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Report of the Group

to Examine the Feasibility of

Implementing the Recommendations of the

National Advisory Committee

(Set up to Suggest Ways to Reduce Academic Burden on School Students)

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**REPORT OF THE GROUP TO EXAMINE THE FEASIBILITY
OF IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SET UP TO SUGGEST WAYS TO REDUCE ACADEMIC
BURDEN ON SCHOOL STUDENTS**

A. National Advisory Committee was set up on 1 March 1992 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal, former Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), to advise on the ways and means to reduce the academic burden on school students. The Committee submitted its Report to the Ministry on 15 July 1993.

2. On receipt of the Report of the National Advisory Committee, a decision was taken by the Ministry to set up a Group under the Chairmanship of Shri Y. N. Chaturvedi, Additional Secretary, Department of Education of the Ministry, to examine the recommendations of the Committee, give its views on the feasibility of implementing them and a time schedule of implementation. The Group was set up on 25 August 1993 and a copy of the Government Order giving the composition and terms of reference of the Group is given in Annex A.

3. The Group held two meetings on 23 and 24 September 1993 in which it examined the recommendations made in the Yash Pal Committee Report. The Group had the benefit of advice of Shri R.C. Tripathi, Adviser (Education), Planning Commission, also. The list of members who participated in the deliberations is given in Annex B. In addition to participation by two senior functionaries of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Group had the benefit of a detailed critique of the Yash Pal Committee Report prepared by the NCERT. This was a particularly useful input in view of the role the NCERT plays in curriculum development, textbook preparation and other aspects of school education.

4. General Observations

The Group has observed with considerable appreciation the participative nature of the Yash Pal Committee Report about the load of curriculum on school students. While discussion on curriculum load has been extensive over the years in the mass media, it has been largely confined to the physical load of the school bag which a student has to carry. Many have felt that there has been a lot of generalisation in such discussions on the basis of the size of the school bag seen in metropolitan cities and particularly in regard to students studying in public schools even at the pre-school stage. The Report has taken note in the beginning itself that "a survey conducted in Delhi revealed that the weight of school bag, on an average, in primary classes in public schools is more than 4 kg, while it is around 1 kg in MCD schools". This finding of the Yash Pal Committee is in tune with the information with the educational managers that firstly, the load of the school bag is not a forbidding one in schools in villages and in small towns and secondly, even in big towns, the problem is in its most aggravated form in regard to students of public schools and children of pre-school classes. Luckily, there are signs recently of the more enlightened public schools de-emphasising subject-matter learning at pre-school stage as also de-emphasising the need to prescribe a lot of books and exercise books at pre-school stage. Since such schools are pace-setters, it is hoped that this example will soon influence other pre-primary schools. This Group is recommending subsequently some specific measures in pursuance of one of the recommendations of the Yash Pal Committee to accelerate this process.

The Yash Pal Committee has instead taken the problem at a more elevated plane by observing that in the present schools "a lot is taught but little is learnt or understood". It has, therefore, inferred that the load of non-learning or non-comprehension is the real load one should be concerned about. This approach of looking at the problem of academic burden has imparted to the Report of the Yash Pal Committee a great deal of significance.

Simultaneously, the Group noted that there are a few things to which the Yash Pal Committee could have given specific attention. The National Policy on Education (NPE) and the

Programme of Action (POA) enunciate the need to have a national core curriculum and have spelt out some of the features of this. The policy also strongly enunciates a child-centred approach to education. It is in pursuance of this that the NCERT framed a curriculum framework for the school stage which has been accepted by all the states. The NCERT has also developed the levels of competencies to be attained at the end of primary stage. These exercises with a lot of validity in them have been the basis for developing syllabi and textbooks for different stages of school education. While there may be some flaws in the syllabi and the textbooks prepared by the NCERT, it does not seem that they can be accused of being grossly unsuitable or overloaded. In regard to curriculum load, the NCERT had carried out a study in mid-eighties which identified the physical overload of curriculum at some stages of school education and also pointed out that inadequate teacher competency, insufficient teaching days, and inadequate classroom facilities, transfer the curriculum load to the students as well as indirectly to parents. The Yash Pal Committee has not referred to this work and the facts stated in the preceding statements. While the main argument forming the basis of the Yash Pal Committee Report is eminently sound, with regard to the main thrust of its recommendations, some of the statements in the Report do not indicate the data or basis on which the Committee has relied. Similarly, some of the recommendations like the one concerning affiliation of schools to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) are not accompanied by corresponding consideration in the main body of the Report. In a few cases like in regard to medium of instruction in schools, the Committee has noted in the main body of its Report: "the educated sections of the society believe that command over English is key to upward mobility in social life... It is a well-known fact that young children studying in English medium schools mug the content of science and social sciences without understanding. It is an accepted principle of pedagogy that whatever is memorised without understanding proves burdensome on children. Any language other than the mother tongue of the child, if used as medium of instruction, is a big source of academic burden on children". However, such strong statements do not have a corresponding

recommendation. The Report also ignores the fact that for most of our students, medium of instruction is the mother tongue or regional language at all stages of school education. Overall it is an important Report which has brought to the fore an understanding about curriculum load which one does not frequently come across. For this it is bound to raise the level of debate about the curriculum load to a qualitatively higher level. It is expected that this Report would lead to meaningful and adequate reform in curriculum formulation, textbook preparation, teacher training, etc. The Group feels that the nature of the problem is different for each stage of school education but the Committee has not specifically referred to the distinct problems of each stage and ways of dealing with them. The views of the Group in regard to individual recommendations made by the Yash Pal Committee are given below.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1

A number of organisations and departments organise competitions at district, state and national level for students in various fields such as school subjects, exhibitions, essay writing, elocution, etc. Perhaps, the spirit behind these activities is to recognise and reward the talent in diverse fields. But, unfortunately this tends to produce somewhat unhealthy singling out of people for their brief moment of glory. Competitions where individual achievement is rewarded need to be discouraged since they deprive children of joyful learning. However, group activities and group achievements must be encouraged and rewarded to give a boost to cooperative learning in schools.

Comments

The Group is of the view that group activity and individual effort are not mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Rewarding individual achievement does not take away the joy of learning and is also a means to motivate towards higher achievement. In the view of the Group, the educational system should promote performance of the students both as an individual and as a member of the group.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (a)

The process of curriculum framing and preparation of textbooks be decentralised so as to increase teachers' involvement in these tasks. Decentralisation should mean greater autonomy, within state-level apparatus, to district-level boards or other relevant authority, and to heads of schools and classroom teachers to develop curricular materials on their own, best suited to needs of local environment. All the schools be encouraged to innovate in all aspects of curriculum, including choice of textbooks and other materials.

Comments

The Group noted that the curriculum and syllabi are designed by the NCERT/CBSE at national level and by the State Boards of Secondary Education/SCERTs at state level by involving teachers and through teachers. However, the number of teachers associated with this exercise is limited to the number of members of the Committee or the Board. The Yash Pal Committee has rightly underlined the need to increase teachers' participation in curriculum development. The Group feels that while the size of committees at national or state level cannot be increased beyond a limit, a meaningful way of improving teachers' participation would be for either the NCERT/CBSE/State Boards/SCERTs to prepare the draft syllabus and finalise it after subjecting it to regional or district level consideration by a large body of teachers or, in the alternative, to get multiple syllabi developed at regional and district levels on the basis of which the final syllabi could be prepared at the state/national level. The Group, however, does not recommend decentralisation in the preparation of syllabus or textbooks at the district or school level because it will be difficult to ensure adequate projection of national identity and of composite culture of India. Also, in such a situation, the adherence to even minimum standards in all parts of the country may become difficult.

In regard to textbooks, the Group agrees with the Yash Pal Committee that the primary responsibility for preparing textbooks, particularly for the lower classes should be that of teachers. It may, however, be remembered that the involvement of experts since the early 1960s led to qualitative improvement

in school textbooks. They helped in weeding out dead wood, brought in new perspectives in tune with contemporary knowledge. The Group, however, shares the concern of the Yash Pal Committee that many textbooks presently tend to project predominantly the urban middle class life style. Therefore, the Group recommends that :

- (a) The writing of textbooks, as far as possible, should be assigned to school teachers and to those who have developed professional expertise in the area. Subject-matter specialists should be engaged as consultants or advisers to vet the content and presentation of the subject-matter to ensure its accuracy.
- (b) In states which have distinct socio-cultural geographical zones, different and parallel sets of textbooks with the same learning objectives should be prepared and used in schools for each such distinct socio-cultural geographical region.
- (c) A conscious effort should be made by the textbook preparation agencies to take examples from rural areas for illustrating various points because a large majority of students are in rural areas.
- (d) The textbook preparation agencies should undertake systematic review of all textbooks in a time-bound manner to ensure that any trivial matter which may have got included in the textbooks is weeded out. Similarly, such a review should also try to eliminate elements of repetitions of the topics covered in previous classes.
- (e) The Group noted that, in some cases, the textbooks for subjects other than languages in some classes are written in a language which is considerably more complex and difficult than the language used in textbooks for that class. It, therefore, recommends that the group which writes a textbook should include one language teacher who should vet the manuscript to ensure that the degree of difficulty of the language used in the subject-matter is not more than the degree of difficulty designed for language competency for that class. In regard to curriculum transaction and teaching materials, the Group noted that there are no restrictions on schools and teachers to innovate. Indeed, the teacher training courses have consistently advocated

this and many organisations have introduced special programmes to promote this. Needless to say that schools and teachers should be motivated to innovate to the fullest extent in regard to teaching methods and use of teaching materials.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (b)

Voluntary organisations with a specific commitment to pedagogical innovations within the formal or non-formal system be provided greater freedom and support in development of curriculum, textbooks and teacher training. A suitable and adequate mechanism be evolved for wider dissemination of the experiences of such organisations.

Comments

The Group fully agrees that voluntary organisations with a commitment to education should be encouraged in all possible manners. The Group also noted that the governments, both at the national and the state levels have, in recent past, made a substantial move to expand such cooperation. The process needs to be continued. However, for reasons mentioned in 2 (a), the Group does not favour decentralisation in curriculum development and textbooks preparation to the extent of entrusting it to voluntary organisations because of the sensitivity of the matter.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (c)

We endorse the idea of setting up education committees at village, block and district levels to undertake planning and supervision of schools under their jurisdiction.

Comments

This is acceptable in principle. This has been strongly advocated in para 10.8 of the NPE, 1986. Following the Constitutional Amendment for decentralisation at Panchayat level, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) has already constituted a Committee on Decentralised Management of Education to examine and recommend measures for effectively carrying out

the desired involvement of the local committees. Therefore, this recommendation should be implemented in the light of the recommendations of the CAGE Committee.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (d)

Sufficient contingency amount (not less than 10 per cent of the total salary bill of the school) be placed at the disposal of heads of schools for purchase, repair and replacement of pedagogical equipment.

Comments

This is acceptable. The State/UT Governments and autonomous bodies of the Central Government controlling their respective chain of schools (Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, Central Tibetan Schools, Railway Schools and Sainik Schools and other schools run by the Defence establishments) should be urged to give this authority to the Principals/Headmasters of the schools to make repairs to school buildings, purchase, repair and replace pedagogical equipment and books and also to carry out innovative projects, subject to the control of the local education committees. The organisations controlling the schools and the State Governments should categorically specify that the Head of the school does not require approval of any higher educational authority and the School Management/Advisory Committee for using the available money for these purposes.

RECOMMENDATION No. 3

The culture of writing textbooks be changed so as to involve a much larger number of teachers in the preparation of textbooks. The scientists and experts in various disciplines may be associated with the preparation of textbooks as consultants and not as writers of the books. Initiative in this regard should rest with groups of enlightened and innovative teachers who should be provided training in book writing.

Comments

The group agrees with the purport of this recommendation—

greater involvement of teachers—and the views of the Group on this recommendation is included in the comments on 2 (a).

RECOMMENDATION No. 4

At least three parallel systems of school education (syllabus, textbooks and examination) are running concurrently in different states. In each state majority of schools are affiliated to the State Board of Education while a few are affiliated to either CBSE or ICSE. The schools affiliated to CBSE in the states other than Delhi enjoy the prestige of being elite schools. The CBSE curriculum becomes a trend-setter for the State Boards leading to heavier curriculum for majority of children. Therefore, the Committee recommends that jurisdiction of CBSE be restricted to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas and all other schools be affiliated to the respective State Boards.

Comments

The Group has been unable to appreciate the arguments put forth by the Yash Pal Committee in this recommendation. The choice of educational boards that the schools have is already very limited — there is no free choice — and it can be exercised only with the approval of the State Government. Therefore, if a school in any part of the country has the choice of affiliating with one Board or the other, it should be generally good for education. As for CBSE, it relies heavily on the NCERT for developing syllabi and preparing textbooks. The NCERT, in turn, operates within the national policy framework and on the basis of guidelines contained in the National Curriculum Framework. Rightly the NCERT keeps in view the existing standards in the country, the capability of students, and standards in developed countries because the syllabus and textbook must take note of all these. If there is unnecessary material in some of the NCERT books, it should be eliminated as the Group has suggested in the preceding recommendations. However, there is not adequate material on record to substantiate that CBSE syllabi or NCERT books *per se* are overloaded. Also, the Yash Pal Committee has recommended that affiliation to CBSE should be restricted to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas with all other schools being affiliated to respective State Boards. If

affiliation to the CBSE is good for Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas it cannot be bad for other schools.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5 (a)

Appropriate legislative and administrative measures be adopted to regulate the opening and functioning of early childhood education institutions (pre-schools). Norms regarding accommodation, staff, apparatuses, play materials be laid down for the recognition of these schools. It should be ensured that these institutions do not perpetrate violence on young children by inflicting a heavy dose of 'over education' in the form of formal teaching of Reading, Writing and Numbers. The practice of holding tests and interviews for admission to nursery class be abolished.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5 (b)

Norms for granting recognition to private schools be made more stringent. This will prove conducive for improving the quality of learning on the one hand and arrest growing commercialisation on the other. The norms, thus developed, be made uniformly applicable to all schools including the state-run institutions.

Comments [5 (a) and 5 (b)]

The Group is in agreement with the recommendations. While the NCERT has prepared some norms for the staff, nature of curriculum and educational material for pre-primary stage, this sector of education in the country is largely unsupervised and unregulated. It is also a known fact that most of these schools are loading the students with the burden of formal teaching of various subjects. The Group advised that an appropriate regulatory mechanism should be urgently set up in the country to ensure that learning at this stage is by playway method and formal teaching of subjects is scrupulously prevented. Similarly, the Group agrees that recognition and affiliation of both private and government schools should be made more stringent so that schools lacking in minimum essential facilities are not allowed to function because it really means punishment

to the students. Although there is a well set arrangement for recognition and affiliation of schools but due to extraneous pressures the standards sometimes are not observed. The Group would like to suggest that the possibility of having a legislation to specify norms of facilities in schools and providing for powers to prevent opening of schools which do not have facilities should be seriously considered.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 6

There is no justification for torturing the young children by compelling them to carry heavy bags of books everyday to schools. Textbooks should be treated as school property and thus, there should be no need for children to purchase the books individually and carry them daily to homes. A separate time-table for the assignment of homework and for the use of textbooks and notebooks be prepared by the school and be made known to the children in advance.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 7

The nature and character of homework needs a radical change. In the primary classes, children should not be given any homework, save for extension of explorations in the home environment. In the upper primary and secondary classes, homework, where necessary, should be non-textual, and textbooks, when needed for work at home should be made available on a rotation basis.

Comments (6 and 7)

The Group has already agreed that there should be no formal teaching of subjects in the pre-school stage. The Group also feels that there should be no homework and project work at the primary stage (Classes I-V). However, it is an extreme point of observation that textbooks should be treated as school property. Besides the financial implications arising out of the burden on schools to purchase the textbooks and the concomitant responsibility on the schools to store the books when most of the schools of the country do not have either the financial resources or storage capacities, the children would

be devoid of the opportunity to refer to the textbooks in their homes. For an overwhelming majority of school students of the country, the textbooks remain as the only source of reading material. The Group recommends that the class routine for the upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages should be drawn up in such a way that every subject is not required to be taught everyday. This should be included in the norms for compliance by every school which the Group has suggested in para 5 (a) and 5 (b) above.

RECOMMENDATION No. 8

The existing norm for teacher-pupil ratio (i.e. 1:40) should be enforced and an attempt should be made to reduce this to 1:30, at least in the primary classes, as a basis for future educational planning.

Comments

The Group agrees with a higher teacher-pupil ratio with improved teaching and standards of education. It understands that in reality the existing teacher-pupil ratio is around 1:40 in most parts of the country. Attempts should be made to bring it to 1:30 over a period of time. Such change in ratio would have a very large financial implication because of the need to induct a large number of extra teachers and, therefore, this can be done only over a period of time. Efforts should be made to ensure that the class size does not exceed 40.

RECOMMENDATION No. 9

Greater use of the electronic media be made for the creation of a child-centred social ethos in the country. A regular television programme addressed to students, teachers and parents and possibly called 'Shiksha Darshan' be launched, along the lines of the 'Krishi Darshan' programme.

Comments

Greater use of electronic media for education is an essential part of modernising the educational system. A regular programme on TV addressed to students, teachers and parents would be

very welcome. The Group took note of the fact that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, has already made a request for allocating one channel for education out of 15 or 16 channels which have recently become available with the commissioning of INSAT 2-A. The Group strongly suggests that an educational channel should be operationalised at the earliest and this channel should include a programme of the nature suggested by the Yash Pal Committee.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10 (a)

Inadequate programme of teacher preparation leads to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools. The B.Ed. programme should offer the possibility of specialisation in secondary or elementary or nursery education. The duration of the programme should either be one year after graduation or three-four years after higher secondary. The content of the programme should be restructured to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of school education and to make it more practicum-centred. The emphasis in these programmes should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking. Pre-service teacher education programme, being a professional course, has to be a rigorous, thorough and intensive programme. Therefore, B.Ed. degree courses by correspondence be derecognised.

Comments

There is a lot of merit in the argument advanced by the Yash Pal Committee for having a programme of B.Ed. aimed at elementary or secondary education. In metropolitan cities, a large number of teachers are actually getting recruited for pre-school and elementary schools with B.Ed. qualifications. Recruitment in KVS and NVS is also, in practice, based on B.Ed. qualifications. Therefore, this reality needs to be taken cognizance of and the present practice of focussing on secondary education in B.Ed. needs to be given up by enabling B.Ed. to be pursued with either specialisation in secondary or in elementary or in pre-school education. In any case the existing arrangements, including the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) for preparing primary school teachers need to be continued and strengthened.

The recommendation of the Yash Pal Committee for derecognising B.Ed. degree by correspondence course is more problematic, while the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has earlier made recommendations on these lines and the UGC has been interacting with the concerned universities during the last ten years on that basis, such courses are continuing. A recent expert committee of the UGC has expressed that for women candidates and for people from rural areas, B.Ed. correspondence course opens up valuable career opportunities. Also, in a large number of countries, B.Ed. through correspondence course is one of the prominent courses in distance mode. These arguments cannot be totally ignored. The Group understands that the matter is at an advanced stage of consideration in the UGC. Also the NCTE as a statutory body is expected to become operational in the near future. The Group recommends that this matter should be referred to the UGC and the NCTE for appropriate decision.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10 (b)

The continuing education of teachers must be institutionalised. The organisation of inservice education programmes and other activities aimed at professional growth of teachers be systematically designed and conducted imaginatively.

Comments

The emphasis given by the Yash Pal Committee to continuing education of teachers is totally unexceptionable. Thus DIETs are being set up in the country primarily to meet this need. Distance education system also is coming up in the country which can be used to meet the needs of inservice education. However, the progress in this regard has been slow. The Group fully endorses the need to set up arrangements for regular and periodic inservice training of teachers and recommends that the DIETs should be operationalised as early as possible and the distance mode of education should be used extensively to strengthen inservice training of teachers.

RECOMMENDATION No. 11

The public examinations taken at the end of Class X and XII

be reviewed with a view to ensure replacement of the prevailing text-based and 'quiz type' questioning by the concept-based questioning. This single reform is sufficient to improve the quality of learning and save the children from the tyranny of rote memorisation.

Comments

The Group feels that the Yash Pal Committee's reference to the concept-based questioning perhaps advocates greater importance to questions of higher ability. The Group agrees with this but it should be remembered that assessment should test various kinds of abilities and not just of one kind. The Group also feels that the Boards of School Education should emphasise Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) that incorporates both scholastic and non-scholastic aspects of education, spread over the total span of instructional time as stipulated in para 8.24 (iii) of the NPE, 1986.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (a)

A project team with a number of sub-groups be set up in each state to examine the syllabi and textbooks for all school classes. The sub-groups be required to decide the following:

- (i) The minimum number of topics required to be taught.*
- (ii) The minimum number of concepts to be introduced within each topic.*
- (iii) The total time needed for teaching this minimum number of concepts comfortably by a teacher in the total working days realistically available in a year.*

Comments

The Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) for language (mother tongue), mathematics and environmental studies for Classes I-V have already been prepared at the national level in 1990 and the NCERT, the Boards of School Education and the SCERTs have developed their resources to introduce the MLLs at the primary stage. Therefore, setting up another Project Team for the same purpose would amount to avoidable duplication. The Group feels that though in para 5.4.5 (vii) and para 21.3.1 (a), the POA, 1992 has called for laying down MLLs at

the upper primary stage and in para 21.3.1 (b), the POA, 1992 has urged the Boards to lay down expected levels of attainment at Classes IX-XII, the reasonableness of laying down MLLs at the upper primary stage and above deserves a careful reconsideration since knowledge base is supposed to grow at a fast pace after the primary stage. Moreover, with emphasis shifting to subject-matter learning at the upper primary stage and above, the idea of laying down uniform MLLs after primary stage does not seem to be a viable proposition. However, at the time of curriculum renewal and preparation of textbooks, the curriculum/textbook designers should systematically check that those can be covered within the instructional time available to teachers. The NCERT at the national level and the State Boards/SCERTs/SIEs at the state level may consider the desirability of reviewing the school curricula/textbooks to ensure that non-essential matter and repetitive treatment of concepts in subjects in different classes is minimised as far as possible without sacrificing the requirements of cognitive development.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (b)

Mathematics curriculum for primary classes in all parts of the country be reviewed with a view to slowing down the pace at which children are required to learn basic mathematical concepts, and broadening the scope of primary mathematics to include areas other than number work (e.g. space- and shape-related concepts and problem solving). The tendency embedded in the syllabi and textbooks of primary mathematics to accelerate children's mathematical skills by teaching them mechanical rules at the expense of understanding and intelligent application ought to be discouraged in future syllabi and texts.

Comments

The Group endorses the recommendation that mathematics and syllabi for other subjects should be reviewed to assess whether they are overloaded. But it would not like to state at this stage that they indeed are overloaded. The MLLs adopted by the MHRD are now being tried out and the question of review should be considered only on the basis of the feedback. As has been referred to in the preceding recommendations, syllabi

have to be designed keeping in view the existing standards, and capacity of students and standards in developed countries. However, the Group endorses the statement of the Yash Pal Committee that the syllabus should emphasise understanding and intelligent application rather than memorising without understanding.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (c)

Language textbooks should adequately reflect the spoken idiom. An attempt should be made in future textbooks to give adequate representation to children's life experiences, imaginary stories and poems, and stories reflecting the lives of ordinary people in different parts of the country. Pedantic language and excessive didacticism ought to be avoided.

Comments

These recommendations are acceptable. The NCERT and the Boards including CBSE and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) should review their respective language textbooks from these angles.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (d)

Science syllabi and textbooks in the primary classes should provide greater room and necessity for experimentation than they do at present. In place of didacticism in areas like health and sanitation, the texts should emphasise analytical reflection on real-life situations. A great deal of trivial material included in primary-level science texts should be dropped.

Comments

The Group has already given its views that all the existing textbooks should be screened in a time-bound manner for eliminating trivial matter and repetition. The Group endorses the recommendation that there should be greater scope for experimentation at the primary stage. This should be systematically promoted through a large programme of inservice education of teachers.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (e)

The syllabi of natural sciences throughout the secondary and senior secondary classes be revised in a manner so as to ensure that most of the topics included are actively linked to experiments or activities that can be performed by children and teachers.

Comments

The Group is of the view that while experiments and activities at all levels are important, the selection of topics in science curriculum at higher stages cannot be determined by the criterion that they are linked to experiment, etc. Every effort should, however, be made to see that experiments and activities, as much as possible, depending on the nature of the topic, are made a part of science teaching even at higher levels.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (f)

Besides imparting knowledge of history and geography the social sciences curriculum for Classes VI-VIII and IX-X should convey the philosophy and methodology of the functions of our socio-political and economic system and enable the students to analyse, understand and reflect on the problems and priorities of socio-economic development. The repetitious nature of history syllabus should be changed. The history of ancient times should be introduced for systematic study in secondary classes (IX and X). The history syllabus for Classes VI-VIII should focus on the freedom struggle and post-independence developments. The civics, as it is taught today, puts a great load on children's capacity to memorise. Therefore, it may be dropped in its present form and be replaced by 'contemporary studies'. The study of geography be related to contemporary reality.

Comments

As regards the Committee's suggestion that history syllabus for Classes VI-VIII should focus on freedom struggle and post-independence developments, the Group holds the view that a large majority of children drop out at the end of Class VIII, which is also the last year of compulsory education and, therefore, it would not be educationally sound to allow such

a big section of our children to remain oblivious of the entire heritage of India before the freedom struggle. The Committee seems to have linked spiral approach (which is based on a well-established principle of curriculum construction) with repetition which 'leads to boredom and load and trivialisation of ideas'. The Group feels that in geography greater importance should be given to study of contemporary problems. The context or implications of the Committee's recommendation for replacing 'Civics' by 'Contemporary Studies' are not clear.

Additional Suggestions of the Group

The Yash Pal Committee has made many thought-provoking recommendations which the Group has tried to recommend for implementation in a more specific manner. If these are implemented efficiently, the standards of school education will undoubtedly improve and as the Yash Pal Committee has envisaged alienation of students from education and the burden of 'non-understanding' on them would effectively diminish. However, in addition to the recommendations made by the Yash Pal Committee, there are a few more issues which immediately present themselves for consideration while considering any exercises for reducing the load of curriculum. The Group would like to suggest these also for implementation.

1. Age of Entry

It is a known fact that in India children join school at a rather early age than their counterparts do in most of the developed countries. At the age of 4 and 5, a difference of one year in age makes a lot of difference in the mental capability of a child. A more mature child can easily cope with the learning requirements. The effect of early admissions of children in schools, particularly at the pre-primary stage, is that she/he is unable to cope with the demands that the syllabus makes and consequently she/he starts in a situation of personal inadequacy. This contributed significantly to the load of non-learning. It is, therefore, desirable that the minimum age of admission to pre-primary classes and in primary classes should be reconsidered for being raised by one year.

2. *Teaching Days*

Kothari Commission recommended 210 teaching days but the actual number of school days are 125-150. Since the syllabi are framed on the basis that 210 days will be available, this only means that either a part of syllabus is not covered by the teacher or that she/he covers the syllabus in a hurried manner which creates difficulty for students for being able to cope with a lot of content in a limited time. Effective action to increase the number of teaching days to 210 in a year would undoubtedly very substantially reduce the daily learning load and would also improve standards.

3. *Classroom Facilities*

In large number of schools in the country not only the facilities in the classroom but the classroom themselves are grossly deficient. This inevitably affects the quality of teaching and, therefore, of learning. The Yash Pal Committee has recommended and we have endorsed that recommendation earlier in this Report that norms for school facilities should be effectively and strictly enforced for recognition/affiliation. However, since government is the major funding agency for most schools, there should be a positive movement for improving availability of classrooms and improving availability of educational aids in schools. For primary schools, the Government of India is implementing a large programme of Operation Blackboard and in the Eighth Plan it is being extended to cover upper primary classes also. At secondary level, the Government of India is implementing a scheme for assisting schools for improving science equipment. However, a much large effort needs to be made. It would be imperative that the effort of the government is supplemented by individuals and philanthropic bodies because the requirement is large. It would be appropriate that the governments and the school systems consider how best they can encourage such individuals and philanthropic bodies to help schools to develop.

4. *Strengthening of the Professional Support System*

An area which needs to be looked into is the qualitative improvement of professional bodies like the SCERTs, Textbook

Bureaus and Boards of School Education who are primarily responsible for curriculum, textbooks and examinations. It is these bodies which will ultimately have to reckon with the problem of load. Under the centrally sponsored scheme of teacher education, there is a component of strengthening of SCERTs which should be taken up on a priority basis.

5. *"...impact of examinations, admission to higher education institutions, including professional courses"*

This was one of the terms of reference of the Committee which has not been dealt with in the Report. The CAGE may consider to refer this matter to a committee drawn from school and higher education. Another term of reference of the Committee related to "the measures such as formal recognition and weightage to sports and games and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities..." A CAGE Committee is looking into this matter and its report is expected to be presented to the CAGE shortly.

Time Schedule for Implementation

As regards laying down a time schedule for implementation of the recommendations found feasible, the Group felt that the recommendations are of long-term nature. Moreover, the report of the National Advisory Committee as well as this report of the Group would be placed before the CAGE in its meeting scheduled to be held on 15.10.1993. As such, it would be advisable to wait for the CAGE's approval to Committee's recommendations and then draw up a time schedule for implementation of the recommendations accepted by the CAGE.

No. F. 11-30/93-Sch. 4
Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Education

New Delhi, dated 25.8.93

O R D E R

Subject : Constitution of a Group to examine the recommendations made in the report of the National Advisory Committee set up on 1.3.92 to suggest ways to reduce academic burden on school students.

A National Advisory Committee was set up on 1.3.92 under the Chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal, former Chairman of UGC to advise on the ways and means to reduce the academic burden on school students. The Committee has submitted its report on 15 July 1993. It has been decided to constitute a Group to examine the feasibility and implementation schedule of the recommendations made in the Report.

2. The Group shall consist of the following :

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| (i) | Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi
Additional Secretary | <i>Chairman</i> |
| (ii) | Joint Secretary (School) | <i>Member</i> |
| (iii) | Dr J.S. Rajput
Joint Educational Adviser (EE) | <i>Member</i> |
| (iv) | Prof. A.K. Sharma
Joint Director, NCERT | <i>Member</i> |
| (v) | Dr (Smt.) R. Muralidharan
Professor and Head
Department of Pre-School and Elementary
Education, NCERT | <i>Member</i> |
| (vi) | Shri V. Sankarasubbaiyan
Education Secretary
Tamil Nadu | <i>Member</i> |
| (vii) | Shri Abhimanyu Singh
Education Secretary
Rajasthan | <i>Member</i> |

- (viii) Shri H.R. Sharma *Member*
Director (Academic), CBSE
- (ix) Shri D.V. Sharma *Member*
Secretary, Council of
Boards of School Education
in India (COBSE)
- (x) Shri A. Banerji *Member-Secretary*
Deputy Secretary (School)
3. The Group will analyse the recommendations made by the National Advisory Committee and give its views on the feasibility of implementing the recommendations and a time schedule in respect of the recommendations found feasible. The Group will give the views and the implementation schedule within a period of one month from the date of issue of order.
4. The Group shall devise its own procedures and methodology of work.

A. BANERJI
Deputy Secretary

1. PS to AS
2. PS to JS (S)
3. PS to JEA (EE)
4. Prof. A.K. Sharma, Joint Director, NCERT
5. Dr. (Smt.) R. Muralidharan, Professor and Head, Department of Pre-School and Elementary Education, NCERT
6. Shri V. Sankarasubbaiyan, Education Secretary, Tamil Nadu
7. Shri Abhimanyu Singh, Education Secretary, Rajasthan
8. Shri H.R. Sharma, Director (Academic), CBSE
9. Shri D.V. Sharma, Secretary, Council of Boards of School Education in India (COBSE)
10. Shri A. Banerji, Deputy Secretary (S)

**List of Participants in the Meetings of the Group
Held on 23.9.93 and 24.9.93**

1. Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi *Chairman*
Additional Secretary
Department of Education
2. Shri R.C. Tripathi
Adviser (Education)
Planning Commission
3. Shri Priyadarshi Thakur
Joint Secretary (School)
Department of Education
4. Prof A.K. Sharma
Joint Director
NCERT
5. Dr (Smt.) R. Muralidharan
Professor and Head of the Department of
Pre-School and Elementary Education
NCERT
6. Shri Abhimanyu Singh
Education Secretary
Government of Rajasthan
7. Shri U.K. Sinha
Director (Teacher Education)
Department of Education
8. Shri H.R. Sharma
Director (Academic)
CBSE
9. Shri D.V. Sharma
Secretary
Council of Boards of School
Education in India (COBSE)
10. Shri A. Banerji
Deputy Secretary (School)
Department of Education

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Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Education
New Delhi

