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Physical burden of school bag: An innovative idea school building as resource

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Abstract

Aim: In today's vibrant climate self-activating changes lies at the door of educational leaders, classroom teachers and academic administrators. School education is no more exception to this. Concern regarding academic burden and unsatisfactory quality of learning has been voiced time and again in our country's several educational committees and various commissions.

Keywords: physical burden, academic burden, curriculum, textbooks, scarce commodity

1. Introduction

In a world changing at breakneck speed, any conceptual innovation or technological breakthrough is subjected to further alteration and up-gradation with in a short span since their launch. In such a vibrant climate the responsibility to address the needs created by self-activating change lies at the door of educational leaders, classroom teachers and academic administrators School education system is no more exception to this. One efficient way to fulfill these needs is periodic revision and at regular interval of time. Burden of physical weight of School Bag even of pre-primary level learners upto secondary stage is still heavy. Concern regarding academic Burden on students and unsatisfactory quality of learning has been voiced time and again in our country during past two decades. The question has been discussed extensively by several committee and groups. The Ishwarbhai Patel Review committee (1977), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) working Group (1984) and National Policy on Education (NPE) Review committees (1990) made several recommendations to reduce the academic Burden on students. The curriculum development agencies are generally in agreement with the recommendations of the committee and assure the public that these would kept in view at the time of forthcoming revision of curricula. But the problem, instead of being mitigated, becomes more acute when a new curriculum is introduced. This has happened in the case of new curriculum introduced in wake of implementation of NPE (1986). Whith a view to have a fresh look on the problems of education, particularly with regard to the problem of academic burden on students, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, set up a National Advisory Committee in March 1992 with the some references that impacts out young students, robbing them of a wholesome growth and depriving the country of what they could contribute.

Reading/learning material in mostly school education system are the NCERT published books of each subjects, on an whole each subject textbook comprises of 15 to 20 units. Timetable as per syllabi according to curriculum maintains teaching of almost every subject everyday. This mandates to bring the textbook everyday by each learner. But one unit of any subject requires 3 to 5 periods to complete the unit. If each textbook can be sub-divided physically as per the different units then each pupil will be expected to carry/bring only that unit part of textbook which teacher supposed to taught in that particular day.

The flaw of our system of education can be identified briefly by saying that "a lot is taught, but little is learnt or understood". The problem manifests itself in a variety of ways. The most common and striking manifestation is the size of school Bag that children can be seen carrying from home to school and back to home every day. A survey conducted in Delhi revealed that the weight of school bag, on an average, in primary classes in public school is more than 4 kg while it is around 1 kg in MCD schools.

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Nevertheless the load we want to discuss is not only the physical load but the load of learning which is there for all children irrespective of the category or type of schools were they study.

The weight of the school bag represents one dimension of the problem, another dimension can be seen in the child's daily routine. Right from early childhood, many children specially those belonging to middle classes, are made to slog through home work, tuitions and coaching classes of different kinds. Leisure has become a highly scarce commodity in child's especially in the urban child's life. The Child's innate nature and capacities have no opportunity to find expression in a daily routine which permits no time to play, to enjoy simple pleasures and to explore the world.

It is hard to reconcile the rigorous academic regime that is imposed on children from an early age with the widespread complaint made about the declining norms and performance of the formal system of education. Teachers routinely complain that they do not have enough time to explain anything in detail, or to organize activities in classroom. 'Covering' the syllabus seems to have become an end in itself, unrelated to the philosophical and social aims of education. The manner in which the syllabus is 'Covered' in the average classroom is by means of reading the prescribed textbook aloud, with occasional nothing of salient points on the blackboard. Opportunities for children to carry out experiments, excursions, or any kind of observations are scarce even in the best of schools. In the average schools especially the school located in a rural area, even routine teaching of the kind described above does not take place in many cases. In several states, the school teachers encourages children to attend after – school tuition given for a fee while the regular class-room teaching has become a tenuous ritual. The contribution that teachers make towards this kind of socialization is especially worrisome. Trained teachers are expected to be aware of the wider aims of education, indeed, aims like development of the "Child's total personality" are the shibboleths of teacher training institutions everywhere in the country. If appears that teachers feel they can do little to pursue such lofty aims in any realistic sense under the harsh circumstances created by factors like excessively large classes, a heavy syllabus, difficult textbooks and soon. Moreover, majority of them neither know nor have the necessary skills to release the goals of education. The recommended pupil-teacher ratio of forty to one is now more an exception than a norm and in many parts of the country it is customary to have sixty to eighty students in one class. The committee learnt that in many states senior secondary classes often have an hundred or more students, many of them spilling into the corridor. In the national capital, many 'model' secondary schools, central schools, and the several elite public' schools have classes, including primary classes with more than sixty students.

The problem of readability in textbooks becomes grim in the context of system which often leaves the child with no resource other than prescribed textbook. The extent to which the child can rely on a teacher to elucidate tersely written text material is dependent on the quality of teachers, their training and their accountability. From what impression the committee could form about these aspects of the system, it seems valid to say that the child is very often helpless in the

face of a style of teaching that is far from being interactive, let alone the absence or irregular presence of teachers.

Greater use of electronic media be made for the creation of 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.

The tremendous potential of ICT in recasting the quality of school education experiences is widely debated and discussed. However, Policies and programmes that effectively transform the school experiences of the young learner need greater attention. We have to move beyond the current paradigm of supplying hardware and proprietary software to schools and embed ICT into all aspects of school life. It should be recognized that ICT is already part of every growing child; withholding its use in schools in an integrated fashion only creates alienation of school from larger life space of the student. Further as a UNESCO report entitled 'Our Creative Diversity' Points out exclusion from technology places those concerned at a disadvantage in the coming 'Information society'. It creates an ever larger rift between high society, between high technology and the modernization of the elite on the one hand, and the marginalization of the majority of the population on the other. The swift pace of high tech advances drives another wedge between youngsters the haves will be able to communicate around the globe. The have nots will be consigned to rural back water of the information society.

A National Advisory Committee was set up by the government in March 1992 under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal, former chairman of the UGC to suggest way and means to reduce academic burden on school students. The committee popularly known as Yash Pal committee submitted its report in July 1993. On receipt of the committee's report, a Group was set up 1993 under the chairmanship of Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi, Additional Secretary, Department of Education to examine the feasibility of implementing the recommendations made in the report of Yash Pal Committee

So far as physical load of the school bag is concerned, the situation has become worse over the past few years. However, the weight of the school bag represents one dimension of the problem, another dimension can be seen in child's daily routine which includes completion of homework and attendance at tuitions and coaching classes of different kinds. The major, well understood, defect of the examination system is that it focuses on children's ability to reproduce information to the exclusion of the ability to apply concepts and information on unfamiliar, new problems or simply to think. Both the teachers and parents constantly reinforce the fear of examination and the need to prepare for it by memorizing a whole lot of information from the textbook and guide books. This sort of perception about the examination make things difficult for children.

Medical surveys say that due to heavy load of school bag, almost fifty percent of elementary school children have started suffering from back pain, spinal abnormalities.

According to some health experts, children can suffer permanent back damage if they are made to carry a school bag more than 15 percent of their body weight over their shoulders and backs regularly in their formative years.

It was in 1993; Yashpal committee has seriously raised the

issue and brought out the report 'Learning without Burden' to make some pertinent and meaningful recommendations, but no avail. The classroom instruction continued to be content – based resulting in prescription of father private textbooks and glossy supplementary books. Every time, when the issue is raised, it is followed by repeating the same old guidelines and circulars and the schools keep on ignoring them.

The recommendations of the Yash Pal committee – 1993 and NCF – 2005 have serious implications for schools and teachers. Neither the schools, nor the teachers have innovated methods to reduce the load of the school bags and cognitive load caused by textbook teaching and textbook learning through cramming.

Even the CBSE and NCERT has not created any demonstration schools wherein the 'Learning without Burden' is happening.

The even increasing Burden of academics, particularly at junior classes in schools, is assuming alarming proportion. The growing tendency of overloading the young children in the turning the process of learning into a dredgery. The measures such as, formal recognition and weightage to sport and games and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, more of outdoor and more mutually beneficial interaction of students with community, this will not only light the heavy burden of school bag but also psychologically satisfying to the learner that only certain amount of classwork and homework would be expected by him/her from the teacher.

We have come to the conclusion that the problem of the load on school children does not arise only from over-enthusiastic curriculum designs, or poorly equipped teachers, or school administrators, or book publishers, or district, state or central educational authorities. Yes, what all these groups, agencies and administrators do can exacerbate or alleviate the problem. But, there is a deeper malaise in our society, which impacts our young children. If we continue to value a few elite qualifications for more than real competence for doing useful things in life and if the economic distance, between those who can manage to cross some academic hurdles and those who can't continues to widen, we will probably continue to spend our effort in designing hurdles instead of problem is connected with the notions of 'knowledge explosion' and 'the catching up' syndrome. We believe that these problems cannot be fully addressed through easily manageable administrative actions. The need wider discussions because they are centrally connected with images of our civilization self-esteem and societal goals. Such a wide discussion can come about through publication of this Report, through a set of seminars, meeting and media discussions. Academics, thinker, need to pour over this basic problem.

Usually land is used a Agricultural commercial and Residential or General purposes in Rural and Urban Area set up school Building comes up over land reserve for purpose other an agriculture. A school Building comprises of certain number of classrooms where pupils of the same age group taught by the teacher concern. School compound and Roof top area can be utilized for commercial/business activities like setting up to the ATMs at the certain location points with in the premises of the school where entry cum exit to the ATMs can be accessed by the General public I-Client without disturbing the academic pursuit or environment of the school compound. Also roof top area of the school. Can be utilized for General purpose Retail Banking Branch,

Insurance offices, General/Official stationary shop even for cyber café where even student learner can take case of their additional academic purpose like using of Net for educational purposes during or after the school houses. This will generate revenue to the landowner for the usage and if the land owner works for Non-profit purpose or Government then this additional generated amount can be utilized for pupils welfare purpose.

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