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## **CRITERIA FOR IMPROVING QUALITY EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Education must help learners' skill development with greater competence and greater confidence. It is possible only when education is a good quality-where the learning process is positive and helpful and where real learning take place. Today's world is complex and knowledge is growing at a fast pace – learning must go on throughout life. The document Tomorrow's Schools (1995) had asked the following question: "What are considered to be the basic requirements of a quality education - one that is meaningful, worthwhile, responsive to individuals and social needs - and every student without fail get those requirements, regulated as these are by principle of entitlement. "According to the Education For All: **Global Monitoring Report 2005** - The Quality Imperative (EFA: GMR), two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education: the first identifies learners' cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. The second emphasizes education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development."Quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits. The wealth of nation depends upon how effectively its younger generation are trained and educated to take up the challenge of the future. With such a great responsibility it is very important to strengthen the teaching profession.*

### **Introduction**

**"Teacher Education is the Mother of All Professions".** We must hold our education system accountable to high standards of student achievement. For this, we need to move from monitoring inputs to regulating for outcomes. Schools and Colleges must be evaluated by readiness of students, employability of school graduates and student's performance on standardized assessments. Higher education institutes, similarly, must be evaluated based on measures such as student selectivity, placements, research papers published in premier academic publications, etc.

### **Quality Education**

**"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation."**(**John F. Kennedy**). There are three broad issues affecting the quality of education in India. They are **access, attendance and attainment**.

### **Access**

A large number of school going children are not even able to access schools. There are many reasons for access the quality of education.

- Poor infrastructure - few schools especially in rural and remote tribal areas those have minimum classrooms, no compounds and no drinking water facilities.

- Parents are not certain about the safety of the girl child traveling to school even if it is only 1/2 km away from home.
- There is a pyramidal structure as one goes from primary schools up to universities. (The system is designed to squeeze out students at each stage as primary, secondary, higher secondary, under graduation, post graduation, etc).

### Attendance

Even if the child does get enrolled in a school, there is no guarantee that (s)he will attend. There are number of factors that keep the child away

- Teachers are held accountable for enrolment, seldom for attendance; they don't see the need to push.
- The child needs to work at home or in the family enterprise to bring money to help feed the family.
- The pedagogy is so hard and the subjects so irrelevant that no self-respecting child will be lured to stay on.
- Teachers are often uninterested in teaching. Their knowledge is limited. *Delhi University is offering students options of quitting a four-year diploma course in 2 years, if they want to be primary school teachers.* What message are we sending? That it is all right for poorly qualified people to be primary school teachers. Teachers are often used for all sorts of extension work by government.

### Attainment

The Indian education system was developed by the British rulers to **create clerks to help the few thousand British administrators run a country of 40 million people.** It was not designed to promote thought and encourage a culture of curiosity. As a result in most Indian schools, at least in the Public school's system, the kids do not attain knowledge and skills commensurate with their age. The pedagogy is very difficult and depends so much on being learning by rote.

- The evaluations, if they happen, are focused on a child being able to vomit out what (s)he has learnt by heart. *Study of history is reduced to dates and study of language to reciting poems.* The only thing I learned about Gandhi in school were his birth date, death anniversary, the dates (years) when he launched major agitations. To understand what his philosophy was, I had to wait till I was in college: that is when I could access some good books.
- Most of the kids coming in from poorly educated households do not have the atmosphere at home to aid learning. There are no books. There is no money to pay for extra coaching, even if a kid is a slow learner and needs that support. Parents are not capable of evaluating whether the kid is learning anything.

- The curriculum is constructed without skill making or perspectives to be able to build a working life. This is not only at the school level and also in college level.

### Criteria for Improving Quality of Teaching And Learning

"When learning and teaching continually improves, everything improves". The following six criteria are very useful for improve the quality teaching and learning.

#### 1. Relevant aims

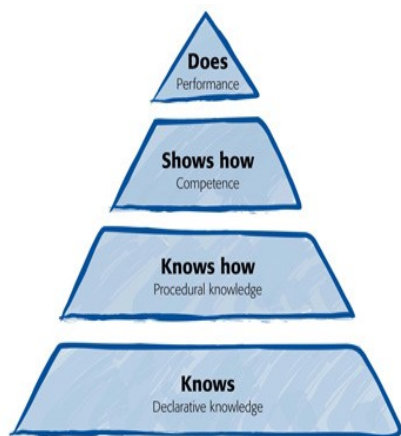
Education must arrive at a relevant balanced set of aims describing what learners should learn and why, the development of cognitive, creative and social skills and values; respect for human rights, the environment, peace and tolerance and cultural diversity. These put citizenship, democracy and human rights at the fore.

#### 2. Subject balance

How subjects are defined, how many are taught and the time allocated to each. Inculcating among teachers, love for the country and appreciation of various national concerns and orienting teachers in new curricular areas.

#### 3. Good use of time

Positive correlations are noted between instruction time and student achievement at both primary and secondary levels. Between 850 and 1,000 effective hours of schooling per year is broadly agreed as a benchmark.



#### 4. Pedagogic Approaches for Better Learning

Child-centered active pedagogy, cooperative learning and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills need to be present.

#### 5. Language policy

Language of instruction is a policy choice affecting curriculum, content and pedagogy. A balance needs to be struck between enabling people to use local language in learning and ensuring that they have access to global communication.

## 6. Learning from assessment

Regular, reliable, timely assessment is a key to improving learning achievement. The goals are to give learners feedback for improve the learning and teaching practices. Formative assessment is needed as a complement to formal examinations.

## Curriculum

- The current state primary school curriculum comprises a commendable mix of areas of knowledge that offer opportunities for the holistic development of individual pupils. The curriculum areas include English, mathematics, religion, science and technology, social studies, physical education, expressive arts (drama, art, music, dance) and personal and social development. All these areas are important as they cover the multiple intelligences identified by leading educational psychologists (Gardner, 1983).
- The current curriculum also recognizes information and computer technology (ICT) skills as tools which can be used to access knowledge in all the other areas of the curriculum. It is essential that ICT skills become incorporated in the specific areas of the curriculum.



## Syllabi

- The primary school syllabi (2005) promote a developmental approach as they specify the learning outcomes in each subject with a clear learner-centered focus.
- Curriculum specialists need to work on further evaluating the learning outcomes that can be achieved within the given time frame in order to allow time for meaningful learning to take place and to avoid pressure on teachers and learners.

## Pedagogy

- Given that teachers will have less pressure to "prepare for the test", teaching needs to place greater emphasis on important knowledge and affective skills which cannot be easily assessed by written tests. The current reform provides space for teaching to emphasize application of knowledge, analysis, synthesis and evaluation besides recall and understanding. It also helpful for experience oriented activity where pupils develop personal and social skills and attitudes as they interact by sharing, discussing, acting responsibly, using different forms of communication and accepting diversity. With the freedom from the constraints of high-stakes examinations, teachers can further explore the use of cross-curricular, problem-solving and thematic activities, which allow pupils to

experience the association between different areas of knowledge. The reform is aimed to gradually lead to more interesting, enjoyable and meaningful teaching and learning experiences.

### **Support**

- The extension of mixed ability grouping to years 5 and 6 presents new challenges to teachers, especially those who have been used to teaching rigidly streamed classes. These challenges need to be recognized and addressed by offering teachers further training and possibly support materials to help them cope with the new challenges. Learning support assistants are also essential in supporting pupils who need special support in each class. However resource needs to be deployed more equitably and effectively. We also recognize that other cases may need further professional help.

### **Visionary Leadership**

- “Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today”. (**Malcolm X**). College principals and heads of school have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the reform. Their driving force is essential and their need for support is acknowledged. A more distributed form dispersed, delegated and democratic forms of leadership imply greater empowerment where and when it matters (Bezzina, 2003). This means that college networks slowly become more responsible and accountable matters ready to deal with school life.

### **Conclusion**

**"When learning and teaching continually improves, everything improves. "(Alexander Dumas).** A system that focuses on quality education allows children to develop and grow in school environments that are supportive and at the same time challenging, which nurture them to become confident, have good self-esteem and willing to strive forward yet at the same time feel a sense of responsibility towards others in their community. We believe that all our schools can be such places where children of different abilities develop, learn and grow together based on the effective teaching learning process. The quality of education is directly related to the quality of instruction in the classroom.

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