

SCHOOL EDUCATION - SOME PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Some problems of class room teaching of pre-primary and primary children are mentioned and methods attempted by the author are given,

1, JUMPING JACK [OR JILL] PROBLEM

In a group, there are always some 'forward' children, learning faster or showing more interest, or interacting better etc. This results in [a] clouding the teacher's idea of grasp by the class in general [b] some shy children creeping into their shells [c] unruliness in the class . Read more

2. CLUTTER IN THE CLASS PROBLEM

While the class is going on, some children are found meddling with some item [in the class room, from their bag, in their pockets, just things lying around], This results in [a] loss of concentration of the child and adjacent children [b] testing teacher's energy [c] loss of concentration, time etc of the teacher [d] damage to the item [d] harm to the child . Read more ...

3 . COLOURFUL BLACKBOARD PROBLEM

Many schools keep their primary class black boards very colourful. Beautiful, artistic, attractive, creative, informative etc are the other words used. Is this a problem? Yes, it is. Many a teacher wonders why what she writes on the blackboard does not seem to have made any impact on most of the children. The answer lies in finding out whether what the children "see" coincides with what the teacher wants them "to see". Mostly there is a 'miss'. Read more ...

4. MESSY MIND PROBLEM

The mind here refers to the **teacher's mind**. The teacher wants to say many things at one time and expect the learner to understand all. More resourceful teachers would like to say more than what is in the book or in her own 'lesson plan'. This over enthusiasm or messy mind results in [a] leaving the majority of the class in 'wilderness' [b] wrong idea [e.g. an analogy] catching on [c] loss of logical or linear thinking [in the learner] . To overcome this .. read more.....

5. CLARITY IN CONCEPT PROBLEM

This is also a problem arising from the teacher or the textbooks. When one is discussing a concept the teacher [or the text book writer] is reminded of very important similarities or exceptions . She or the book may have 'clarity of concept', but the problem is '**how to bring clarity in the learner**'. To realise that this is a problem and to see possible solutions, read more...

6. CARRYING THE RED CROSS PROBLEM

From the pre-primary to puc level this problem exists. Children do their homework or copy the written or dictated notes or Q AND A [question and answer] . What follows: [a] it is

never checked for correctness by anyone, it goes on as it is written [b] in some ‘good’ schools the teacher sees the submissions and ‘**red crosses**’ are made. When the process stops here, carrying the red cross problem appears. For solution read more.....

7. ‘TOUCH-ME-NOT’ PROBLEM

‘This comes from **compartmentalization** of knowledge into man-made pigeon holes. This kind of segmentation of teaching and learning into narrow subjects and syllabuses may be self made by teachers or mandated by education department or copied from ‘cognition experts’. There are at least 3 kinds of ‘touch-me-nots’. .. read more.....

READ MORE ...

1 In a group, there are always some ‘forward’ children, learning faster or showing more interest, or interacting better etc. This results in [a] clouding the teacher’s idea of grasp by the class in general [b] some shy children creeping into their shells [c] unruliness in the class

Solution to jumping jack problem – 1. Do not call the child ‘hyperactive’ and thus something undesirable. Learn to manage such a child by giving him extra info or making him **share or distribute** info or materials etc 2. Do not purposely curb the enthusiasm. 3. Deliberately give **chance to ALL children** 4. Reach out to the shy receding child and demonstrate your concern. Call, touch, sit by the side, look at his work etc. And make him **feel part** of the system. 4. Make ALL the above a **HABIT** so that every child is included.

2 CLUTTER IN THE CLASS PROBLEM While the class is going on, some children are found meddling with some item [in the class room, from their bag, in their pockets, just things lying around], This results in [a] loss of concentration of the child and adjacent children [b] testing teacher’s energy [c] loss of concentration, time etc of the teacher [c] damage to the item [d] harm to the child .

Solution to clutter problem - reduce to the minimum any unwanted material – 1. Let the class room be basically empty without any [hazardous or not] material within reach of the children 2,. Even teaching aids and KG and Montessori equipment can be used and neatly packed and put back in their proper places. 3 If possible **keep away all the belongings** of the child [bag, food, water bottle [especially the water bottle] neatly in a corner or shelf . 4. Young fingers get active on loose ends of mats, carpets etc Teacher has to manage this in her own way. 5, Don’t be misled by edu dept’s ill-advised ‘nali-kali- ‘ [IF this statement embarrasses any senior stalwart primary teachers , the writer , Durai Krishnan, is willing to share more ideas and views]

3 COLOURFUL BLACKBOARD PROBLEM Many schools keep their primary class black boards very colourful. Beautiful, artistic, attractive, creative, informative etc are the other words used. Is this a problem? Yes, it is. Many a teacher wonders why what she writes on the blackboard does not seem to have made any impact on most of the children. The answer lies in finding out whether what the children “see” coincides with what the teacher wants them “to see”. Mostly there is a ‘miss’.

Solution to colourful problem – since the problem is similar to the clutter problem , solution is also similar – 1. Get out of ill-conceived , much hyped govt. concept of nali kali and the rest. 2. Just imagine what happens when you write one important new letter, word, or idea. This tiny input is surrounded by gaudy writings , quotations, peacock, flowers, leaves and plants 3. Learning is different from inducing , encouraging students to come to learn. 4. Art, colour and attraction can be outside to bring the child inside and into learning process and skills. 5. Related to this problem is another , i.e. how to teach a new concept – not by writing all over

the blackboard and make the child copy while the teacher reads a newspaper or goes out .
each new input should be stressed and then newer one should be introduced. –

4 MESSY MIND PROBLEM The mind here refers to the **teacher's mind**. The teacher wants to say many things at one time and expect the learner to understand all. More resourceful teachers would like to say more than what is in the book or in her own 'lesson plan'. This over enthusiasm or messy mind results in [a] leaving the majority of the class in 'wilderness' [b] wrong idea [e.g. an analogy] catching on [c] loss of logical or linear thinking [in the learner] . **Solution to messy mind problem** - since the messy mind problem relates to the presentation of the matter, let me elaborate.. When many ideas are presented together , new learners get confused. Even attentive students get distracted .

My **axiom #1**. Young minds should be given only **one item at a time** , whether it is for knowing, or understanding or storing. My **axiom #2**. If the items are connected in some way they should **be presented in a linear or logical fashion**. My **axiom #3**. The above axioms are true **for any learners of any age**, if new inputs are given to the learners.

Based on the above axioms , I give below **some suggestions** to solve the messy mind problem .

#4 Case 1

Even though he was hungry and food was in front of him, he could not eat because his hands were dirty after having repaired his cycle.

Many textbooks are even more complex. Do you recognize that there is a problem ?. Try this .

He just finished repairing his cycle. He was very hungry. Food was in front of him. But his hands were dirty. So he could not eat.

Lesson; split the complicated idea into its essential small parts

4 Case 2

All insects have six legs – even though some like spiders have more- and they crawl or fly.

Everyone will agree that this one line sentence is quite complex. [some 'pure' biologists may even say it is inaccurate.] Let us try to see what the lesson's author wanted to convey.

Insects have six legs. They crawl e.g. ants. Some can fly. E.g. mosquito. Some others have more than six legs e.g. spider.

Lesson: only one item at a time for learning- no brackets or hyphens -

Messy mind problem is not a problem of writing in English. It is a problem arising out of too many ideas in mind at a time .

5 CLARITY IN CONCEPT PROBLEM This is also a problem arising from the teacher or the textbooks. When one is discussing a concept the teacher [or the text book writer] is reminded of very important similarities or exceptions . She or the book may have 'clarity of concept', but the problem is '**how to bring clarity in the learner**'. **Solution to CLARITY IN CONCEPT PROBLEM-** here, both the teachers

and the textbook writers forget that one idea at a time and that idea built up well is better than too many details. Thus

Just as we need food and water, plants also [in fact all living beings] need food and water , and how do they get it ?

See the problem here. Smart students will joke “ not by going to a hotel or to a supermarket”.

Unlike Marathi or Kannada , Konkani does not have its own script or written literature .

This sentence is a short one. But there are problems .

Solutions :

1. Sacrifice your own enthusiasm to tell too many things . Mercilessly cut off textbook contents. If education dept officials jut in with their own blue books and model questions and unit tests , give them extra tea and biscuits and keep them away from the children.

2. Deliberately cut and splice textbook contents and reassemble to have only sensible contents.

3. If it is a long story like *Ramayana* or a long lesson like *our body* , **split into recognizable stopping points** . Every time the serial continues, condense the earlier story into a **short review and continue**.

6 Solution to CARRYING THE RED CROSS PROBLEM From the pre-primary to puc level this problem exists. Children do their homework or copy the written or dictated notes or Q AND A [question and answer] . What follows: [a] it is never checked for correctness by anyone, it goes on as it is written [b] in some ‘good’ schools the teacher sees the submissions and ‘**red crosses**’ are made. When the process stops here, carrying the red cross problem appears.

#6 Case 1 Homework and notebooks are **not at all checked** . Here there is no visible red cross but the burden is still on the student [and the parents]. In such cases , the school should initiate some mechanism of actually demanding and checking work done by the students. Then correct each one of the submissions. Put the red cross if you will. Now case 1 becomes case2 .

#6 Case2 Here each submission is seen by the teacher and mistakes are pointed by putting a red cross. This is to indicate to the student where he/ she had gone wrong. Instead, many teachers make the notebook look like a scene of crime , with blood splattered all around.

Now solutions and suggestions:

1. Please realize that correction is for helping the student . It should help him improve. Correction should not look like condemnation which would be counter-productive.

2 . Do not just put red marks. Let the children know WHY. Giving just the right answers will not help. Tell them how and why the mistake and hence help further learning.

3. It is an **undesirable** practice to make children **rewrite** the whole thing. It is unfair to the bright ones who got 90 % correct in the first attempt. It is useless to the 90% mistake makers

also, because they would blindly rewrite without ever knowing what was wrong in their first attempt.

4. Therefore, make all the children **correct only** those [words/ steps/ places/ concepts/ numbers/..] **where they had made mistakes**.

5. Teachers know that children memorize everything by reading or writing from the notebook. Carrying the red cross in their notebooks will result in learning incorrect or uncorrected versions. ‘Unlearning’ afterwards is another daunting task.

6. Corrected, neatly written notebook alone will help.

Teachers, ask yourselves. Do you need a red pen at all? Go back and recall how much you hated the red lines or crosses or circles in your notebook [when you were a student].

This writer always uses a pencil so that the corrected version will be neat. The child need not carry the cross.

7. Solution to ‘TOUCH-ME-NOT’ PROBLEM This comes from **compartmentalization** of knowledge into man-made pigeon holes. This kind of segmentation of teaching and learning into narrow subjects and syllabuses may be self made by teachers or mandated by education department or copied from ‘cognition experts’. There are at least 3 kinds of ‘touch-me-nots’.

There may be a lesson on science/ sociology/ environment in the language course. This could be in the first, ii or iii language. The same content may be part of a core subject. These are usually taught in two different ‘periods’ – sometimes by the same teacher and many times by a different teacher. ‘Touch-me-not ‘problem arises if the teacher[s] fail to indicate that the subject matter is the same. Worse is the case if the matter included imparts conflicting concepts. Therefore,

1. Always refer to and point out the related content-[whether learnt much earlier, or in the recent past, either by the same teacher or by another]. While doing so ,look for, and clarify any conflicts.

2. In schools where camaraderie and cooperation among teachers exist, conduct consultation sessions. Clarifying sessions can be done together or independently depending on whether the overlap is in different subjects.

3. Touch-me-not problem exists because of false respect, or pretended ignorance or simple ego-trip. So avoid all these in the interest of the learner.