

Education and Vision

BY Hasina Sajun

Safia Shaikh has been running a successful Montessori school since the past eleven years, she expanded to a Primary and Junior school at the end of 1990, named the Bayview Academy which has made waves in Karachi.

The key to her success is her sincere dedication to the cause of child education. Taking great care to nurture the self esteem of the child, Safia believes that things really work when you put yourself in the child's place as a parent or a teacher, how would you like to be treated, how would you like to be taught if you were the child, how would you like to be respected how would you like to be appreciated. A positive approach to everything is a must, it is important to accentuate and enhance the positive aspect of the child, this will get you a positive response and help you to be sensitive to a child's needs.

I asked Safia if she had always intended making education her career. She explained how she had successfully completed her Montessori Training in Karachi but went on to try her hand at other things including advertising. Then she returned to Montessori and worked at Nursery school after which she happened to start her own school. Once she had started her own school, Safia said "I started broadening my horizons and

making the effort to qualify myself further and expose myself to different systems of education and went abroad and spent time observing schools and taking courses. I inquired where she had taken these courses. The first one was in Karachi through the Grammar school which is her Alma Mater. "I found it very



enlightening" said Safia, "that was my first exposure to something beyond what I had been doing. This workshop was held by a team that had come from England, the workshop leaders were heads of schools in Bradford. She followed this up by actually going to Bradford and visiting the schools, spending time seeing what she had learnt in theory being implemented in practice.

This observation of the schools

was a follow up to what she had learnt- her experience, Safia said, was very interesting because she was able to realise things like classroom management, room arrangement and lot of other things which you cannot relate to until you actually see them happening

Safia also took the Hi scope system of education in America, where classroom observation was part of the training. She has attended a lot of workshops held at the TRC in Karachi. Workshop leaders had come from abroad too and then there was the workshop on how to be a Workshop Leader. She also did a number of workshops for the TRC. Besides this Safia has been involved in writing a book called 'Teachers guideline' with another lady Christine Parker, this was funded by UNICEF, it has also been translated into Urdu and these have been distributed free of cost. This was done in collaboration with TRC. This was basically for the pre school teachers.

Wondering what the Hi scope system was, Safia Shaikh explained that it is not really a system as much as philosophy. It is very much in keeping with the Montessori system, the only addition that is made to it is that they have certain material in the classroom which is more open ended, there is no prescribed material in the Hi scope they only give you the development sequence the children go through

