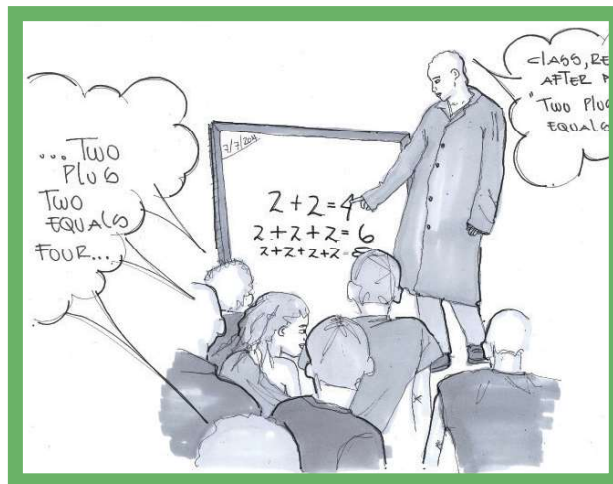


Rote based learning VS. Play based learning

Schools play an important role in ensuring children's access to play. Unfortunately, many teachers around the world have not been trained on methods that include play in learning. Consequently, many schools only employ the "rote learning" method. "Rote learning" is a method of teaching that uses memorization and repetition to instruct children. Does this scene look familiar?



This is an example of a "rote learning" classroom. It can be a useful method in some settings. It is helpful for memorizing large sets of information to recall quickly.

However, the problem with only using "rote learning" in the classroom is that by simply repeating information, children do not learn how to think critically and learn how to use the information in real ways that work in the real world instead of just recalling it. It is also very difficult for young children to learn using "rote learning" because their bodies want (and need!) to move and play. It is very difficult for them to sit still for long periods of time as this goes against the natural way they were built to learn. It's much easier and less stressful to work with the way children instinctively want to learn.

Remember the child playing with sand and stones in the school yard?



She was learning the same concept of “ $2+2=4$ ” by stacking and counting her stones while playing. Because she was actively involved through play, she is learning the concept of addition and how to apply it to other situations, instead of just how to repeat an addition equation. And this didn’t require the teacher to expend energy forcing her to learn.

In order for children to learn instead of simply repeat, they must be actively engaged and using their senses and bodies. They must test, experiment, work together, and try new things. They do this best through play.

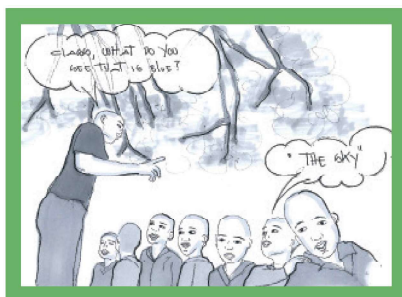
If you are a teacher, teaching through play may sound impossible. You know you are responsible to the school and the ministry of education for instructing your students on a set of information and learning outcomes for the class level and subject you are assigned this.

Teachers can support children to learn through play by incorporating “play based learning” in their classrooms.

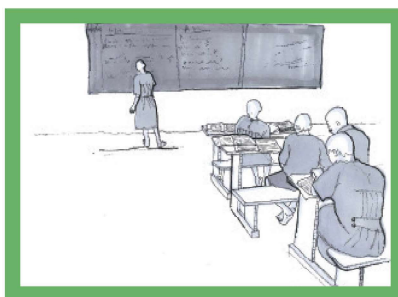
Play-based learning simply means adapting learning objectives to respect and encourage children’s natural play drive. Let’s look at an example. Maria is a nursery school teacher. Today, according to her lesson plan she must teach her students about identifying colors.

If Maria used “rote based learning” her classroom might look like this:





If Maria used “play based learning” her classroom might look like this:



In the play based learning example, Maria is engaging with her students hands-on. She is encouraging them to learn through exploring and interacting with the world around them in active, playful ways. “Play based learning” will look different for different ages of students.

For example, an older group of students might learn a history lesson through “rote based learning” by writing down facts and dates they copy down from the blackboard.



If their teacher used “play based learning” they might learn the same lesson by reading the information and then acting out the story from history in a play or by telling stories about what the different characters might have experienced at that point of history. What they could see, smell, hear, and feel.

Look back to the section on “What Does Play Look Like?” Can you think of different ways to teach learning objectives in the classroom by utilizing some of these play types? When teachers use “play based learning” instead of only “rote based learning” in their classrooms they support their students to think critically, develop their minds, and cultivate a love of learning.