**Rationale for the Project Back to Basics**

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“Don’t limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in a different time.”

Education is going through a remarkable transformation and though we have made efforts to address the challenges of present age it is evident that a lot still needs to be done. It has become abundantly clear that though we have been going through the process of implementing the latest theories, technology and techniques of education on the child, we have been doing her a disservice by not teaching her the basic competencies and concepts that are the basic building blocks of all education. In our desire to complete the syllabus we have failed to emphasise the importance of remembering, vocabulary drills, accuracy in speaking and even handwriting.

Our children learn about water in social science, science, literature, chemistry and even physics but do not know what it actually is because they learn about it in different subjects separately and without taking their experience into account! because there is no integration or interconnectivity between subjects. They read about various scientific theories and experiments and may perhaps even see a few experiments being conducted from afar but neither do they experiment on their own nor do they read and find about the basic concepts behind the experiments, as the teacher is in too much of a hurry to complete the lesson.

Time tested techniques like recitation, dictation, dramatization, story- telling, mental maths, memorisation or remembering as a study technique have all been shelved in the race for completing the syllabus and targets. Our students are not encouraged to use their creativity and imagination nor do our teachers have the time to think and create a learning environment that caters to the individual learner. Parents too are so focussed on getting the dream A+ grade or the perfect 10 CGPA score, so children have become learners by proxy- parents complete their child’s work so that she gets the perfect score thereby not allowing her to make mistakes and so denying her the opportunity to learn from mistakes.

Memorisation or remembering was a study technique used even in the ancient gurukul system but now teachers have taken it for granted that all memorisation is bad. Needless to say that it is learning by rote which is bad and should be discouraged. However memorisation of concepts after understanding in certain core competencies can help children assimilate and apply their learning to a variety of real life situations. Techniques like mnemonics can be helpful in this regard. Memorisation is essential when it comes to poem recitation, Slokas, declamation etc.

An opportunity to learn maybe available to a child anywhere but we don’t allow such events to facilitate a child’s learning, we don’t allow her to learn while playing or while walking to school or in morning assembly – We want children to study subjects not learn. We don’t encourage our children to ask questions or make choices or even express their opinions or thoughts whereas these would be perfect opportunities to learn and grow.

Therefore, we need to refocus our attention to developing the basic concepts and abilities of our children- for eg. In languages, our students should be taught the basic skills of reading, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, writing, referencing, handwriting etc. on the plea of having very little time for completing syllabus, teachers abuse the text by giving it a mere reading, the text is just a take-off or a spring board for exploring it creatively in a variety of contexts and activities, on the contrary it is badly used.

In mathematics, they should know concepts, mental mathematics, problem solving, operations, formulae etc.

In science they should have conceptual clarity, practical ability of recording, narrating and describing, understanding of scientific terms, develop a scientific temper and ability to appreciate elements of nature in a scientific way among others.

In social science too, conceptual clarity, referencing skills, reading a map, skill of deduction, sense of social responsibility and even communication should be taught.

Co-scholastic activities like art and craft, games, music, dance, drama and debate which are an integral part of a child’s school life should be used for much more than whiling away time. Teachers can exploit the possibility of integrating the concepts from textual material with the co-scholastic activities, so that learning becomes fun and not a burden which is orchestrated only by teacher dominance.

Now, it is the time to go Back to the Basics and learning the core concepts, competencies and skills that ought to be the most integral part of our children’s lives and help them become independent learners, creators, leaders and thinking individuals of tomorrow. The activity sheets included in the material are prepared incorporating the basic concepts, competencies, skills or learning objectives identifiable in a lesson, a sample of wide ranging activities that can be used in the classroom to achieve a few of the identified learning objectives have been included along with suggestions for other activities. Tools and techniques for assessment of learning have also been prepared for use of teachers and to ensure that the project is implemented in letter and spirit a monitoring tool for use of Head Masters, Principals and Inspecting officers has also been developed.

Back to Basics material is not meant to be used in place of the text book, it is in addition to the textual material already being used by teachers and to enhance its value by incorporating the Learning Indicators circulated by the NCERT in 2014. Teachers should make use of the material and activity sheets for planning their lessons and activities in such a way that the learning indicators, learning objectives, pedagogical processes and assessment tools are in consonance with the expectations of their learners and all other stakeholders.