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Research Paper Education

School Curriculum in Terms of Life Skills and its Implications for Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

School Curriculum of a country reflects its socio-cultural ethos and is a mirror of the kind of society that is envisioned. The precious years of schooling should be optimally used for developing skills, attitudes and values essential for effective living. If the general education curriculum is to be made relevant to the community, it will require a paradigm shift in the schooling process, and concurrently the teacher education .This paper reflects on the school curriculum that reflects life skill and its implications for teacher education.

KEYWORDS:

1.0School Curriculum and life skills

It is rightly said that the School Curriculum of a country reflects its socio-cultural ethos and is a mirror of the kind of society that is envisioned. The first ten years of schooling provide for general education through an undifferentiated curriculum. This span of schooling should enable children to grow into citizens who will live by democratic and secular values, form an egalitarian society, respect composite culture, nurture national identity, be proud of country's cultural heritage and adjust to newer economic concerns such as globalisation, and be able to live effectively in the information age. Developing in children these national concerns, along with life skills relevant to the individual and the community, as well as pedagogic concerns such as flexible pace of learning and learning how to learn should determine the content and process of school education including that of teacher education.

The common impression is that the learning in schools is largely confined to the coverage of the prescribed syllabi. This type of learning may at best result in acquiring knowledge of facts and concepts, but is not directly related to the immediate life of the learners or to their future needs. And, quite often one of the reasons for children dropping out of school is that parents find that what their children are taught at school is not immediately relevant to them in the contexts in which they live. Therefore, there is a concern that the precious years of schooling should be optimally used for developing skills, attitudes and values essential for effective living. If the general education curriculum is to be made relevant to the community, it will require a paradigm shift in the schooling process, and concurrently the teacher education programmes.

It has, therefore, become necessary to state the learning outcomes to be achieved through the schooling process in a form that can be unambiguously understood by the parents, the teachers and the children. It is envisaged that even in the changed educational process in terms of the concerns mentioned above, the learning will continue to remain around the traditional school subjects, namely, language(s), mathematics, science, social sciences, art and aesthetics, work experience, health and physical education. But the learning outcomes shall not be limited to mere acquisition of knowledge of concepts and facts of these subjects. Though the textbooks may continue to remain the principal source of teaching-learning, the task of the teacher should go beyond just covering of the prescribed syllabi and emphasise a better appreciation of the life's environment. Therefore, a new type of teacher will be required.

2.0Redesign the teacher education curriculum

Preparation of teachers for the envisaged schooling process will require change in the existing teacher education curricula. The foci of teacher education curriculum, which are around building of general foundations for the teaching profession and teaching methodology skills, may now have to be suitably redesigned. In addition to teaching to pre-service teacher the traditional foundation courses, the teacher educators will have to provide a broad exposure to a variety of strategies that can be employed for ensuring that each child is able to acquire the skills, attitudes and values relevant as envisioned for the concerned stage of school education. This expectation from the teacher should determine the teacher education curriculum. At the same time, the schooling process will be directed for fulfilling the assurance given to the parents in the form of statements of skills that children will attain as learning outcomes. This paradigm shift in the school education will mean that teacher will take care that learning of children is not limited to mere memorisation of information contained in the textbooks. This, of course, would require a changed approach to the preparation of teachers.

Let us now look at the various components of the present day school curriculum and make an attempt in defining the kind of life skills that each component is most amenable to develop in the children.

3.0Language Curriculum

Language is central to all learning. The present day language curriculum of the school largely emphasises skills of reading and writing, predominantly the latter. What is needed is to give a thrust to this area of curriculum with a clearer focus on development of communication skills in their total perspective. The entire gamut of language skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing with comprehension has to be developed in totality through any language curriculum.

Skill		Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
1.	Listening and Speaking	*Be able to follow, comprehend and respond to instructions and questions at school and at home *Be able to follow assembly programs, thoughts for the day, news, etc.	*Be able to comprehend and respond to instructions and questions and be able to interact confidently with known persons *Be able to follow assembly programs and contribute effectively to the same	*Be able to take initiative in group discussion *Be able to contribute and participate in assembly programs, short talk on current topics, thought for the day, conduct quiz and in-house competition, etc.
2.	Ability to inquire and respond appropriately to simple inquiries relating to self and immediate environment	*Be able to show-and-tell using pictures, simple craft-work, models and charts, etc.	*Be able to conduct surveys on contextual topics within the school and in the vicinity of home	*Be able to conduct survey on contextual topics within the school and in the vicinity of home *Be able to take part in discussions, prepare surveys reports, etc.

4.0Art, aesthetics and general skills

No education can be meaningful if it stops at only developing cognitive learning. There are dimensions inherent in every individual, which crave for participation in areas beyond cognition Concern for love, beauty, compassion coping with stress, time management, etc. becomes basic for survival. There are other affective dimensions which will involve development of certain psychological skills and skills for co-operation and learning to live together. The art and aesthetics ap-

preciation skills that should be developed through a general education curriculum have been given in the grid below:

Skill		Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
1.	Handling emotions	*Be able to overcome negative emotions like fear, anger, and aggression and develop positive emotions such as love, empathy, tolerance, etc. * Be able to confide freely in parents and teachers	*Be able to overcome negative emotions like fear, anger, and aggression and develop positive emotions such as love, empathy, tolerance, etc. * Be able to confide freely in parents and teachers	*Be able to overcome negative emotions like fear, anger, and aggression and develop positive emotions such as love, empathy, tolerance, etc. *Be able to confide freely in parents and teachers
2.	Coping with stress	*Be able to cope with day-to-day stresses such as sibling rivalry and working parents etc.	*Be able to cope with day-to-day stresses such as sibling rivalry and working parents etc.	*Be able to cope with day-to-day stresses such as sibling rivalry and working parents etc.

5.0Learning to Learn

The following category of skills are for preparing children into becoming lifelong learners, for making learning not a drudgery or a burdensome task but a joyful experience in process of growth of an individual and for drawing the maximum out of life:

Skill		Primary	Upper primary	Secondary
1.	Willingness to learn	*Be able to take interest in learning, become inquisitive and acquire self-motivation	*Be able to take interest in learning, become inquisitive and acquire self-motivation *Be able to gather information, analyse it and use it for solving some problem	*Be able to take interest in learning, become inquisitive and acquire self-motivation *Be able to gather Information, analyse it and use it for solving some problem, *Become an autonomous learner
2.	Apply knowledge	*Be able to understand problems, analyse them, find their solution within the available resources	*Be able to understand problems, analyse them, find their solution within the available resources	*Be able to understand problems, analyse them, find their solution within the available resources

6.0Implications for Teacher Education

Concerns of school education have simultaneous implications for teacher education. Learning outcomes that can be achieved through the transaction of the school curriculum through the teacher will depend on the teacher's abilities. Therefore, the quality of any educational intervention ultimately rests with teacher's professional acumen, motivation and competence. Effective teacher education programs need to consciously focus on developing in the teachers the necessary knowledge, skills and values that enable translation of school curriculum into action. How does one go about this exercise?

Let us look at how teacher education curricula are presently structured. There are two vital aspects of teacher preparation, one of which is concerned with equipping the teacher with those areas of knowledge which are generic to the role expected of him/her to be a transformer of young minds and understand the implications of imparting education. Such an objective is realised through imparting knowledge of foundation disciplines of education, which draw inputs from the disciplines of philosophy, history, sociology and psychology. There is considerable scope to give some practical orientation to the course content offered under foundation areas of teacher education, which are presently handled largely theoretically. Educational philosophy provides the needed foundation for discussing, practising and internalising the whole gamut of life issues/skills pertaining to 'learning to be', particularly the total value orientation to life through educational processes. The practical component of educational psychology could also lay emphasis on psychological skills for life as enumerated earlier in the tabulated statement as part of practicum in the subject. Development of social skills could constitute a substantial part of practicum in educational sociology through discussions, seminars, workshops, investigations, case studies, etc.

7.0 Conclusion

In today's context of life's realities, the scope of general education needs to be extended beyond imparting the literacy and computational skills. The general education may have to be used as an instrument for consumer literacy, legal literacy and of course the IT literacy.

It is expected that the approach of spelling out the school curriculum in the form of statements of skills and competencies to be developed in children by the school, de facto will be the assurance of the school to the parent. The parents will be able to judge for themselves that the school attended by their child has been able to develop the skills that the school assured at the time of admission of their child. This will bring in accountability on heads of schools, teachers, teacher education institutions, the State and the non-governmental managements that have set up schools for taking care of education of the children.

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