

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

S. S. Madiba

Mathematics at the primary school level should be closely linked to the reality of the learner. The school grounds and local environment provide ample opportunities to do this.

Mathematics is a living subject full of fun and activities. It is used in our daily activities, both consciously and unconsciously. The daily activities take place at home, at school and everywhere. It is for you and I as teachers to make these activities a reality for the learner. Mathematics should be exciting, enjoyable and full of fun for the learner.

Home environment

Children, pupils and students use mathematics at home. How? They can tell you the number of rooms at their homes, how many pets they have and the number of almost every little article available at home. How do they get this? Yes, through counting. In their counting they use: natural numbers, even numbers, odd numbers, multiples and even prime numbers. These mathematical terms will be of meaning to the young learner as he continues with his education. For example, pupils are sent to shops to buy this and that. They correct the person at the counter by saying, "You have robbed me, this is not the correct change." That has something to do with addition and subtraction.

Classroom environment

Before going deep into the subject matter let us first use the available resources. For teaching shapes let us refer the pupils to the chalkboard, doors, window frames, the floor and the ceiling, moving from simple to complex forms. Let us also find out if triangles, squares and other mathematical shapes are not available in the classroom.

Schoolyard environment

Pupils can be taken out to the school grounds. An interesting lesson on measurement can be conducted there. Use metre sticks to determine the length of the soccer field, netball field and the athletics field. Also use metre wheels to determine these measurements. The game is playful and enjoyable. They like playing, so, let them enjoy playing under your supervision and guidance.

Conclusion

Hard facts, formulae and statements will be introduced later, when the basics are understood. We do not start the house by roofing! Do we?

Lastly: Forget about pennies and shillings - instead use Rands and cents. Forget about pints and gallons - instead use ml, l and kl. We should not have a separate school language and home language in mathematics. If we have the two, then which one should the children use?

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will focus on 'Environmental Education and the Community'. Articles pertaining to this or any other aspect of environmental education will be welcome.

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