

**A STUDY OF CURRICULUM LOAD
AT
PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY STAGES OF
KARNATAKA STATE
(Mysore and Mandya Districts)**

A REPORT

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PREFACE

The Improvement of higher education in any country depends upon the quality education in pre-primary and primary education which provides strong foundation for future learning among children. With all financial constraints our Central Government is putting all efforts to improve the quality of education at pre-primary and primary levels. To increase the efficiency, NCERT has proposed a project to study and understand various problems of teachers, headmasters, children and parents related to curriculum load at pre-primary and primary stages. Similar study has been made in Haryana and Delhi.

To prepare a national document on curriculum load at pre-primary and primary stages, this study has been further extended to four more states namely Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka to see variations in different parts of India. I have been assigned the task of this study in Karnataka state. For sample we selected Mysore and Mandya districts to collect data from 30 schools of both urban and rural areas.

The study has been completed in Karnataka and then qualitative and quantitative analysis have been made. This report comprises all the details about various aspects as required by NCERT. This helps in the preparation of national document by

consolidating data from other states. Finally the document may help the government to take some measures to improve the status and quality of education in pre-primary and primary stages.

I thank NCERT for providing financial assistance to carryout this project and also Prof. K.K. Vasistha for appointing me as Coordinator of this project. I acknowledge the assistance rendered by Dr. R.D. Sharma, Reader, NCERT in collecting data from a few urban and rural schools. I also thank Prof. G. Ravindra, Principal of this Institute, for extending constant help and full support to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION

As a part of national project a detailed analysis and survey of curriculum load in pre-primary and primary classes was undertaken in August and September 2000. The main objective of the study was to understand the feelings of teachers, headmasters, parents and some students with regard to various facets of the issue of curriculum load, standard of education and other facilities in these classes. This survey was made to examine the magnitude of curriculum load on children in pre-primary and primary classes in Mysore and Mandya districts of Karnataka State.

The survey was made separately by using different quotations for pre-primary and primary levels. Some were attached to primary and a few were independent. Regarding primary level there were three Kendriya Vidyalayas, two SC/ST schools, 12 public schools and 18 government schools from Mysore and Mandya Districts. Importance was given equally for both urban and rural areas in both the districts.

At primary stage 49 teachers and 79 parents were interviewed. For the primary part of the study 132 teachers/headmasters, 98 parents and 150 children studying in classes III, IV and V were

interviewed. Separate tools were used for the collection of data from pre-primary and primary stages. Each stage contains two interview schedules for teachers and parents, one for school information, one for school observation and one for students interview. Interviews were conducted with seriousness to collect real and correct information. The data was collected and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to find answers for the questions under consideration.

The major findings are summarised separately for pre-primary and primary stages.

A. FINDINGS RELATED TO PRE-PRIMARY STAGE

The present study looked into various aspects as follows:

- duration of pre-school
- class size
- age of admission
- procedure of admission
- teacher-pupil ratio
- professional training of teachers
- working hours
- school timings
- distance to school from home
- medium of instruction
- syllabus prescribing agency
- availability of play and learning materials

- number of books prescribed for nursery
- physical load of the bag
- home work and its monitoring, etc.

Thorough discussions were made with teachers and parents on the above issues by using questionnaire and their views have been summarised below:

- In government schools duration of pre-school has been found to be 1 to 4 years while in public schools there is three years of pre-school. The admission to pre-school is allowed at +1 age (Anganwadi). Violation of age of admission may be observed in some public schools which will admit children at +2 stage.
- The average class size was noticed to be 40 in public schools and 50 in government schools.
- Many strict measures will be taken to reduce the admission pressure in public schools. They will adapt verbal tests and also conduct interviews with parents. A few schools will go to the extent of conducting written tests.
- The average teacher-pupil ratio was found to be 1:50 against the minimum specifications laid down by the state government as 1:40 at this stage. In government schools most of the teachers are trained whereas in public schools sometimes they will appoint untrained teachers.

- The duration of pre-school classes ranged from four hours to six hours.
- The average distance covered by children in government schools ranged from less than 1 km to 1.5 kms. But in public schools the distance will range from 1 km to 15 kms.
- In most of the government schools the medium of instruction is Kannada. The public schools use English as their medium of instruction and sometimes Kannada or both.
- In public schools the syllabus for pre-school is divided by the management.
- Most of the public schools were found to have different kinds of play and learning materials in terms of swings, sand play, building blocks, puppets, etc. Whereas government schools are found to be poorly equipped.
- In government schools definite books are not prescribed for children. However children possess slates and minimum materials because of some of the enthusiastic parents and teachers (Anganwadi schools). But in public schools 5 to 12 books will be prescribed for effective learning process.
- The load of the bag for children is much more in public schools in comparison to government schools.
- In most of the schools homework is given to children which will be appreciated by parents.

- Majority of the teachers from government schools do not find the problem of curriculum load at this stage. However, more than 30% of public schools express their concern about the heavy load of curriculum on children at this tender age. They blame the parents for this load, because they expect too much regarding the prosperity of children. They do not really understand the age and level of children.

In addition, many private publishers have produced plenty of workbooks which will be an additional load to the children. In that tender age learning should be more joyful and through many academic games, children should be able to learn on their own by learning through self experience.

CONCLUSION

Our experiences by visiting to both rural and urban pre-schools will provide the following conclusions.

The curriculum load cannot be generalised for all the schools. If the schools have good infrastructure and well trained teachers this can be managed very well. In this direction some public schools are working to make money, but at the same time they provide better facilities and maintain very good standard. Some of the middle and upper class parents spend more money for their children's education.

But the problem is mainly in government pre-schools especially in Anganwadis. The main problem here is salary for teachers. The teachers in villages are untrained and are poorly paid (Rupees 500/- to 800/- per month). When the teachers are not mentally happy, the government cannot expect quality teaching and dedicated service from others. Because of this reason the whole system is suffering. The government cannot improve the quality of education unless some of the basic problems are solved. For such unlucky and unfortunate children the curriculum load is really heavy because of the lack of proper evaluation and follow-up action by government. The teaching method should be more joyful and meaningful in that tender age. Thus the teachers should be well trained in this direction.

Some of the private and public pre-schools prepare children for admission tests to good schools and thus to some extent children are heavily loaded with information and memorisation.

Medium of instruction is another menace in our country. Middle and upper-class parents want their children to be studied in English medium. This provision is not there in most of the government schools. Thus private schools and public schools are flourishing very well through their English medium sections.

The homework menace is another important factor. Pre-school children should complete entire work in the classes. The teachers should see that the maximum work is done in the schools.

But the problem is with parents. Parents want their children to be given lot of homework. Then only they will appreciate teachers and schools. To earn good name and to compete with other good schools lot of homework is given to pre-school children. The real sufferers are children with heavy curriculum load.

Another observation made is distance. The parents should try to put children to nearby schools. When the distance is less, the children enjoy going to school. But some of the ambitious parents put their children to far off schools (2 to 15 kms), where the transportation becomes a problem.

Eventhough government has recommended definite curriculum some of the private and public schools frame their own syllabus to impress upon the parents that their standard is very high. The parents think, by providing such standard pre-school education to their children their foundation will be strong for future education.

B. FINDINGS PERTAINING TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This project was undertaken to study the curriculum load in primary schools to understand its nature and magnitude as perceived by teachers/headmasters, parents and students of classes III to V. The issue was examined on various indicators such as

- minimum age of admission
- admission procedure
- availability of instructional time
- class size
- teacher-pupil ratio
- physical facilities
- medium of instruction
- professional competence of teachers
- classroom transactions and
- pupil evaluation

The perception of teachers, parents and students were obtained on issues like

- ◆ home work
- ◆ comprehensibility
- ◆ language of the textbooks
- ◆ quality of instructional package
- ◆ parental cooperation, etc.

The Important Findings are as Follows

- There is uniformity in the admission pattern in all the schools for the children of age group 5+.
- Admission procedures seem to be different in different kinds of schools. All government schools provide seats to the localites irrespective of their marks in pre-school and background of parents. But many private schools look into the standard of students and background of parents. But they conduct oral and written tests to select intelligent children. The main objective is to maintain high standard in the schools. But this is not a good practice. At that tender age, intelligence cannot be decided so easily. Most of the private/public schools collect huge donations for admission process. Many parents pay donations to provide good education in private/public schools to their children.
- Total number of working days varies in different types of schools. Government schools are reported to have an average of 220 working days while public schools have 220-230 working days with 5½ hours to 6½ hours of schooling per day.
- Teachers in government schools are reported to have non-teaching assignment costing 20% to 50% of instructional time.
- In all government primary schools the teachers are trained and some of them possess higher qualification. But in some private/public schools some of the teachers are untrained, but majority

will be trained. In aided private schools the qualification for the selection of teachers will be strict. But in unaided private schools the management has freedom to select even untrained teachers.

- Teacher-pupil ratio in government schools, varied from 1:40 to 1:70. In KVS it was around 1:30. Public schools had a ratio ranging from 1:40 to 1:50.
- Medium of instruction in government schools was found to be Kannada. In KVS English is the medium of instruction, but in private/public schools mostly they will have English medium in addition to a very few Kannada medium sections (sometimes Kannada medium will be totally absent).
- Most of the government school teachers feel that textbooks are helpful for their job. Public school teachers recommend additional materials to improve the academic level of students. Sometimes they also recommend to the government to improve the quality of textbooks.
- Teachers of public schools do lot of preparation prior to teaching. Teachers in government schools express that they strictly follow textbooks. As per government order they have to prepare lesson plans in advance. Another segment of government teachers amounting to 20% express that they do not require any preparation because of long experience and over confidence in the subject.

- In public schools the teachers use good teaching aids to make classroom situation more interesting and effective. In Kendriya Vidyalayas also teachers use teaching aids but not to the extent of public schools. But the hopeless situation is in Government schools. Eventhough government has many innovative programmes to improve classroom teaching, but very rarely teachers use these facilities. Somehow they are not very enthusiastic.
- 60% of teachers feel preservice/in-service training programme are useful for them. 20% consider it partially useful and the remaining 20% feel that it is not relevant.
- Around 20% of teachers expressed that some children feel difficulty due to difference in home language and school language.
- Teachers found it difficult to teach the subject which does not belong to their background or area of specialisation (teachers with science and mathematics background have less competency to teach language and social science and vice versa).
- Periodic tests like quarterly, half yearly and annual tests are a regular feature of all types of schools. Public schools and KVS schools will have continuous evaluation (weekly and unit test) to improve teaching-learning abilities among children. The preparation of oral and written tests will vary. 20 to 25% will be

oral and 75 to 80% will be written tests. In IV and V classes the written tests will be more prominent.

- 90% teachers mentioned that they organise diagnostic and remedial teaching to help weak children. Poor learning is attributed to either weak background of students or lack of interest among parents.
- It has been observed that mathematics content is more than required in classes III, IV and V. Some of the social science topics are also beyond the level of comprehension of students and the textbooks do not maintain the level of students. The teachers said that environmental studies was found to be heavy from classes I to III. These problems were expressed mostly by government school teachers especially from rural sector. In government schools English is another problem for children as a subject or medium of instruction.

Public school teachers expressed their concern about EVS lessons and KVS teachers complained about heavy dose of mathematics particularly Vth level mathematics.

- Teachers perception regarding the benefit of teaching derived by the children was obtained. It was found that most of the public school teachers feel that 50 to 90% students are benefited by their teaching. KVS teachers feel that 75 to 95% of the students take advantage of classroom teaching. Government school

teachers maintain a very low profile by saying that 40% to 65% students are benefited by their teaching.

- Teachers suggested many strategies to deal with weak and slow learners. They mentioned

- individual attention
- extra time and reinforcement
- peer tutoring
- extra remedial teaching

for all slow learners. In some of the public/private schools the above techniques are in practice to bring good name to the Institution. But in government schools the teachers are least bothered about the improvement of students.

- The teachers gave following reasons regarding student difficulties of weaker sections of society.

- parental ignorance
- deficiency of the knowledge of previous classes
- difficulty in understanding the language of textbooks
- differences in home and school languages
- level of content and losing interest in the subjects

- In all the schools the teachers give homework for about 30 mts to 2 hours. As per the opinion of the teachers of public schools and KVS 80% to 95% students complete their homework regularly.

The completion rate of homework in government schools was found to be 5 to 70%.

In some cases the students seek help from teachers, brothers, sisters or tutors.

- About 30% parents feel that curriculum load is the main reason for distracting their wards from attending the schools. The dropout rate is more in rural areas in comparison to urban areas.

There are many reasons as follows:

- poor teaching
 - harsh behaviour of teachers
 - distance between home and schools
- About 82% parents explained the difficulty faced by their children in different subjects. Mathematics and English were identified as more difficult subjects by 50% parents. In government and private Kannada medium schools V English is very difficult to learn, because they do not learn English from classes from I to IV. In these schools English is started directly from V standard, thus the students do not understand because of the lack of previous knowledge. But this problem will not be faced by teachers working in English medium schools.

Maths and Hindi were identified as difficult subjects by 25% parents. Next difficult areas were Social Studies (15%) and Kannada (10%).

- Enquiry was made regarding the quality of textbooks. Parents expressed that environmental textbook is heavily loaded and very difficult. Then followed by maths, science and English.
- The parents mentioned that their children devote ½ hour to 2 hours on reading textbooks. They use one hour for helpbook/ workbook and they devote 3 to 6 hours for watching TV and playing. [Watching TV has become a big menace in our society].
- 26% of parents feel the load of curriculum on their children. Parents of public school children demand more content and standard education for their children.

Parents in general demand English medium education and also they do not want any free period.

- The children of government schools have 3 to 6 hours in classes III, IV and V. There is increase in the number of books in KVS and public schools. On an average the children have to carry 8 books and 13 notebooks every day.
- Children's views were also obtained with regard to their perceptions about teachers, teaching-learning situation and textbooks. Most of the students complain about language difficulty and memorisation of too much of content.
- Some of the buildings of government schools are in a bad condition. Classrooms are not equipped with good furnitures to create proper atmosphere for learning. Some of the teachers are

involved in administrative work in the absence of a clerk. But in private/public schools the teachers are totally involved in teaching work.

CONCLUSION

The above findings give us an idea that curriculum load is not same in all types of schools. It is different in different categories of schools. In rural schools this has not been felt, because they carry minimum number of textbooks and notebooks. But in urban areas this is really a big problem. The parents have more expectations and aspirations. To meet the demands of parents in providing quality education, there is tough competition between private and public schools as well as KVS. The government school teachers are not worried about quality education and they do not have high aspirations to compete with private schools.

The private/public schools in the process of improving quality education they have included many additional workbooks and textbooks. In addition, they also propose too many notebooks. Thus the children going to such standard schools feel heavy load of curriculum which is really a burden on them.

The real problem in rural schools is to prevent dropouts. If the textbooks are not understandable and interesting, the students cannot be attracted for learning process. Teacher should also be more creative and innovative to attract students in the classroom.

The teaching should be more interesting and individual attention is very important. If not so, the interest will fade away in the minds of students leading to dropout.

Eventhough central and state governments have lot of projects to implement "Universalisation of primary education", there is no total success. Because there is mismanagement in the whole system and it is not reaching grassroot level as desired by administrators.

Eventhough government teachers get good salary and all facilities, most of them are not working hard to bring good name to their schools. The problems in government schools must be assessed and proper solutions should be suggested to improve quality of teaching in rural schools to reduce dropout rate. Any how, in the eyes of public the government schools have a very low profile.

By taking this advantage private/public schools are striving hard to improve the quality of education and also in fulfilling the expectations and aspirations of parents. Our parents want heavy curriculum load for their children. In this process children are the real sufferers.

The curriculum load can be reduced in the following ways:

- ◇ Important workbooks and notebooks can be kept in the classroom. The teacher can give them during classes and again they can be collected back.

- ◇ All the textbooks need not be carried everyday. As per time table the students can take required textbooks.

The above methods may reduce curriculum load to some extent.

Distance is another important problem for children. Parents should admit their children to nearby schools. If the schools are far off, children will lose interest in going to school.

School authorities should provide minimum infrastructure and facilities. The classrooms must be provided with furnitures and good blackboard.