

SOMETHING TO PONDER ABOUT

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Assessments are closely related to observation. It is imperative for each teacher that along with her other skills, she learns to train her eye so that she has the practiced skill of a doctor. This observation is kept purely scientific. It is also known as phenomenological observation where one observes facts without mixing it up with opinion, feelings, previous knowledge, concepts etc. Observing how a child walks, talks, holds a pencil, picks up a fruit to eat, the size of his head, the structure of his body builds a picture of the child and gives you a story, far more important and accurate than any assessment will do.

When a teacher or parent looks at a child with loving interest, many questions get answered. You build a relationship first and then you make a perception. The mechanical or impersonal is kept at bay and you get many answers when you ask in your heart, who are you, what can I do for you and what do you bring for me. This is especially true in children on the autism spectrum where no assessment is quite enough to give you all the answers.

Then you begin to understand, both, the typical and the typological forms of the child.

What happens with this introspection is that we look at things as they are instead of jumping to conclusions.

When I enter a classroom, instead of finding children who are approached with what's wrong kind of look, to one which says how can I tell if this child were approached differently, like with supportive patience from my side, how would he do?

In fact, done the other way round, establishing an assessment score, slotting the child into a box can be dangerous at the most and misleading in the least. Children have shown to not cooperate on bad days and sometimes the performance varies with unfamiliarity of the material used.

Watch the doughnut, not the hole:

All children with disabilities have some developmental area which is not age appropriate. Like a child with cerebral palsy may have lags in the physical domain, but his social needs, his cognitive abilities and his sense of self may be like that of his normal peers. How damaging then is it to, provide him with a curriculum and interaction which is watered down or suited to a much younger child. So all children, are children first and the disability a part of them. This is something we must never forget in our attempt to define them.

Labels: An expert Susan Hall says, "Labels are dangerous when they replace a persons humanity and individuality, but they are invaluable when they provide the precise terminology to decide who needs what, when, where, why and how!"

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