachers. Successful college teaching demands that the teacher have available a number of techniques to use at the proper time and in the proper situation to maximize learning. One of those techniques—underused because most faculty do not understand its dynamics—is the discussion.

The particular technique described here is really a first step away from the lecture method of teaching. It is a method for leading a discussion in which a good deal of authority and control remains in the hands of the faculty member and in which a good deal of content and theory is still imparted by him or her as discussion leader.

The authority issue is an important one. Many advocates of discussion method teaching argue that for true learning to take place, the faculty member must relinquish authority and control and seek to empower students so that they are able on a continuing basis to learn for themselves. I do not dispute that goal as an ultimate one, but for the new convert, the approach must provide an orderly transition from the lecture method. Once the process becomes second nature, he or she may then be willing to consider methods that relinquish greater authority to students. This authority issue is an important one—keep it in mind as you grapple with the suggestions that follow.

