

To  
Commissioner for Public Instruction,  
Department of Primary and Secondary School Education,  
Government of Karnataka  
Bangalore, Karnataka.

**Sub – Education Emergency in High Schools**

Dear Sir,

The closure of schools due to Covid pandemic has had significant impact on learning of most of our students. Students who are now in class 8 have not attended most of last year (class 7) and are likely to have regressed on their learning from earlier grades as well. Same is the case for students in grades 9 through 12.

Research in this area, as well as our own interactions with students indicates that students need significant support before they can come to grade level learning. Many may even need support for foundational language and mathematical competencies.

A recent survey of around 150 high school teachers from Karnataka and Telangana revealed that less than 15% felt that 80% or more class 8 students are at grade level. This figure is worse for Mathematics subject. Similar figures for grade 9 and 10 are 18% and 24% respectively. In our interactions with high school teachers, most are clear that their students need a lot of support for learning concepts which are foundational to high school syllabi.

In the case of lower primary schools, the department has asked teachers to ensure students are given time and support to learn foundational language and mathematics competencies and adopt a socio-emotional learning approach for this academic year. This will help to retain student interest and engagement in learning. However, in the case of High Schools, teachers are being formally and informally persuaded / pressurized to get onto grade level teaching and month wise syllabi prescriptions are being provided though students are not ready for these, and also there is no uniformity across schools in terms of student learning levels.

There is a huge danger that students will be unable to comprehend the content being taught to them. Instead, as in the case of LPS, teachers must be allowed and encouraged to teach students based on the student learning levels, for which simple assessments must be designed by teachers themselves and conducted for their students.

Learning is important, rather than focus on syllabi completion, and the latter is likely to cause non-comprehension, disengagement and dropout. For the same reason, the department should consider dropping the Class X and XI board examinations to allow teachers of these grades to focus on relevant student learning, than forcing students to memorise content without understanding for purposes of the written examinations. As was done this year, all students can be encouraged to take admissions for higher studies, and the ‘filtering out’ students can be avoided this year as well.

Secondly, teachers need to focus all their energies on teaching in order to support students to get back to the learning processes. All non teaching duties need to be minimized. In this context, the data entry into the SATS is an issue that needs to be looked into. The time costs of making thousands of teachers enter this data daily needs to be compared with the benefits. Making this data entry a monthly or a quarterly activity would liberate enormous time of teachers.

Studies have indicated that malnutrition has significantly increased during the lockdown period. The Midday meal is an ideal opportunity available to address this issue. We request that the midday

meals be enhanced with provision of eggs, leafy vegetables and fruits and the Ksheera Bhagya program be resumed.

We also read a recent news report that Central Government has doubled the devolution of grants for November, to support state governments in covid relief measures. We request that this grant be considered for the purposes of untied grant to schools, midday meal enhancements, learning materials and teacher support measures to support schools in this very difficult period.

Our Hon'ble Chief Minister has repeatedly stressed on the need to make our government schools model schools across the state and the submissions in this letter would be useful to make his and our vision of a strong public school system, a reality.

We look forward to engaging with the department on this important issue.

National Coalition on the Education Emergency  
Bengaluru.  
18<sup>th</sup> November 2021.