

## SCENARIO OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION STATUS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF WEST BENGAL

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### Abstract:

*Primary Education is the core of all higher education as it lays the foundation of life. That is why at this stage all entities of a child need to develop in an interesting way. The purpose of the study is to reveal the real picture of Health and Physical Education in primary schools of West Bengal. **METHOD:** - Twelve Primary Schools were randomly selected and surveyed by the investigators. Physical Education infrastructure; man power; financial involvement for games and sports; students and teachers' attitude towards health and Physical Education were surveyed. Measurement Technique: 1. Structure Method: A set of questionnaire was developed to collect the data from primary schools. 2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Method: PRA method was adopted to obtain an overall picture of the health of each child. **RESULTS:** - There was no trained physical education teacher in any school. A few schools had play field but that was inadequate and poorly maintained. Playing equipments were also insufficient in all the schools. 50% children under survey had health problems. There were no regular medical check-up or health screening system in any of the schools. Minimum First-aid facilities were available in the schools. Sanitation & ventilation were satisfactory in the schools under survey but purified drinking water facilities were unavailable. Attitude of administrators and students was highly in favour of Physical Education. **CONCLUSION:** - The health and physical education scenario in the primary schools of West Bengal were found shocking. In spite of adopting varied policies of the government of India, primary education is neglected. Therefore, it is essential to generate a movement for introducing balanced Physical Education programme for the students at primary level.*

### KEYWORDS:

Health, Physical Education, Primary school, infrastructure, equipments, sanitation & ventilation, PRA method, healthy life style.

### INTRODUCTION

Learning to move and enjoying the freedom of movement is a human right (UNESCO, 1999). Physical Education in the primary schools focuses clearly on developing movement concepts and skills. The youngsters need to participate in physical activities for their overall growth and development. The curriculum for every child should include physical activities and thus Physical Education should be considered as the fundamental right of children. Physical Education programme of activities may act as a 'Health Insurance Policy' in schools as it has tremendous potentiality to develop a child and to prevent diseases as well.

It has been reported that strong relationship exists between activity and various health parameters

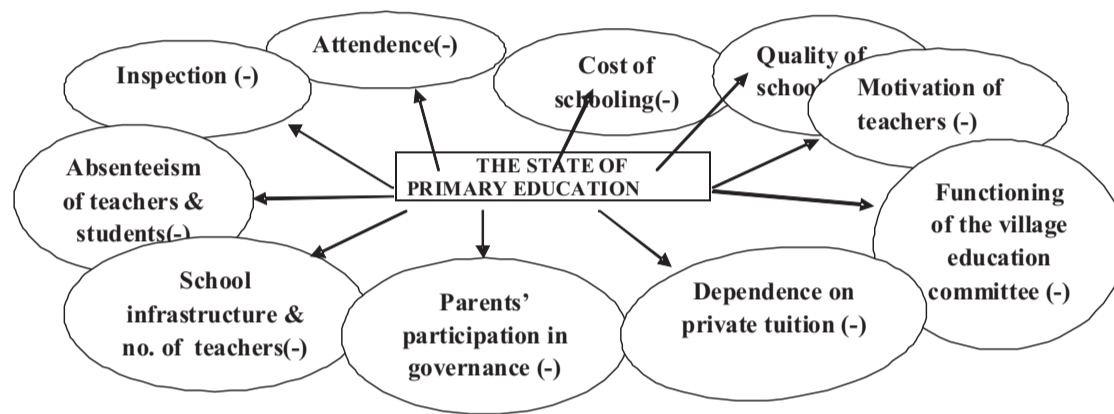
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like bone health, blood pressure, lipid profile and obesity in children (Riddoch, 1998).

At present every effort has been made by the government to achieve the goal of 'Education for All' from 2000 A.D. through formal, non-formal and adult education programmes in India. Although it was a constitutional directive to provide free, universal and compulsory primary education to all children up to 14 years of age, but the dilemma of successful implementation is still going on. The new slogan of the UNESCO (2006) is 'Sound mind in a sound body from early childhood' is yet to be considered.

In West Bengal, in spite of introduction of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) in 2001 to bring an improvement in the elementary education system of the country, the Pratichi Trust Education Report (2002) revealed the horrifying picture of primary education:



\*\* (-): Indicates negative response or deterioration

Figure 1: PRATICHI TRUST'S EDUCATION REPORT 2002.

**Table 1: REASONS FOR ENJOYING PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Opportunity to play with friends | 25% |
| Enjoy studying                   | 63% |
| Like the teachers                | 20% |
| No response                      | 3%  |

**Table 2: BASIC AMENITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Total no. of primary schools | 18  |
| No of playgrounds            | 72% |
| No drinking water facilities | 33% |
| No toys & games              | 50% |
| No teaching kids             | 50% |
| No musical instrument        | 83% |

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It is known that young children enjoy active play. If sedentary alternatives are not available most children will play or invent active ways of passing time that involve physical activity (L.H.Epstein et.al, 1995). A child spend a long time in school where playful activities are the most attractive way to them to learn even their cognitive lessons. Not only the activities, for a healthy lifestyle, each and every child requires healthy school environment, health screening and clinical check-up facilities at a regular basis for which the government has launched the School Health Programme.

In a school, the Physical Education programme and Health Programme are complimentary to each other for an ideal school environment. Under the circumstances, the study was undertaken to explore the status of Health and Physical Education in primary schools of West Bengal.

### RATIONALE

Health development facilities such as pure drinking water, regular medical check-up, first-aid facilities, trained health and physical education teacher, nutritious food, sufficient playfield, adequate sanitation & ventilation, proper infrastructure and equipments of games and sports etc. are the basic needs in the primary schools.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to investigate the status of primary schools of West Bengal related to (i) infrastructure facilities in Physical Education and attitude towards it and (ii) health facilities offered to children.

### METHODOLOGY

Twelve Primary Schools from Birbhum district were randomly selected and surveyed by the investigator. School Health and Physical Education programme in connection to infrastructure; man power; financial involvement; participation of the parents, local people and political personalities; interest of students and teachers towards Health and Physical Education in primary school were surveyed.

#### Measurement Technique:

1. Structure Method: A set of questionnaire was developed to collect the data from primary schools.
2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Method: One figure of human body was drawn and held it in front of the students and asked to come and give a cross (x) mark on the figure where he/she has problem/illness/pain/abnormality. It described an overall picture of the personal health status of the students.

### RESULTS

The trained physical education teacher in every school was 0%, however there were some teachers who had previous experiences in games and sports.

Standard Play field in the schools were 0%, however some of the schools had small area open place which were inadequate and maintenance was poor for children's play.

Outdoor equipments of permanent nature was 0%, The researcher did not find any child playing with equipments like Marry Go Round, See-saw, Sleep etc.

Outdoor equipments of temporary nature were found in 7% schools. The investigator found at least one Football in each school but there were no cricket set. It was also found that there were equipments like shot, jumping bars, skipping rope etc.

First-aid kits were available in 9% schools. However, minimum first-aid facilities were found in all the schools.

50% children under survey had health problems. Medical check-ups held in 0% schools. None of the schools conducted any yearly medical check-up program and arranged for specialist doctor for health screening (eyes, ear, skin etc.).

Sanitation & ventilation was proper in 30% schools. The investigator found that common toilet facilities were available in few schools and toilet facilities for girl students were 0%. However, ventilation of the class rooms was quiet satisfactory and sanitation was fairly maintained.

Pure drinking water facilities were in 0% schools. All the school had drinking water facilities and water supply was adequate but there were no provision for water purification.

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There were no specific grants for physical education from the govt. level or private concern.  
Organized games & sports programmes held in 0% schools. No school had organized any intramural competition or even annual sports.  
100% Primary school administrators opined in favor of introducing Physical Education for health benefit of the students.

#### CONCLUSION

The health and Physical Education scenario in the primary schools of West Bengal are shocking. Many of the students in the primary schools seemed to have health problems. As all children spend a great deal of their time in primary school, the school setting is an important arena for promoting physical activity. Physical Education lessons could increase physical status among both overweight and normal-weight children. (A.C. Sollerhed & G. Ejlertsson, 2008). Studies indicate that many children do not achieve the lowest level of recommended daily physical activity of at least moderate intensity. Physical activity is an essential stimulus for bone structure and has the potential to increase peak bone mass in children within the limits set by genetic, hormonal and nutritional influences (Colin Boreham & Chris Riddoch, 2010).

To develop 'healthy mind in a healthy body from early childhood' (UNESCO, 2006) and promote lifelong healthy lifestyle it is essential to generate a movement for introducing Physical Education in primary schools of West Bengal.

Conflicts of interest - The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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