

April 3, 2018

Children Reveal Who They Are Through Play Activities, Says Renowned Author



The **pre-primary** stage could be considered to be the defining time of a child's growing-up years. It lays the foundation for his future learning. Taking up common issues that children and teachers face at nursery classes, **Bhawna Satsangi** of *edInbox* conducted a detailed interview with **K.T. Margaret**, the acclaimed author of *The Substance of Play: Principles of Pre-primary Teaching*. The book talks about her devised methodologies to improve children's overall learning experience.

A one of its kind book, it deals with the issues of childhood learning. To make teaching a learning experience, Margaret, in her book, deliberates on her learning experience while teaching for the past three decades. Here are the interview excerpts:

edInbox: Please elaborate on *The Substance of Play: Principles of Pre-primary Teaching*.

Margaret: *The Substance of Play: Principles of Pre-primary Teaching* has been compiled with the aim of assisting and motivating both aspiring and experienced pre-primary teachers. The book includes anecdotes, photographs, case histories and comprehensive lesson plans to elaborate on a methodology, which I designed to improve children's overall learning experience.

edInbox: What factors did you mention in the book, which deals with pre-primary teaching?

Margaret: The book discusses a range of topics which include my definition of the aim of education, activities which I believe children of this age will most benefit from, how to set up a classroom, suggested materials for play activities, classroom experiences and typical issues teachers and children face, how to tackle such issues, observation records and lesson plans.

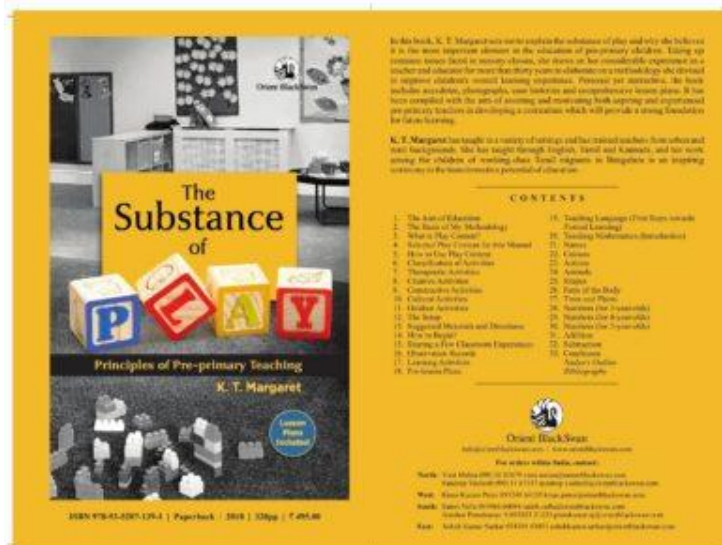
From my experience teaching children, I have come to realise that it is through play activities that children reveal who they are. They choose play materials which help them express their emotions, anxieties, worries and frustrations. If we, as teachers, observe them and listen carefully to what they say, then we will understand what their behaviour is telling us. My book helps teachers and helps children in the difficult task of developing their personality.

edInbox: What research went into writing this book?

Margaret: I drew on my experience as a teacher and educator for more than 30 years to write this book. A lot of the issues that I explore are issues that I faced or witnessed during my time as a teacher. It is my hope that teachers facing similar problems, who are interested in helping young children, will greatly benefit from my book.

edInbox: What are the issues that children of nursery classes face and how can they be tackled?

Margaret: Sometimes, there are children who are quiet and keep to themselves, or



children who are prone to fits of anger and violence, or children who do not participate in the classroom. As teachers, we have to observe their behaviour without judgment and try to determine the root of the problem. Sometimes, this can be arrived at by using observation records and learning from the children's behaviour when they interact with specific play materials like clay, wooden blocks or paint or it can be arrived at through patient dialogue with both the child and the parents. There are of course many degrees of complexity when it comes to helping a child, and my book addresses this issue comprehensively. My book also provides lesson plan designed to help the children better express themselves, thereby providing a strong foundation for future learning.

edInbox: Do you feel that teachers are not skilled enough to tackle issues children face or that the children are not equipped to share their issues with the teachers?

Margaret: Teachers most definitely have the skills to help children. What my book sets out to do is provide guidance where necessary. The methodology I have provided is one which, in my experience, has helped both teachers and children.

edInbox: What are the key points that need immediate attention to improve the quality of teaching? The quality of teaching has not been up to the mark at schools, especially government schools. What recommendations can you make to improve the quality of teaching which, in turn, will help student-retention at schools?

Margaret: I do not wish to define the quality of education at our schools today, but I will say that my book emphasises on learning with understanding. Rote learning is of little use in my opinion. *The Substance of Play* has been put together to help teachers help students to learn with understanding, which is a powerful and effective way for students to remember difficult concepts.