

Course-501
Elementary Education in India: A Socio- Cultural
Perspective

पाठ्यक्रम-501

भारत में प्रारंभिक शिक्षा: एक सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य

Max. Marks 30
कुल अंक 30

Assignment-I/ सत्रीय कार्य-1

Note: Answer the following questions in about 500 words.

टिप्पणी: निम्नलिखित प्रश्नों के उत्तर लगभग 500 शब्दों में दें।

1. What type of changes you want in yourself as a teacher to cater the need of the changing society and learner? Explain with at least two examples. (5)

बदलते वर्तमान समाज एवं शिक्षार्थी की आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति हेतु एक शिक्षक होने के नाते आप अपने आप में किस प्रकार का बदलाव करना चाहते हैं? कम से कम दो उदाहरण लेकर व्याख्या कीजिए।

OR/ vfkok

How do you feel that role of ancient guru has changed in present society? Which qualities of ancient Guru you would like to adopt as a teacher? Why? (5)

आप किस प्रकार महसूस करते हैं कि प्राचीन गुरु की भूमिकाएं बदल गई हैं? आप एक शिक्षक होने के नाते आप प्राचीन गुरु की कौन-सी विशेषताओं को अपनाना चाहेंगे और क्यों?

2. Survey some schools in your locality and enlist the major issues of the elementary education. Suggest the ways to resolve these issues. (5)

अपने आस-पास के कुछ विद्यालयों का सर्वेक्षण कीजिए तथा प्रारंभिक शिक्षा से संबंधित मुद्दों की सूची तैयार कीजिए। इन मुद्दों के समाधान हेतु तरीके सुझाइए।

OR/ vfkok

Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a report in the context of adaptation of salient features of NCF 2005. (5)

अपने आस-पास के कुछ विद्यालयों का दौरा कीजिए तथा राष्ट्रीय पाठ्यचर्या रूपरेखा 2005 की मुख्य विशेषताओं को अपनाए जाने के संबंध में एक प्रतिवेदन तैयार कीजिए।

Assignment-II/सत्रीय कार्य-2

Note: Answer the following questions in about 500 words.

टिप्पणी: निम्नलिखित प्रश्नों के उत्तर लगभग 500 शब्दों में दें।

1. Enlist the various reasons for exclusion. What strategies you will adopt to setup an inclusive school and classroom? (5)

बहिर्वेषन के विविध कारणों की सूची तैयार कीजिए। एक समावेशी विद्यालय एवं कक्षाकक्ष तैयार करने हेतु आप कौन-कौन सी युक्तियां अपनाएंगे।

OR/ vFkok

- Suggest ways to access and retention of child in school. (5)

विद्यालय में बच्चों की पहुँच एवं ठहराव हेतु तरीके सुझाइए।

2. You as a teacher, critically analyse the implementation issues of Right to Education Act, 2009, face by your school. Suggest ways for better implementation of the Act? (5)

एक शिक्षक होने के नाते आपके द्वारा अपने विद्यालय में शिक्षा का अधिकार अधिनियम 2009 लागू करने में आने वाली दिक्कतों का आलोचनात्मक विष्लेशण कीजिए। इस अधिनियम के बेहतर तरीके से लागू किये जाने हेतु तरीके सुझाइए।

OR/ vFkok

- Visit some schools in your locality and enlist the various program related to SSA. How these programs can help in harmonization of Right to Education Act, 2009 and SSA? (5)

अपने आस-पास के कुछ विद्यालयों का दौरा कीजिए तथा सर्व शिक्षा अभियान द्वारा संचालित विविध कार्यक्रमों की सूची तैयार कीजिए। ये कार्य क्रम सर्व शिक्षा अभियान एवं शिक्षा का अधिकार अधिनियम 2009 में समानीकरण हेतु किस प्रकार सहायक हैं?

Assignment-III/ सत्रीय कार्य-3

Note: Answer the following question in about 1000 words.

टिप्पणी: निम्नलिखित प्रश्न का उत्तर लगभग 1000 शब्दों में दें।

1. Who are the ones who have dropped-out? Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a list on the drop-out children at the elementary level in your District. Enlist the reasons for the same? What can you do, as a teacher, to ensure that students retention in school? (10)

विद्यालय से बाहर के बच्चों का क्या अर्थ है? अपने आस-पास के कुछ विद्यालयों का दौरा कीजिए तथा प्रारंभिक स्तर पर विद्यालय से बाहर के बच्चों की सूची तैयार कीजिए। बच्चों के विद्यालय से बाहर रहने के कारणों को सूचीबद्ध कीजिए। एक शिक्षक होने के नाते आप बच्चों के विद्यालय में ठहराव हेतु कौन-से कदम उठायेंगे?

OR/ vfkok

Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a report on the issue of protecting child rights. (10)

अपने आस-पास के कुछ विद्यालयों का दौरा कीजिए तथा बाल अधिकारों के संरक्षण पर एक प्रतिवेदन तैयार कीजिए।

ASSIGNMENT REFERENCE MATERIAL (2017-18)

Course-501

Elementary Education in India: A Socio- Cultural

Perspective

Assignment-I

Q1. What type of changes you want in yourself as a teacher to cater the need of the changing society and learner? Explain with at least two examples.

Ans. As the world is becoming more advanced and new things are coming up so students should be kept updated about the new innovations and about the changing trends in the world. As a teacher the learning process should not stop and teachers like students should also keep learning new things so that they can teach their students something new every day.

Studies show that teachers, who have a healthy and friendly relationship with their students, are more successful in their academic field. So, the most important thing that I will definitely adopt is friendly and caring attitude with my students. It helps to know your students especially when the students come from different cultural and socio-economic background. Cultural misunderstanding between the teacher and student can have huge negative impact on students and their educational experience.

The other most important thing is that always ask students for their feedback. It gives them the impression that you consider their opinions and experiences and value them. It also creates a culture where students feel free to ask questions and share their ideas which also helps them to grow personally, academically and socially.

Being a teacher and teaching a large class of children has always been my dream. It's a proud feeling to be respected by your students. A teacher holds a very respectful position in society. Unlike all other jobs even teaching methods have changed now. Even the attitude of children has changed since the past decade. Thus, as a teacher I would like to bring a few changes in myself. These changes are as under:

(1) I would like to develop in me the unique ability of reading my students' mind so that I can preempt something untoward; and provide them learning environment, absorbing activities, and counsel them not only to overcome their academic challenges, but also the general challenges of life.

(2) I would like to upgrade my subject knowledge regularly and blend that knowledge with technology to make it learning effective, interesting, and result-oriented.

(3) Now you can use technology to teach your students. These days you can teach through projector to explain better. You can connect with parents online and inform about homework and other updates. So, I would also like to teach my students with these technologies.

(4) As a teacher, you need to have a command over your students. These days children are becoming more stubborn. You need to become more dominating. Therefore, I'll become little more dominant at my classroom.

Above all as a teacher I would like to teach students self-confidence which is the most needed thing in today's world and which is often ignored at school and also I want to help children know how to talk to people and in what way they communicate to people so that they leave a lasting impact on the other person. They should be given motivation classes so that they study properly and think of studying as something they need and should take interest in studying rather than just studying it for the sake of a duty.

Or

How do you feel that role of ancient guru has changed in present society?

Which qualities of ancient Guru you would like to adopt as a teacher? Why?

Ans. In Bhartiya Darshan 'Guru' has significant place. It consists of two words, Gu-ru. The word 'Gu' indicated darkness and 'ru' means controller. It means to avoid darkness or ignorance. In Vedas the term acharya is used for guru. Guru is considered greatest treasure of knowledge.

Guru was playing many roles in those days for the students like parent, teacher, scholar, missionary, a friend-philosopher and a guide. He was to pay personal attention to the needs of the students. It was a responsibility of Guru to see that the student develops, makes progress to the satisfaction of Guru as well as to his own satisfaction. That time the relationship between teachers used to be very intimate and the taught-like father and son.

Oral interaction method was prevalent those days. Lectures, discourses, a debates and discussions, recitation and recapitulation were part of routine daily student life. Assessment was continuous comprehensive assessment internally conducted by Guru. There were no terminal examinations, no degree-certificates, but announcing by the Guru in the convocation that the student has graduated after completion of the stipulated studies. Guru would present the qualified student to a gathering of learned people who may ask questions, or the student would be asked to contest in debate and prove himself. Then for his mastery over the subject, the student would be known and accepted as a scholarly person.

Learners' autonomy was respected. They were free to choose the Guru and the subject of study. At the same time, to accept the student (Shishya) or not, it was a prerogative of the Guru, the teacher.

Challenges of technology have created new roles for the teacher. Lorillard's Conversation Model describes the four types of roles viz. discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflective roles of the teacher.

In the new world, there are numerous roles the teacher is expected to perform. The typical roles may include:

- Developer and nurturer of e-culture,
- Networker and change agent,
- Learning practitioner and facilitator.
- Learning resource developer
- Techno-pedagogue

- Evaluator
- Action researcher
- Behaviour scientist
- Curriculum designer and transact or
- Instructional system designer

Ancient gurus had their own ashrams. They had discipline established. They taught morals and the good ways of life at their schools. Great gurus were very knowledgeable. They learnt a lot through their mediation and tapas.

The gurus were unselfish and lived for the good of the world. But this is difficult to follow these days. Gurus were respected very well. They taught students in the middle of nature. There were practicals too. Gurus were appreciated by the kings and were sponsored by them. Gurus had powers to command their students and disciples. They could judge the situations well and were able to give good advices to kings or people. Therefore, we need some of these qualities in today's teachers.

Q2. Survey some schools in your locality and enlist the major issues of the elementary education. Suggest the ways to resolve these issues.

Ans. In my survey of some schools in my locality, I have seen many issues that have serious implication for quality improvement in primary education. Some of these issues are discussed below:

(1) There is a clear evidence to suggest that achievement levels tend to decline as the children move along the educational hierarchy. This is true of both the English and mathematics test. This shows that schools are not able to cope with the teaching learning load as the pupils' progress through various grades.

(2) The students from privately managed schools perform better as compared to the students from government and aided schools, although the evidence is limited. It is also clear that despite better performance, even the private schools are far away from achieving the goals set up by the MLLs.

(3) There are no mechanisms for assessing the achievement levels for children studying through non-formal and alternative schools. Since these systems are more of informal and flexible, it is important to establish their credentials through effective monitoring and evaluation.

(4) The overall scores of class V learners based on class IV competencies are low for both mathematics and language. The low achievement in mathematics is indeed a matter of concern. The long term effect of low achievement in mathematics is revealed by the secondary and senior secondary examination results where most of the children fail in mathematics and the overall result stays around 50 percent. It is therefore important to evaluate the mathematics curriculum and related instructional materials.

(5) The teachers are at the centre stage of the educational system. There is no system to identify teacher training needs. The teacher training packages do consult the teachers but once finalised, their content is same for all the teachers. Is it possible to identify the level of competencies attained by teachers in language and mathematics so that a proper module on their capacity building is developed.

(6) The class II tests were oral in nature and class III/IV were written. The sudden drop in the level of mean achievement scores also points to another phenomenon i.e. the transition from oral

to written mode of examination. Are the students well prepared for this transition. Perhaps at no point of time, the students are taught about this transition. This aspects need to be examined by the pedagogists.

A national testing agency or a research cell in the national/state institutions should be established to undertake continuous and comprehensive analysis of learners' achievement at primary and upper primary stage. The cell should assists the state governments to meet the challenging mathematics standards at primary stage, work closely with teachers unions and other NGOs for upgrading the skills of teachers on continuous basis. Educational administrators needs assessment information that will help them remove barriers to learning by telling schools to decide on what works well and what does not. Enable teachers to identify students learning needs early, before the problem becomes too big. The school administrators should also ensure that that the dialogue between the schools and children is better informed; giving parents a better picture of the progress of their children and the effectiveness of the schools.

Or

Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a report in the context of adaptation of salient features of NCF 2005.

Ans. I visited XYZ school in my locality. It is a state board syllabus school. The most attractive thing I noticed about the school was they have inclusive learning. They have inculcated in their curriculum learner centric mode.

They encourage the children to participate in various club activities like chess, carom, gardening, classical dance, silambam and Carnatic music. They have NSS in their school and they do lots of social service through the same.

They have activities such as worksheet, which makes the children to brainstorm and write. They have worksheets for all the subjects. They have a big playground which has a basketball court and volleyball court. They also have a separate place for yoga and meditation. All these have a separate time-table.

Their first language is the regional language, that is, Tamil. Their medium of instruction is English and Hindi is taught as third language. Their classroom is well-equipped with smart board. This enables the teacher to make her teaching interesting and the teacher is able to reach out to all the three types of learners, "Auditory, Visual and Kinesthetic learner". They have well ventilated rooms and the teacher-student ratio is for every thirty children-one teacher.

The children are made to cherish their learning through practical training. Various competitions are conducted for the same purpose. Extended learning happens when they are taken on a field trip. Taking the children on a field trip is done every term based on the lesson which requires such learning.

In order to prepare the children for the competitive exams, they have Math Lab, STEM lab and in order to give a holistic development for a child they have the games on the computers which enhances a child's concentration, observing skills and quick thinking skills.

As far as exams are concerned, till 5th standard, the child gets only grades. Exams are conducted in a leisurely manner, sometime it is conducted on one on one basis. From VI upwards it is marks. This is to motivate the children to prepare for the Board Exam.

Children are happy to come to school because they carry fewer books as most of the books are collected and kept in the class. Each child has a cubicle to keep his/her books. The teachers are friendly and firm. If a child does not complete the homework consecutively for three days, parents are intimated and the root cause is found.

If a child is found copying, the child is sent home to introspect for two days and then return. This way the child gets to understand the mistake done by her/him.

I was very happy to study this school because they have almost adhered to all the rules laid in NCF 2005. 'J.P Naik has described an exclusive triangle for Indian Education and that is, equality, quality and quantity'. This school has their school motto as "empowering knowledge by invoking the creativity in the young minds".

Assignment-II

Note: Answer the following questions in about 500 words.

Q1. Enlist the various reasons for exclusion. What strategies you will adopt to setup an inclusive school and classroom?

Ans. The minority is constantly under the threat of assimilation. When under the compulsions of economy the family structure is loosened, the social organisation faces disintegration, the handicrafts and other finer cultural traits of distinctiveness face extinction, and language remains a major identity marker if not the only one and acts as the only window to the cultural past of a people. The demand for the recognition of minority languages and their use in education, administration and mass communication draws strength from this situation.

Education is generally directed towards the needs of the students coming from homes having a majority status in the society. As a result, students belonging to minority community often feel excluded in school environment. There are following reasons for their exclusion:

- (1) The preconceived notions of the students might be different from those of the majority due to difference in cultural background.
- (2) Students might find the content irrelevant as they are.
- (3) The language used in the textbooks and in classroom transactions could be different from the mother tongue of the students.
- (4) The experiences referred in the textbooks and in a classroom, discourse might be unfamiliar to the students.

To facilitate the development of inclusive society in which every member has an opportunity to achieve his/her potential to fullest extent is the real purpose of building an inclusive school. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary that diversity among learner population is given due importance and provision is made to achieve everyone's rights. Access for all is the central concept in

inclusive schools. It involves the psychological and physical environment of the school including curriculum transactions. All these aspects of the school should be conducive to learners with different abilities and social background. In brief, it is essential that the school should have inclusive learning environment that fosters the personal, academic and professional development of all the students.

The attitude of a teacher is the essential aspect of an inclusive classroom. A teacher who believes that the intelligence is inherited and nothing much can be done to improve it will hardly encourage the development of all the students. On the other hand, a teacher who is optimistic about the potential of individual and who maintains that the intelligence can manifest in different forms would provide an inclusive environment in the classroom to foster individual talent. Teacher must realise that diversity in learner is inevitable and everyone would have different requirements. Taking these diversities into account a teacher has to create both psychological and physical environment in the classroom. Every child has a chance to progress, in such a conducive environment.

Every year, SSA framework provides `1200 every disabled child. While planning for the utilisation of this money, it should be borne in mind that the amount available is not only for the use of a particular child with a special need, but also has to be utilised for planning of Inclusive Education activities at the school/habitat/village levels. For implementing the programme of Inclusive Education, the SSA State Mission Societies are allocated funds depending on the total number of disabled children identified in the district. While some disabled children may only need the help of a special education teacher, others may require simple equipment like assistive devices like hearing aid, etc. However, this does not mean that this amount has to be spent annually; it can be accumulated for a year or two and utilised on a sizeable facility.

This amount could be used in other activities like assessment camps, development of training material, community awareness campaigns, 45-day Rehabilitation Council of India recognised teacher training, requesting specific services from NGOs, workshops and meetings. An attempt should be made to provide aids and appliances to identified CWSN through convergence. If this is not possible, then SSA funds could be used for this purpose. Only in exceptional circumstances, referral to residential special schools should be made. As far as possible CWSNs should be allowed stay with their family. Interventions for education of children with disabilities have to be planned by each district keeping in view available resources. In normal schools, overriding emphasis should be on inclusive education and in special schools, not isolating them.

Or

Suggest ways to access and retention of child in school.

Ans. Following are the ways to access and retention of child in school:

(1) **Education of SC Children:** SC children remained aloof from the education system because these groups doing menial jobs. After independence untouchability has been abolished by law. However, a schedule of castes was prepared to ensure that these groups of people are given extra benefits to compensate for their deprivation. People belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) are also guaranteed certain constitutional rights. Not only are they given free school education but are also offered a reservation in institutions of higher learning. These measures have increased the percentage of SC students in schools and colleges. Many of them have successfully completed higher education too. The literacy levels of people from these communities have seen a constant growth over the past sixty years. Nevertheless, thorough investigation and action plan the problem needs to overcome it fully.

(2) **Education of ST Children:** The problems faced by children in the tribal areas are often different from that faced by children belonging to Scheduled Castes. Hence, special interventions are needed for attracting and retaining tribal children in school. Some of the interventions, which can be considered, are:

- Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of Primary education where they do not understand regional language.
- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers.
- Aganwadis and Balwadis or crèches in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are not required to do baby-sitting.
- Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect.
- Interventions for Early Childhood Care and Education
- School/EGS like alternative facility to be set up within one kilometer of all habitations.

(3) **Children with Special Needs (CWSN):** The objective of SSA can be achieved if the education need of every child, whatever nature he/she may be is catered. A good number of children have been found in the category of disabled with various disabilities. CWSN have often been marginalised on account of their disability, lack of awareness on the part of the parents and community about their potential. Apprehensions on the part of the teachers to teach such children also have denied them right to education. A general societal attitude of sympathy towards such children focusing more on what they cannot do rather than on what they can do has also been a barrier. Realising the importance of integrating CWSN in regular schools, SSA framework has made adequate provisions for educating CWSN.

(4) **Education of Geographically Remote Children:** Guidelines issued separately under the EGS & AIE shall apply. The management structure for implementation of EGS & AIE will be incorporated in the management structure of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Planning, appraisal and supervision processes will also be the same. The new scheme makes provision for diversified strategies and has flexible financial parameters. It has provided a range of options, such as EGS, Back to School Camps, Balika Shivirs, etc.

Q2. You as a teacher, critically analyse the implementation issues of Right to Education Act, 2009, face by your school. Suggest ways for better implementation of the Act?

Ans. When it comes to implementation of RTE Act, the situation is worse in the state of Uttar Pradesh. I work in a government school of UP. There are a lot of statistics which indicate that the Uttar Pradesh is way behind in improving its education system and in implementing the RTE Act in improving its education system and in implementing the RTE Act in its letter and spirit. According to a Report titled "Education for All-Towards Quality with Equity" (2014) prepared by National University for Educational Planning and Administration (NEUPA), there were 8.15 million children out of school in 2009. Uttar Pradesh accounted 34% of these 8.15 million out of school children, i.e. 2.78 million children. Currently, the figure of "out of school" children in the entire country is counted up to 3.45 crore.

By virtue of S. 12 (1) (c), the RTE Act imposes 'a legal obligation on the private unaided schools to enroll children from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and disadvantaged groups at entry level, with 25% seats to be reserved for them, in order to make these schools more inclusive'. Though the enrolment rate in EWS category under S. 12 (1) (c) of the Act increased from 21.5% fill rate in 2012-13 to 29% in 2013-14, in Uttar Pradesh, however, this rate was recorded the lowest at 3.62%, by "State of the Nation" (2015) Report. The Report was brought out collectively by Indian Institute of

Management, Ahmedabad, Central Square Foundation, Accountability Initiative and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. The same Report estimates that the 25% reservation clause in UP would cover 633262 seats, out of which a total of only 5033 seats were filled in 2014-15 with a seat fill rate of 0.79%. In 2013-14, the seat fill rate was 1.17%. The attitude of elite private schools, in this regard, can be seen from the attitude of City Montessori School (CMS) in the case, City Montessori School v. State of U.P. (2015), wherein the school was refusing to admit 31 EWS students in one of its branches.

Additionally, RTE Act creates several obligations on the government regarding the quantity and quality of teachers, and the operation of schools. The Schedule to the RTE Act includes numerous provisions which specify the number of teachers (at least two for class I to V, and at least one per class for class VI to VIII) and the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (no more than 30:1 in class I to V, for schools with 120 students or fewer, and no more than 40:1 for larger schools; and no more than 35:1 in class VI to VIII. The target was supposed to be met by March 31, 2013. On U.P.'s schools, ASER 2016 states that only 30.8% comply with the RTE mandated pupil-teacher ratio.

Or

Visit some schools in your locality and enlist the various program related to SSA. How these programs can help in harmonization of Right to Education Act, 2009 and SSA?

Ans. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education covering the entire country, started in 2001. The programme aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 years age group by 2010. It is an initiative to universalise and improve quality of education in a mission made through decentralised and context specific planning and a process based, time bound implementation strategy. The programme lays emphasis for bridging all gender and social category gaps at elementary education level. SSA was initiated in 2001 following recommendations from the state education ministers' conference in 1998. Although the 86th Amendment to the Constitution enacted in 2002 made elementary education a fundamental right, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act that operationalised the provision of free and compulsory education was not passed by the Parliament until August 2009.

By following points, SSA programs can help in harmonisation of Right to Education Act, 2009:

(1) The SSA is governed at the Centre by a General Body chaired by the Prime Minister, an Executive Committee and a Project Approval Board. In the states, it is implemented through separately registered societies with staff deputed from the state government or appointed on contract. A Governing Body and an Executive Committee functions in every state too. A State Project Director oversees the SSA at the state level, in addition to the already existing Director/Commissioner of Education.

(2) The RTE Act envisages a National Advisory Council at the Centre and State Advisory Councils, to advice on the implementation of the Act. As for monitoring, the Act designates the NCPCR and the SCPCRs (or REPA) to ensure that the rights of children are not violated.

(3) SSA has a Joint Review Mission (JRM) that reviews the progress of the project every six months. The developmental partners of SSA, namely the World Bank, the DFID and the European Commission, are a part of this JRM exercise.

(4) RTE requires the entire education department to be geared in a unified manner to take up the task on a longterm basis. In the long run this would require the unification of the existing SSA structures with the regular education department. The actual convergence of SSA structures with

the regular education department and the SCERT should commence immediately; dichotomous and overlapping structures, wherever they exist and are adversely affecting the programme, should be eliminated. However, complete integration of SSA and Elementary Education Department structures may take some time. It is, therefore, prudent to implement a transitional strategy whereby a modified SSA remains the modality to be replaced by a new scheme compatible with the provisions of the Act from the middle of the Twelfth Plan period. Till then, SSA would be the vehicle for implementation of the RTE Act.

(5) Thus, the NAC/SACs under the RTE Act will coexist with the General Body and Executive Committee structure of the SSA till the NAC/SACs take over the full advisory role by end of the Eleventh Plan. Similarly, as the NCPCR/SCPCR (REPA) gradually takes over the monitoring role, and it becomes clear what the future role of the development partners shall be beyond the Eleventh Plan period, the JRM would continue. In the meantime, the precise nature of review and monitoring beyond the Eleventh Plan could be worked out in a manner that fulfils the provisions of the Act.

Assignment-III

Note: Answer the following question in about 1000 words.

Q1. Who are the ones who have dropped-out? Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a list on the drop-out children at the elementary level in your District. Enlist the reasons for the same? What can you do, as a teacher, to ensure that students retention in school?

Ans. A dropout is a student who was enrolled at some time during the previous school year but who was not enrolled (and who does not meet reporting exclusions) on day 20 of the current school year. A single individual may be counted as a dropout more than once if s/he drops out of school in multiple years.

Out of approximately 200 million children in the age-group 6-14 years, only 120 million are in schools. The overall dropout rate was 40 per cent at the primary level and 55 per cent at the upper primary level in 1999-2000 (India Vision, 2020).

In a resettlement colony in northwest Delhi, I had a conversation with 54-year-old Abha Devi about why her family stopped sending her 15-year-old granddaughter Soni to school. Abha's family was forcefully evicted from a central Delhi jhuggi-jhopri (JJ) cluster in Delhi in 2006, along with other families, and resettled in a JJ resettlement colony close to the Haryana border. Abha's 13-year-old grandson continues his schooling in the JJ resettlement colony where they currently live, while Soni dropped out of school at the age of 12. Abha and her family, including Soni, pointed out that it is unsafe for girls to go out in this JJ colony. Women's safety – or the lack thereof – is a recurrent narrative across Delhi's resettlement colonies.

According to the Social and Rural Research Institute-India Market Research Bureau 2014 survey data, the percentage share of girls out of school is higher than that of boys in the age bracket of 6-13 years in Delhi as well as in urban India. However, both rates of out-of-school children and their gender disparity are much higher in NCT Delhi compared to urban India on average in the same age bracket.

Gender disparity in out-of school children is further sharpened in urban resettlement colonies in Delhi.

Like many large cities in India, the government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) regularly evicts jhuggi settlements from central parts of the city. The GNCTD provides resettlement plots to some of the evicted bastis (slums and JJ clusters) dwellers in the margins of the city within so called 'planned' resettlement colonies. Fear and lack of oversight in the nascent resettlement colonies constrain women's mobility. Young girls and boys experience urban displacement differently, especially in relation to their experiences with schooling after eviction and resettlement. While most boys continue schooling, girls mostly drop out after a certain age.

Existing research reveals three main reasons for high dropout rates for girls in India: higher expectations of domesticity from girls (early marriage, sharing domestic responsibilities with parents and so on); safety concerns (boys teasing and taunting girls travelling to and from school); and infrastructural barriers (such as lack of toilets for girls in schools). Lack of women's safety emerges as a key reason for the high female dropout rate in Delhi's resettlement colonies.

The lack of women's safety as a constraint for female education and mobility has become a trope. This is not to suggest that lack of women's safety is a myth in these resettlement colonies. However, my research, based on interviews with young girls and women, highlighted that there are several other factors at play that impact this idea of 'safety'.

Saying that it is only women's safety concerns that causes girls to drop out of school camouflages a deep-rooted patriarchal psyche that could be the actual driver. 'Ghar (home)' or 'inside' is seen as the ideal place for girls. While gender-based violence 'inside' the home is acceptable, lack of women's safety 'outside' the home is a threat.

Although better implementation of existing programmes for women's empowerment is a challenge, it is not sufficient to ensure a gender-sensitive environment. Flagship programmes do not take into account ground-level realities. Recognising and attacking context-specific patriarchal norms and practices should be the first step. Community mobilisation is the real challenge for the success of programme goals.

Grassroots-level organisations such as Jagori initiated a more nuanced approach to combat gender-based violence in selected resettlement colonies in Delhi. Their plan includes training a cadre of youth leaders – both boys and girls –to “explore and understand issues of ending violence, building resistance and confidence”.

Research-based action and understanding deep-rooted and context-specific problems in each resettlement colony and planning accordingly is crucial for successful outcomes. Action-based research, acknowledging the residents of the resettlement colonies as participants in the research and planning process as well as bridging gaps among residents, community leaders, volunteers, researchers and planners is equally important. Research-based action going hand in hand with action-based research is the need of the hour.

Shashi Kant Singh, Principal of a government school in Dwarka told Firstpost that many of the students do not take admission even if their names are sent by the MCD schools.

“If a school sends names of 270 students normally 230 of them finally show up for admission,” he said. He also said that it was difficult to assess why some students never show up for admission, but he surmised that some among them take admission in the schools in the neighboring states.

Ashok Agarwal attributes the sudden rise in dropout rates to the neglect showed by the Delhi government towards the MCD schools. "The schemes introduced by the education department to decrease dropout rates are meant for the students studying in the schools run by the Delhi government," he said.

He also added that no scheme has been introduced to do the same in MCD schools. This is the prime reason why dropout rates have jumped to an alarming level in these schools. He said that there is no scheme initiated by the education department even to bring these students back to school.

Or

Visit some schools in your locality and prepare a report on the issue of protecting child rights.

Ans. The brutal murder of a 7-year-old in a Gurgaon school and the rape of a 5-year-old in a Delhi school have once again reminded us of how unsafe schools can be for its children. It brings back memories of the twin drowning cases last year – one in a Delhi school (which is part of the same chain in which the 7-year-old was murdered) and the other in a government-run public school. These tragedies in school campuses aren't just limited to schools in India but also occur in some of the developed countries as well. The central government on its part has passed laws such as Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO Act) and many state and city governments have issued school safety guidelines. Yet, the efficacy of such laws is very poor given the state's poor capacity for implementation of such laws and guidelines. Having robust state mandated laws and protocols are a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition to protect our children in school. For example, while every state government mandates police verification for school teaching staff, very few police departments have a robust and a timely police verification system. While schools may find ways to get the police complete the verification of its staff, it doesn't entirely eliminate the possibility of a criminal sneaking into the school's payrolls. Another example is the recommended use of CCTVs by various governments. While CCTVs are important, they are often used retrospectively to analyse an offence rather than proactively to prevent one.

But there are a few things parents can and should do to ensure that the school is safe for their children – from sexual offences, bullying, corporal punishment, physical safety, natural calamities and medical emergencies. I'm sharing a few best practices some safe schools follow around my locality:

(1) Safe schools often have a matured and an independent safety committee with representations from parents, teachers and expert consultants. This committee has a mandate to work with the school on developing metrics for safety audits, process and policy design and creating buy-in from parent community on safety issues. But the primary responsibility of this committee is to help the school balance the safety concerns against curriculum requirements. Theoretically, the safest school is the one that locks its kids and teachers in a single room with no movement outside in corridors or playground! But that was not what schools are built for. Many good schools have totally abandoned any experiential and outdoor learning in favour traditional classrooms teaching because they are not confident of their safety procedures. A good parent safety committee must provide this support and comfort to schools by encouraging parents to volunteer as tour marshals.

(2) Much of a school's safety is incidental upon its environmental design and its architecture. A school should have no dead zones – areas nobody has a visibility over. For example, there should be no doors that can be locked (except for individual bathroom units), no doors without transparent/glass panels, no rooms within rooms in the entire campus. Much of the crimes in schools can be prevented over the principle of 'see and be seen'. Corridors and classrooms that encourage a natural surveillance provide the best deterrence. CCTV cameras should cover all the common areas

especially remote or less populated areas. Unfortunately, most CCTVs are rendered useless due to their poor positioning and poor quality of images. Also, CCTVs are effective only when there are pairs of eyes scanning the live video feed. As parents, talk about its environmental design to your school.

(3) A proven method to build safe schools around the world is to have a culture of teachers 'walking around' during breaks, transition times, assembly time and dispersals at the end of the school. Research across schools in many geographies have time and again proven that schools that have dedicated teacher patrol routines during break and transition time drastically reduce bullying, physical accidents etc. Teacher patrols also build a large culture of care in the school community. Every student knows that someone is always watching out for us. Unfortunately, Indian schools unlike their counterparts in the west, do not focus on this protocol. Many of the state's safety guidelines are silent on teacher patrols. As a parent, work with your school to ensure that there are caring adults walking around the campus, especially in areas where offences could happen – bathrooms, gym room, labs, deserted areas behind the school building etc.

(4) Safety doesn't happen by accident. It happens through disciplined and consistent practice. Safe schools are diligent about their scheduled and unscheduled safety drills and training. Everyone in the community takes these drills seriously. Safe schools are also serious about sharing the lessons of safety drills and tweaking their processes. Parents should check the track record and findings of such drills in their schools.

(5) Often, Indian schools relegate the management of its blue collared staff to third party contractors building very little engagement and ownership among them. As much as a rigorous recruitment process, safe schools ensure continued engagement and training of its blue collared workers. Training not only includes protocols and procedure training, but also training on yoga, meditation and spirituality. As a parent knows, that safety is more about culture than it is about processes. Ask your school – how do they ensure engagement and ownership among its blue collared workers?

(6) Teachers who can teach their subject well need not necessarily be good at handling child safety issues. Does your school constantly invest in training and sensitising of teachers? Are all the teachers able to identify a child in distress? Do they have the maturity to sensitively handle issues and protect the child as per law and child rights guidelines? As a parent, ask your school on the training the school has invested in. Talk to the teachers to get a sense if the school has well articulated emergency procedures that are well understood by all.

(7) As crude it may sound, most safe schools will have a no touch policy. No teacher or staff, irrespective of gender, is allowed to touch any child for any reason whatsoever. While it may sound very conservative, it does, for a school system as a whole, ensure safety of the child (and the teacher too in cases of false/wrong accusations). Parents should have a dialogue with the school on what their policy on student teacher touch is.

(8) Safe schools do a good job of enforcing access controls in different parts of the school. No access zones areas are clearly demarcated – like zero access for bus drivers/conductors to children's restrooms. Dead zones are adequately barricaded and rights of access are articulated visually. As a parent, see if you are experiencing these controls when you visit the school.

(9) While all Indian schools take student attendance in the morning, most schools do not have a robust mechanism to track students between class periods. No wonder many of the recent accidents or abuses in Indian schools happened in between classes. Some of the good practices

include attendance in every class, corridor passes for stepping out of classes etc. Such tracking system not only makes the individual teacher accountable for each child in the class, but it also makes students accountable for their movement during class time.

(10) Lastly, no school, like anything else in life, can guarantee absolute safety. While the school may do everything in letter and spirit to substantially decrease the probability of an accident, it may not be able to totally eliminate the possibility of an accident. Safety is everybody's business – not just the school's or the government's. Parents should not delude themselves by abdicating or outsourcing their child's safety to the school. As a parent, ensure that your children are empowered to deal with any situation. Invest time in teaching them on how to keep themselves safe. Take efforts to build your own understanding of various issues faced by children of today. S

