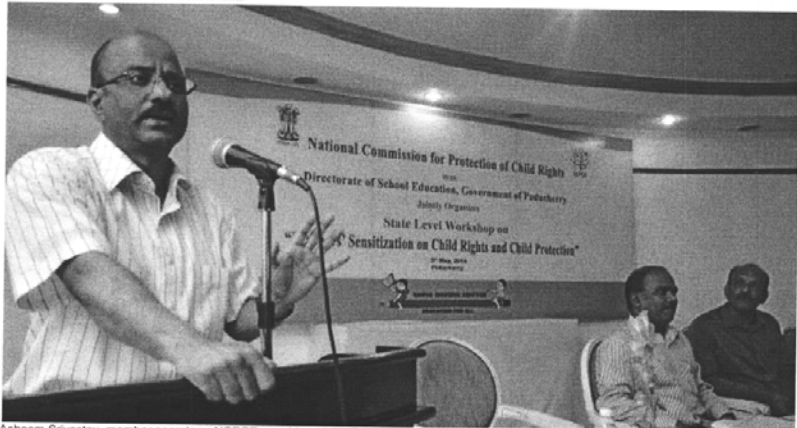


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Teaching teachers laws on child protection and rights

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Asheem Srivastav, member secretary, NCPCR speaking at the State Level Workshop in Puducherry on Monday. Photo: T. Singaravelou

Experts tell them to adopt friendly approach towards students

What place do the nuances of law have in the classrooms? With cases of corporal punishment and child abuse being reported in schools, teachers on Monday took stock of the situation beyond the syllabus.

A State-level teachers' sensitisation programme on child rights and child protection, organised on Monday by the Directorate of School Education and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) recommended that teachers become conversant with laws that govern rights of the children.

The initiative was to bring teachers and principals of schools up-to-date on two principal laws- the Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) 2013 and section 17 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) which deals with 'physical punishment or mental harassment,' said E. Vallavan, Director, School Education.

The NCPCR, formed in 2007, monitors the implementation of the RTE and POCSO Acts. But teachers have a role in ensuring child rights, according to Asheem Srivastav, member-secretary, NCPCR.

"It is important for every person who is implementing the law at the ground level to be conversant with the nitty-gritty of the Acts," he said, explaining the need for sensitisation.

The debate on child rights is gaining weight in the international arena. India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Changed scenario

Noting that the Education Department had issued a "strict circular" to government and private schools on corporal punishment, Mr. Vallavan added that the scenario in schools has changed.

"Two out of three cases are of children being subjected to mental harassment. It is not to say that physical punishment is not upsetting, but mental harassment can have a more severe impact on a child."

This is more in the case when the children hail from single-parent families or suffering from a disability or disorder including dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Encouraging teachers to adopt a friendly approach to students, Mr. Vallavan said awareness of laws can create a shift in attitude towards children.

Principals of schools in the Union Territory have received training in psychological handling of children, under the aegis of the Indian School Psychology Association, he added.

Teachers must realise that the future GDP and prosperity of the country rests with children, noted Mr. Srivastav.

Panel discussions and sessions on child abuse and child rights were part of the event.

