

A PROPOSAL FOR INTRODUCING 'ROAD SAFETY' AS A COMPULSORY SUBJECT IN SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

"India records the highest number of deaths in road accidents in the world, 13 every hour, 1,14,590 a year, more than terrorism or natural disasters."

So says the latest issue of 'India Today' in its cover story on "Killer Roads of India". It provided extremely shocking and scary statistics and also revealed the fact that road fatalities in India have been rising at an alarming rate of 8 percent a year. The article is an eye opener for all the right thinking people and especially the policy makers.

A cursory glance at the road accident figures provided by the Traffic Department, Mumbai from 1952 to 2007 presents some startling facts. The total accidents have increased by 200 percent and the fatal ones are a whopping 300 percent, 39% of which belong to the age group of 0-25 years.

Road traffic fatalities, injuries and trauma constitute a serious problem, bringing adverse effects on the quality of life and longevity of citizens, children and especially adolescents. This is of significant concern, both in terms of cost to individuals and the community and the added burden it places on health services.

The situation demands strong preventive measures and collaborative efforts by all stake-holders from all walks of life.

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION

Worldwide research indicates that school based learning programmes and resources are key elements of an integrated approach to reducing road fatalities, casualties and trauma. The chances of accidents can be averted to a large extent, if school children who are going to be adults of tomorrow are made aware of road safety measures. It is considered that Road Safety Education at school and in the early childhood years makes an important contribution in improving behaviour and attitudes on roads. It provides a foundation for forming lifelong values, skills, behaviour and attitudes. However, it is important that Road Safety Education is continued throughout school which will prepare young people more effectively for safe road use in their community.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To create an awareness of the need and importance of road safety and road etiquettes.
- (2) To impart practical knowledge about traffic rules and safety code of conduct.
- (3) To inculcate a lifelong approach to road safe behaviour and habits.
- (4) To develop knowledge, understanding and skills that will empower children make informed safe choices and decisions as road users.
- (5) To change children's perception about road safety and their responsibilities as road users.

'ROAD SAFETY' AS A SUBJECT

In the present school educational curriculum, Road Safety forms a part of one of the optional subjects (Civil Defence and Road Safety) out of 7 optional subjects under School Certificate Examination in Standards IX and X. However majority of the schools/students do not opt for this subject. Besides, no standard textbooks are available on the subject.

It is proposed to introduce Road Safety Education as part of Health and Physical Education subject in Standards I to VIII. The Health and Physical Education is taught in Standards I to IV for 2.5 hours per week (5 periods) and in Standard V to VIII, it is 2 hours (4 periods) per week. It is proposed that one period per week be allotted to road safety education out of the PT periods.

A comprehensive graded curriculum should be devised and designed by a team of experts involving academicians, traffic police, members of the advisory committee, NGOs, parents, counsellors, etc.

The importance of this subject be highlighted by integrating it with other school subjects like Languages, Science, Maths, etc, also by providing proper weightage (25%) in the evaluation system and promotion rules.

The subject could be evaluated on the basis of written exams, orals, practical and project work.

CONCLUSION

The success of implementation of Road Safety Education programme largely depends on the whole hearted support and participation by key Government departments like Education, Police and also parents and teaching community and society at large.

PRINCIPAL NAJMA KAZI
PRINCIPAL RAJ ALONI
Members, Advisory Committee, R.S.P

November 18th 2009