

CHILDREN FORUM: A REPRESENTATIVE APPROACH FOR STRENGTHENING CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Dr. A. H. Rizvi*

*Directorate of Distance Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India
E-mail: drahrizvi110@gmail.com*

Received : 17-5-18

Accepted : 18-6-18

ABSTRACT

Children Forum is relatively a new concept for post primary level in India. In democratic set up, the establishment of Children Forum is mandatory for raising their voices in schools, representing school children and for promoting schools. The Forum provides a platform to school children to represent issues of their concern before school authorities. It is not parallel authority to school authority or meant for finding out the weaknesses of school policies, like, their recruitment procedure, infrastructure development etc, but for raising issues concerning children within the school. The concern issues of Children Forum should be how to detain the drop out cases through encouragement of poor children, friendly behavior with new entrants, arrange fund generating club, may organize inter class competitions, like, mock parliament, dancing, singing, swimming, debating, quiz programs, other sports and cultural activities. The Forum may install canopy for free sale of second hand school dresses, books, winter clothes for street children and poor children of schools. The school authority must listen, encourage and give out the solution of the issues concern to the Forum. Here, the researcher has made an attempt to detail concept, role, activities and composition of the Forum and duties of office bearers. The researcher is hopeful that through active partnership between school authority, teachers, parents and students, the concept will work effectively for the benefit of children and school both.

Keywords: Children representation, school, Duty, Agenda, composition..

*Author for correspondence

1. INTRODUCTION

Children Forum is the delegate structure through which children may include in school activities from post primary classes onwards. They will get an opportunity to work together with school authority and staff and guardians for the advantage of the school. A Children Forum gives a chance to children to participate in schools with teachers, guardians and school principals in the activity of their school. Children Forums can enhance scholastic

guidelines and diminish dropout rates in schools. Children Forums can make a feeling of responsibility for school and its exercises among the children populace. It empowers children to assume liability for ventures, and to show that they can oversee and bring such activities to fruitful conclusion. Additionally, the commitment made by a Children Forum to the advancement of school approach in various territories can have critical advantages for children and the school. School strategies are

unquestionably liable to be fruitful where they are obviously comprehended and acknowledged by all accomplices inside the school network. The children of a school will play the lead part in the foundation and task of a Children Forum. Overall, it is a democratic approach to convey their need, feelings and requirements to teachers and school authority, which they cannot fully understand.

2. THE ROLE OF CHILDREN FORUM

The main task of a Children Forum is—to take part in the school activities and to contribute the school with the coordination of teachers, school authority, guardian and other stakeholders. A Children Forum will set its own targets, which will change from school to class. Some broad objectives could include—to upgrade correspondence between children, authority, staff and parents, to elevate a domain helpful for instructive and self-awareness, to advance companionship and regard among students, to help the authority and staff in the improvement of the school, and, to speak to the perspectives of the children on issues of general worry to them. A Children Forum will distinguish activities that it might want to be associated with arranging, despite the fact that a ultimate conclusion on the exercises of a Children Forum ought to be concurred with school authority. Numerous schools that don't yet have a Children Forum may as of now have a settled class representative, official or tutoring framework. These rules don't require that schools replace built up rehearses that as of now function admirably with a totally new structure or set of methods. Rather these rules enable schools to adjust current practice to meet the prerequisites of the schools. In a few schools children assume an important help part for

school authority for instance by aiding the running of the school shop as well as library or keeping up arrange in passages amongst classes and amid breaks. These game plans for the most part have not been produced as delegate structures, and the activities included may not be proper to crafted by a Children Forum. School authority ought to consider deliberately which components of their current structures they will join with a Children Forum, and which may sensibly keep on running in parallel. The school organization gives that a Children Forum will act in co-activity with the School Authority, guardians and teachers. A Children Forum should not involve in the affairs of teachers, staff or school authorities. It is in this way not a component of a Children Forum to talk about or remark on professional issues or recruitment of teachers and experts, staff or school authorities.

2.1 SCHOOL AUTHORITY AND CHILDREN FORUM

The school authority will set up and keep up ways to inform children in a school of the exercises of the school. That will help children to set up a Children Forum. That will draw up rules for the foundation of a Children Forum which will accommodate the race of individuals and the disintegration of a Forum. That will have a part in considering the principles representing gatherings of the Children Forum, and the direct of its issues. Support and help with the foundation of a Children Forum can be given in different routes, for instance, by giving data as well as direction on the part and potential advantages of Children Forums, giving a space to children to meet to sort out the foundation of the Forum, enabling decisions to happen amid break time or class time, where this does not truly upset ordinary classroom work. It is for the

most part alluring for an teacher or parent to direct this procedure. Once a Children Forum has been set up the School Authority should give dynamic help to it. This could include assigning a teacher in the school or potentially a parent to coordinate with the Forum on a progressing premise, and additionally helping the Forum in drawing up a constitution and in arranging and sorting out its exercises. On the off chance that the estimation of a Children Forum is to be completely acknowledged, it will be critical that the School Authority includes the Forum in the improvement of school strategies in territories, for example, harassing, teach and uniform prerequisites, and in the arranging and School of school exercises and occasions. The foundation of Forum is not an end in itself, yet rather offers all concerned an upgraded method for building organization and viable interchanges inside the school. It is essential to pressure the requirement for a school authority to tune in to the Children Forum as well as to react genuinely to its worries. The primary accountability regarding the authority and activity of a school lies with the School Principal. The key responsibility of Children Forums is to promote interests of schools, representing children, and in improving life within the school community.

2.2 PRINCIPAL AND CHILDREN FORUM

The role of Principal is of focal significance in the foundation and task of a Children Forum. In helping the School Authority in the improvement of school arrangement, and in working with teachers and guardians to actualize it at everyday level, the Principal is midway set in all parts of the school's activities. In the underlying stages, the Principal, together with alternate teachers, can aid the improvement of a Children Forum in a few different ways, for

instance, by examining with children the part of a Children Forum and the part of individual delegates on the Forum, by encouraging the holding of decisions and by exhorting on a fitting constitution or articulation of destinations. As the Forum creates, and starts to extend its part, the Principal will help with managing the Forum's improvement, in order to take into consideration a useful and deliberate Forum. The Principal can promote a school culture which perceives the possibly valuable information that children can make, to improve Children Forum in the interest of school.

2.3 TEACHERS AND CHILDREN FORUM

Building up a soul of association between a Children Forum and teachers has benefits for both. The Children Forum can assume an essential part in perceiving and supporting crafted by teachers. Correspondingly the intrigue and support of teachers will be of extraordinary incentive to a Children Forum, especially amid the beginning times of its improvement. It is for the most part attractive for an individual from the teaching staff to go to gatherings of the Forum. The help and direction offered by a teacher will be extremely valuable to Forum when arranging its exercises, and accommodating a teacher to go to Forum gatherings will build up a great working connection amongst children and staff of the school.

2.4 PARENTS AND CHILDREN FORUM

The Parents can make a huge commitment to the advancement of a Children Forum, by empowering and supporting children in the foundation of a Forum and by supporting the Forum in its emergence. A Children Forum may think that it's helpful to meet with individuals from the Parents every once in a while or to

welcome a parents' illustrative to go to Forum gatherings or to help it specifically exercises. This will guarantee great correspondence between the Children Forum and the Parents.

3. DUTIES AND AGENDA OF CHILDREN FORUM

The major agenda of the Forum are to retain the drop out cases through encouragement to drop out children, friendly behavior with new entrants, arrange fund generating club, may organize inter class competitions, like, mock parliament, dancing, singing, swimming, debating, quiz programs, other sports and cultural activities. The Forum may install Canopy for free sale of second hand school dresses, books, winter clothes for street boys and girls. The Forum may extend welcome or welcome party for new entrants, new teachers and staff. The Forum may also celebrate retirement party with teachers and staff. There are many more activities, which children may emerge as and when the need arises.

There is a wide range of activities of benefit to the school community which a Children Forum may wish to undertake, that follows:

3.1 REPRESENTATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

The basic duty of every Children Forum is to listen the problem and need of every fellow children at least of School. It includes talking and tuning in to the children body, thinking about their perspectives and concerns, and examining these with the school authority in the interest of the children.

3.2 ACCESS TO TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL

The primary responsibility of Children Forum is to make consistent communication and rapport with school principal and teachers.

Notice-board, Newsletter and presentation in staff meetings are the ways to communicate to their fellow children, principal and staff, and guardians about their activities and future plan.

3.3 CREATION OF DIALECT-CREATIVE INNOVATIVE CLUB

A Children Forum can add to the learning condition for children in the school by creation of study groups for children for examination or remedial classes or homework clubs, or sorting out noon exercises. Dialect clubs for reducing the pre-examination preparation for removing pressure of examination, for remedial classes for their weak fellow children and for creative and innovative activities.

3.4 WELCOME OF NEW ENROLLED CHILDREN

In every new session, it is the duty of Children Forum to warmly welcome new commerce. Avoid any type of ragging or harassment with new enrolled children. A tutoring program where senior children assist new children with finding their feet can help their incorporation into the school. Safety and security, and prevention from any sort of abuse is key responsibility of the Forum.

3.5 COORDINATION IN SCHOOL POLICY

The Children Forum can effectively add to the improvement of school arrangement in an extensive variety of zones, for example, harassing, uniform prerequisites, code of conduct, curricular and co-curricular activities. The Forum should set up advisory groups within the forum to discuss policy issues, to counsel with children, staff and guardians and to convey to the Forum's perspectives on those issues to the principal.

3.6 ASSISTING SCHOOL IN SPORTS AND CULTURAL SPORTS

Children forums can assist in organizing and developing sports activities and cultural activities in school, like, sports days and drama or musicalevents.

3.7 GENERATING CORPUS FUND

Children Forum can organize events inside and outside the school and related to the wider community, for the functions of raising money for designated charities and for meeting out day today expanses of the Forum

3.8 LIASIONING WITH OTHER SCHOOL FORUMS

It might be valuable for a Children Forum to liaise with Children Forums in different schools, especially in cultural and sports activities and for charity purpose. A Children Forum could have a valuable part in aiding and prompting a recently framed Children Forum in another school.

3.9 FUNDRAISING

Raising fund for certain activities is also a part of Children forum. The permission of school authority must be sought before planning any fundraising act for the school initiatives. The Treasurer has obligation for making sure that any cash raised by using the Children Forum is used for the functions for which it was accrued. The charter of the children discussion board ought to specify that a monetary record be supplied to the forum at the end of every financial year. A few examples of fundraising activities encompass:

Artwork, Exhibition, Cake sale, style show, holding a set, Jumble sale, Raffle, Non-uniform day, table Quiz, Sponsored activities

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDREN FORUM AND ITS BYLAWS

To establish a Children Forum, class monitor or some school boys should approach to class teacher and principal, should request for existing bylaws, in case not, then arrange a meeting with them for framing by laws. Parents, guardians and other stakeholders may also be involved in constitution of the Forum and its bylaws.

4.1 INITIATIVE OF SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

The school authorities, especially principal, vice-principal and class teacher must motivate to constitute Children Forum in their school. They must encourage conducting election and appointing office bearers of the Forum. Office bearers must be assigned responsibility to lead in cultural and sports activities, annual functions and other school programs. Their members may be nominated in various meetings of policy issues of school. They must be encouraged to explore their genuine demands of school children to facilitate in best possible manner. The principal must arrange some premises to the Forum for their regular meetings and discussion in democratic set up. This is the best way how weaknesses of the school may be identified and may be improved henceforth.

4.2 ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH PARENTS' FORUM

The parents and guardian should believe in their children, and provide required time in constituting the Forum and making its bylaws. They must encourage in participating in election. Gone of the days, when it was a assumption that only academic activities may lead to acme of success, but in current scenario there is a need to involve the child in various

cultural and sports activities for making integrated and complete personality. Child Forum is one of the tool exploring needs, to understand fellow children, how to communicate and respect teacher, principal, guardians in meeting, how to present oneself before educated gathering, how to eliminate social phobia, meta cognition activities—what to think and how to express one selves.

4.3 COMPOSITION AND BYLAWS OF CHILDREN FORUM

The school authority should prepare bylaws for setting up Children Forum and its bylaws, process and procedure. Bylaws for conducting of elections should also be ready. Bylaws of the Forum should be—what should be the designation and duties of office-bearers, what should be the tenure of the Forum, what should be the eligibility criteria for voters and contestants, how many meetings and how many hours the Forum may take out from school timings? The school authority will decide the term of office of elected members; the authority will also decide whether a teacher or principal is to be included as a nominating member in the Forum. The bylaws should be approved after meeting with school authorities, parents, guardians, children representatives and educationist. It must be approved written document and must be circulated to concerned, display at school notice board and upload on school website.

5. ELECTION AND VOTING

Voting meeting or election of the Forum may be conducted during recess or after school timings or weekends or in summer or winter vacations subject the approval granted by school authorities.

The school authority should appoint a chief election officer and an observer from list of

senior teachers or from outside school for unbiased election. Election should be conducted through ballot papers and counting of votes should be conducted in presence of children under nomination, parents, guardians and senior teachers. Result should be declared same day in evening hours.

6. ELECTED OFFICE BEARERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

After election, the elected office-bearers, if designated, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Treasurer, take charge. After oath ceremony, they shall conduct their first meeting, whereupon they shall raise the issue of their concern, plan and prepare a representation with the signature of all members to present before school authorities and shall take time to meet and discuss the issues. If there is heavy work load, the Forum can constitute committees and share some work to it, like, fund raising issues and conduct of cultural activities. The responsibility of each office bearer is as follows:

6.1 PRESIDENT

The president is accountable for presiding over meetings of the forum. The president, with the secretary, prepares the agenda for every meeting and, approve when they have been agreed by means of the Forum. The decisive vote is with president, In case of, equal votes, the president usually has the casting vote. Usually, the president is assigned to represent the Forum before school authorities.

6.2 VICE PRESIDENT

The role of vice president is to assist the president. In the absence or death or leave or leaving the post, vice president assumes charge of president and convene the meeting and regulate the session.

6.3 SECRETARY

The secretary, in consultation with the president, prepares schedule and agenda for each meeting and circulates among office bearers and members of the Forum. The secretary maintains a record of previous meetings and prepares the minutes of current meeting. The meeting is also convened by the secretary on behalf of president.

6.4 JOINT SECRETARY(PUBLICITY AND ORGANIZING)

Usually two joint secretaries, one for publicity and one for organizing the event are elected. The responsibility of joint secretary (publicity) is to publicize the activities done and result achieved by the Forum, whereas joint secretary (organizing) is responsible for arrangement of any event.

7. CONCLUSION

The Children Forum is representative of children in the school. Children form is the best way to fill the gap between children and school authorities. There are various concerns and issues of children which teacher, parent and school authority cannot understand due to big generation and technological gap. Psychologically, a child can better understand and convey his or her urge, need, and demand to same age group in Children From under democratic set up. The Forum is also the tool for making children vernacular and jack of all trades. The primary duty of the Forum is to identify the problem of each and every child and sort out with the coordination of teachers and school authorities. Their concern is also to explore the best ways to facilitate the children in the interest of school. The Forum can also discuss upon academic issues, like, what content they want to learn, what pedagogy should be

used in classroom and outside the class, school timings, curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities etc. The Forum can chalk out schedule, timings, theme and procedure of sports and cultural activities, national festivals and annual functions etc. Thereby, the school will produce the best nationals having both practical and theoretical knowledge, full of sports and team spirit, fit in heterogeneous and multicultural society. The Children Forum is just like a mini parliament of school, which has its eye on every activity of the school. This is the best way how weaknesses of the school may be identified and may be improved henceforth.

REFERENCES

- <http://www.aisa.in/mind-without-fear/All India Students Forum/>
- <https://www.citized.info/>
- https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Post-Primary-School-Policies/student_council_voice.pdf
- <http://nsui.in/en/voices/National Students Union of India/https://www.studentvote.ca/>
- Jacoby, B. (2014). Service-learning essentials: Questions, answers, and lesson learned. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Oxfam. (2014). Mid-term review of the my right, my voice programme. Retrieved from http://saatlas.org/uploads/files/Midterm_Review_Report.pdf
- Parker, K., & Leithwood, K. (2000). School councils' influence on school and classroom practice. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75(4), 37-65.
- Veugelers, W., & Kat, E. De (2003). Moral and democratic education in public elementary schools. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED479166.pdf>.