

Excuses, Excuses, **Excuses...**

Shahida Parveen

You may have heard of the recent trend in using Low Cost/No Cost (LCNC) materials to develop classroom activities. You probably think it is a great idea. It is. Except if you are in a remote area of Gilgit where you barely have access to even a box of tissue.

These were some of our concerns that we expressed to our trainer Alminah Pardan during a session on CE.ECED (Certificate in Education in Early Childhood Education Development). Our facilitator understood that what he may show would have more value than what he would tell.

He introduced us to Ms. Shumaila, a graduate of the CE.ECED Programme from last year. A tall soft-spoken girl, with a black scarf covering her head, Shumaila was a community teacher at a government school for girls in Gilgit. It is a rugged mountainous area. Understandably, the school is unable to provide any teaching learning material.

Alminah Pardan arranged for us to visit Ms. Shumaila's school. There we saw neat little subject corners, displaying relevant material made from locally available LCNC material. Ms. Shumaila spoke with us emphasizing the value of thinking outside the box and of improvising.

Talking with Ms. Shumaila quieted our doubts about using LCNC material in areas where empty packets from consumer goods and food items were not easily available. She showed us how we could make the best use of what was available to us.

When we went back to our own schools, we collected LCNC materials with the support of other teachers, parents, students and other stake holders. We found ways to

incorporate this material in our learning and at the end of the summer vacation, our classrooms were ready for the new session; there were displays put up to support children in their learning.

What I learnt from Ms. Shumaila was that if we want to look for excuses to shirk work, there are plenty to be found; but if we want to be creative and productive, the resources are abundantly unlimited.

The author is a student of M.Ed at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad