

Embracing the Future of Early Years Education in India

In 2020 the Indian National Education Policy gave a visionary statement about how education in India must and will change for the future. Retaining an essential core of Indian culture and understandings, it seeks to use the best educational thinking and practice in the world to revolutionise the experience of students and secure brighter futures for all. And, rightly at the heart of this was the recognition of Early Years (EY) education as being not just a 'foundational' stage but the 'essential' stage of a student's education that will

FinlandWay programme. Highly skilled teachers in Mumbai now work with leading educators from Helsinki University in a training and development programme to produce a world class curriculum and experience. The aim: to combine the best of India with the best in the world for our students and their futures.



determine both their future academic success and wellbeing as an adult.

So, in seeking the world's best Early Years education, where should we look? Well Finland has topped the world in the PISA rankings (Maths, Literacy and Sciences) that compares 15 year old students across 80 countries and systems. What do they put their success down to? Surprisingly, it's not a competition driven, fact oriented system but the quality and experience that students gain in their Early Years! With a strong EY programme in place and galvanised by the NEP, the Garodia Education Centre for Learning in Mumbai (GICLM) decided to investigate what they could learn from Finland to complement the rich experiences in an Indian education. It soon developed into an official partnership with the Finnish Education Department to work together to offer the Garodia

So, what makes the difference in the classroom? Quickly it was recognised that a strong core of Maths, literacy and science was crucial. And, this is now supported by what the Finnish describe as the 'Three P's': Play-based, Participatory and Phenomenon based learning. This is a very skilful and highly personal way of approaching every child's learning. Every activity, including play, develops individual learning, skills and attitudes essential to that child. Even when they are lying down on the grass looking up at the sky, the teachers are talking about the shapes in the clouds and how they are blown by the winds. And parents are integral to this. A unique tracking system gives parents daily progress reports online with individual targets and evidence of achievements.

Such has been the success of this programme that we are now seeing students at GICLM having reading standards at least two years above their international peers and expectations.

So, the future in India is rosy as we look beyond our borders and respect ourselves. GICLM has become a centre for educators and parents to visit, learn and join in activities. Everyone is welcome. We hope that the pebble thrown into the water will spread its ripples of excellence. That is our challenge to recognise and take new opportunities after the pandemic of our times. A brighter future can definitely be our reward. And it starts with Early Years.