Another way to pick up alphabets of life

B. Sreejan, TNN | Jul 7, 2014, 02.17PM IST

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Parents in Kerala are scared of experimenting and instead, wish to mould their kids according to preconceived ideals. "The only aim is to develop competitiveness among kids and somehow admit them to professional colleges," said Nirmala Diaz, founder-trustee of Sloka Waldorf School, Hyderabad, and a campaigner of Steiner-inspired pedagogy.

Sloka is the first Waldorf school in the country which has a curriculum based on Steiner philosophy. Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner had advocated ethical individualism which gives thrust on values and believes that the highest endeavour of education must be to develop free and able human beings.

Diaz said that early education should focus on developing all senses of the child.

"We use fairytales in plenty to convey lessons. Panchathantra, Jataka, Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bible are all part of our learning system," she said. "Children are encouraged to think in pictures as developing pictorial consciousness is very important," said Diaz who started Sloka in 1990 after an enterprising career in advertising.

The Steiner-inspired curriculum teaches mathematics based on rhythm, beat and music. "Hence, our students never hate maths," said Diaz, pointing to the fact that

Many students who pass Class X by attending CBSE curriculum get cent per cent mark for maths. "If taught rhythmically, they will easily discover the magic of maths," she said.

Teachers at Sloka are encouraged to guide students to individual choices and freedom. "We want our teaching to be as artistic as possible," said Diaz. "It's important that teachers never beat children or use harsh words against them. If that happens, we simply ask the teacher to go out," she said. Learning to play the flute is a must for all kids, as it is the best breathing exercise. "So is the daily round of exercise," she said.

The biggest issue of conventional education is the inability of students to think out of the box. "We see so many suicide and drug abuse cases daily. There are even reports of children committing suicide because of failure in exams," she said. Diaz and Sloka's founder-trustee Suresh Kuppu were in Thiruvananthapuram to explore the possibility of starting a Waldorf school here. They held discussions with Swami Sandeepananda Giri of the School of Bhagavad Gita here on Saturday.

"The philosophy of the school is interesting and I strongly feel that our kids should also be given an opportunity for holistic education," said Swami Sandeepananda Giri.

Giri said the School of Bhagavad Gita has plans to start Kerala's first Waldorf school, probably in the next academic year.