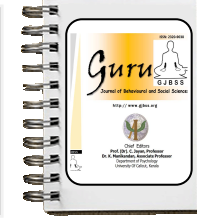




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Sources of Stress in Educators of Mainstreamed Children with Hearing Impairment

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Abstract

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This study was a survey among teachers to find out the stressful factors that interfered with the quality of their work. A rating scale listing common stress factors identified in literature was used to collect data. Convenient sampling techniques was used wherein as many possible participants from mainstream as well as resource teachers were selected. Results revealed that social sources of stress stood ahead followed by personal and domestic, and professional factors. The special educators perceived unfavourable social conditions like low social status as most stressful. On the personal and domestic front with factors like incompetence, poor health and lack of understanding and support from family members contributed to their stress. And in the professional front, factors like autonomy and lack of opportunities for career development were found to hindering their performance.

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Keywords:

Educators, Special educators, Mainstream Educators, Stress factors

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. It is very common to experience stress in today's high demanding life. Stress can influence our behaviour thus leading to unpleasant state of mind. Being in a state of stress does not give a positive feeling to the person experiencing it. Although stress is psychological reaction, it affects us physiologically as well as our biological system. Maslach (2003) as cited in Bush (2010) states that burnout is the stress as a result of the interpersonal demands in the work environment leading to emotional overload and exhaustion. It is further elaborated that the key dimensions of the burnout syndrome are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of accomplishment. Stress is a part of any profession, more so over in the field of special education. Stress leading to burnout if not addresses may lead to turnover and ultimately attrition

Stress in the field of special education

Teaching is a noble profession, however it has been characterized as a profession that is emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating (Lambert.O'Donnel, Kusherman & McCarthy, 2006). Teacher Stress as defined by Kyriacou (2001) as 'the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions, such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression resulting from aspects of work as a teacher". It is a profession which is marked by higher attrition rate than any other professions (Minarik, Thorton & Perreault, 2003). Teachers may experience pressures due to their increased accountability which the job requires; moreover the factors which cause stress among teachers could be poor working conditions, poor student behaviour, lack of administrative support and the excessive number of tasks that are required to be managed by teachers. According to Chen, Chen and Chong (2010) the most frequently reported source of life stress apart from the professional stress was unstable economy, financial stress, family problem and children's education. The study further reported that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report financial stress and children education as sources of life stress.

Working with children and their behaviour management could become a source of stress to teachers. Moresover, being a special educator and managing children with special

needs becomes even more stressful for special educators. Cherniss (1980) and Pines, Aronson and Kafry (1981) have reported in their study that special educators who are empathetic, sympathetic, dedicated, idealistic and people oriented are vulnerable to experiencing excessive stress.

Special educators handle children who exhibit a variety of behaviours which are likely to produce negative effects among peers and teachers and the consequent unmanageability of workload. The negative effect could be aggravated whenever they are unable to make reasonable impact on the levels of performance of their students which causes poor motivation and eventual burnout (Antonioni, Polychroin, & Walters, 2000). In spite of the fact that stress among teachers could have deleterious effects, such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism and attrition (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1995). It is commonly observed among special educators that special education teachers have higher levels of anxiety, feel less supported and have lower job satisfaction than their contemporaries, (Hastings & Brown, 2002). All the factors stated above are stresses and strains to special needs teachers. Fraser (1996) also reports that the severity of the disabilities in learners creates tension, emotional imbalance and psychological trauma in the lives of teacher of exceptional children. When the teacher is unable to make reasonable impact on the levels of performance of their students, leads to frustration, poor motivation and eventual burnout.

Implication of stress on special educators

Special teacher's face high levels of anxiety as a result of pupil's progress. Work related stress factor strongly contribute to job satisfaction and burnout among workers. Among one of the implications of stress among special educators is attrition i.e. leaving the teaching profession. According to Concio et al. (2013), the main problem is not retirement but it is that almost one third of new special education teachers leave the profession after three years in the field. They report lack of support from colleagues, poor administrative support, teacher team efficiency, student disengagement and poor socio-economic/human conditions. Stress among special educators could lead to poor performance in the job and sometimes quitting or leaving the field.

Recent evidence suggests that special education, math and science are the fields with the highest turnover and that special education teachers are more likely to depart those other groups (Ingersoll, 2002). A synthesis of attrition research indicates that in special education work environment is an indicator of the teacher's job satisfaction and intent to stay. Review of literature reveals variables like salary, school climate, administrative support, colleague support through induction and mentoring are the major causes of attrition (Billingsley, 2002; Gold, 1996; Westling, Herzog, Cooper-Duffy, Prohn, & Ray, 2006; Rosenburg, Griffin, Kilgore, & Carpenter, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989; Westling, Herzog, Cooper-Duffy, Prohn, & Ray, 2006; Whitaker, 2000).

Other than attrition, the impact of stress could have an adverse affect on the health of the teacher, thus affecting the students and the learning environment. Suldo, Shaunessy and Hardest (2008) states that teachers experience insomnia, anxiety and depression when they try to relieve stress using anger induced methods such as blaming and yelling.

Remedy for stress

To overcome stress and burnout in the workplace, special educators need to device strategies to cope with stress. Special Educators can look for ways of making work more interesting, re-organizing the work and setting priorities. Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) opine that initiating action strategies, thinking about what steps to take and handling the problem in the best possible way. Having a strong social support such as having stable relationships was also indicated as main coping strategies (Green & Ross, 1996).

Stress in the field of mainstream set-up

Children with disabilities form a sizeable group in India as they constitute 2.5-6% of the total population (Huddar & Kulkarni, 2014). With policies and acts, both national and international like SSA (2001), UNCRPD (2006), National Policy for Person with Disabilities (2006), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (2010) and Right to Education Act (2009), all propagated and led the nation towards inclusive education for students with disabilities. For inclusive education to be successful, both special educators and mainstreamed teachers play an important role. These both group of teachers are expected to shoulder greater responsibilities, face novel challenges and learn new skills. The teachers face difficult times because of the lack of avenues to support them.

Teaching is a noble profession but a stressful one. Teaching children with special needs even though satisfying is a demanding job. Moreover, teachers teaching in mainstream set-up are even more stressed out because of teaching many children. A child with special needs when included into mainstream set-up becomes an additional responsibility to the mainstream teacher to meet his/her educational needs. Inclusion is a challenging task to many teachers, because for a mainstreamed teacher, the included student was just one of many in the class.

Singal and Rouse (2003) predominantly observed that teachers in inclusive learning set-up faced problems due to issues like large class sizes, task of maintaining discipline and vast amount of syllabus among others. All these stressful factors lead them to think of managing special education needs in inclusive set-up as an additional responsibility. They also suggest provision of necessary resource support to the teacher as well as the students will help them become optimistic and innovative in meeting the challenges.

Teaching is an occupation with relatively low pay and high responsibility as compared to other professions with similar levels of trainings. Job security, very low income, lack of correspondence between employment responsibility and income earned can be some of the sources of stress and frustration for both the groups of special educators as well as mainstream teachers. Moreover, resources to meet the need of the teachers not available adequately and the return is not gratifying thus leading to widely prevalent stress among special educators and mainstream teachers. In view of the above facts, a need was felt to identify the academic and non-academic factors leading to stress and burnout among teachers.

Objective

1. To identify the factors that caused stress in teachers catering to children with hearing impairment in mainstream learning environment that affects their work.

Method**Participants**

A total of 36 teachers teaching in either in primary or secondary set-up participated in the study. Among them 26 were female and the remaining were male teachers. Among the selected 36 teachers, 16 were from special schools and the remaining 20 taught children with HI in the mainstream set-up. Most of the participants were young adults either between 25 to 30 years (17) or 31 to 35 years (11), 4 teachers were less than 25 years of age and 4 teachers were older than 35 years of age.

Majority of the teachers were with less than 10 years of experience, while 5 participants were between 11 to 20 and 3 participants above 20 years of experience. The table below gives the details of the participant teacher.

Table 1
Details of Participants

Attribute: Age of Participants			
Categories	<25 years	25 to 35 years	35< years
Number:	4	28	4
Attribute: Gender			
Categories:	Male		Female
Number:	10		26
Attribute: Educational Setting			
Categories:	Special School		Mainstream School
Number:	16		20
Attribute: Years of Professional Experience			
Categories:	10 years & less	11 to 20 years	20 years & more
Number:	28	5	3

Instrument

In the present study, a five point rating scale was developed covering three main domains related to personal and family, job and professionals and societal factors.. These domains included 5, 15 and 5 items each. It was a Likert Scale with 5 graded response options where 1 being not at all stressful and 5 was the most stressful.

The checklist was developed after reviewing the literature related to the causes of stress among general and special education teachers. The developed checklist was given to five experts in the field of special education for validation. Those items which received consent from 80% and above of the validators were retained. The validators suggestions to improvise the items further were incorporated.

Procedure

The checklist was personally administered on the participants. Enough time was given to the participants to go through the items and record their response. Before administering the checklist consent was taken from the participants for participation in the study after explaining the purpose and process of the research.

The data thus collected was subjected to appropriate descriptive and inferential analysis necessary to decipher the predominant factors leading to stress in teachers handling children with hearing impairment as well as to investigate the influence of independent variables like gender, age, educational setting and years of professional experience on the aforementioned dependent variables of stress levels.

Results and Discussion

The study was carried out with the purpose of finding out the sources of stress among educators in the three domains namely personal and family, job and profession and in social domain. The data collected was subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The results obtained from qualitative analysis have been described herein after

Level of stress factors in personal and family domain

This domain had five sub-domains. These sub-domains assessed the sources of stress in the personal and family life of the educators which were family support, personal competencies, financial constraints, poor health and reduced personal accomplishment. They were descriptively compared by computing the average levels of the stress

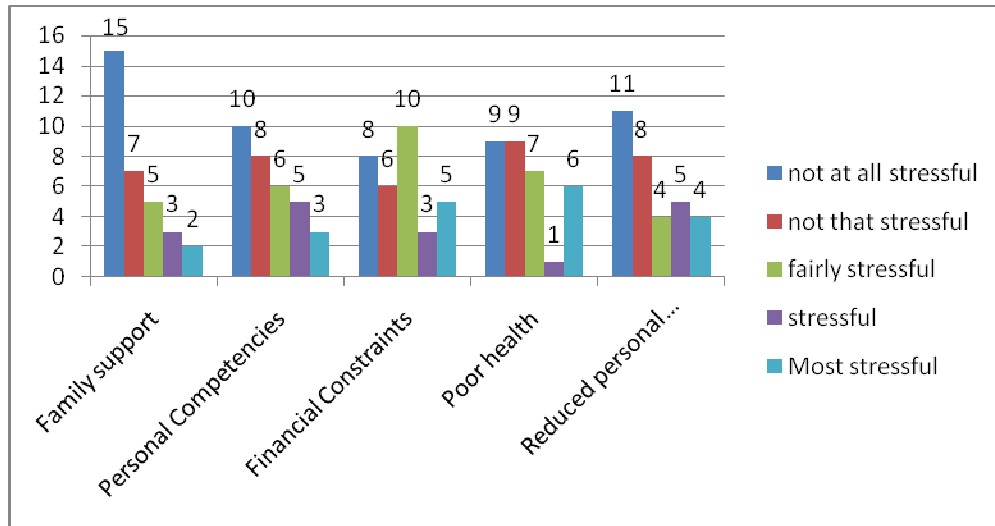


Figure 1: Level of stress factors in personal and family domain

Results shown in the above figure makes it evident that the in the personal and family domains, poor health caused the most stressful condition followed by financial constraints and reduced personal accomplishments. Since teaching requires good stamina, poor health conditions among the teacher may lead to poor productivity, consequently poor performance among the children. Financial constraints could also be stressful as the teachers have to maintain their family, moreover, education expenditure from the part of their children and their inability to give the best facilities could also lead to stress among the educators. The same findings could be supported by the findings of Borg (2003) which suggests that prolonged occupational stress leads to physical, mental and emotional health thus impairing the quality of teaching itself.

Level of Stress on Job and Profession Domain

This domain had a sub-total of 15 sub-domains which ranged from caregiver's support, to low income to sympathetic bonding. The response of the participants on the rating scale was averaged to identify the most stressful factor in the domain pertaining to job and profession.

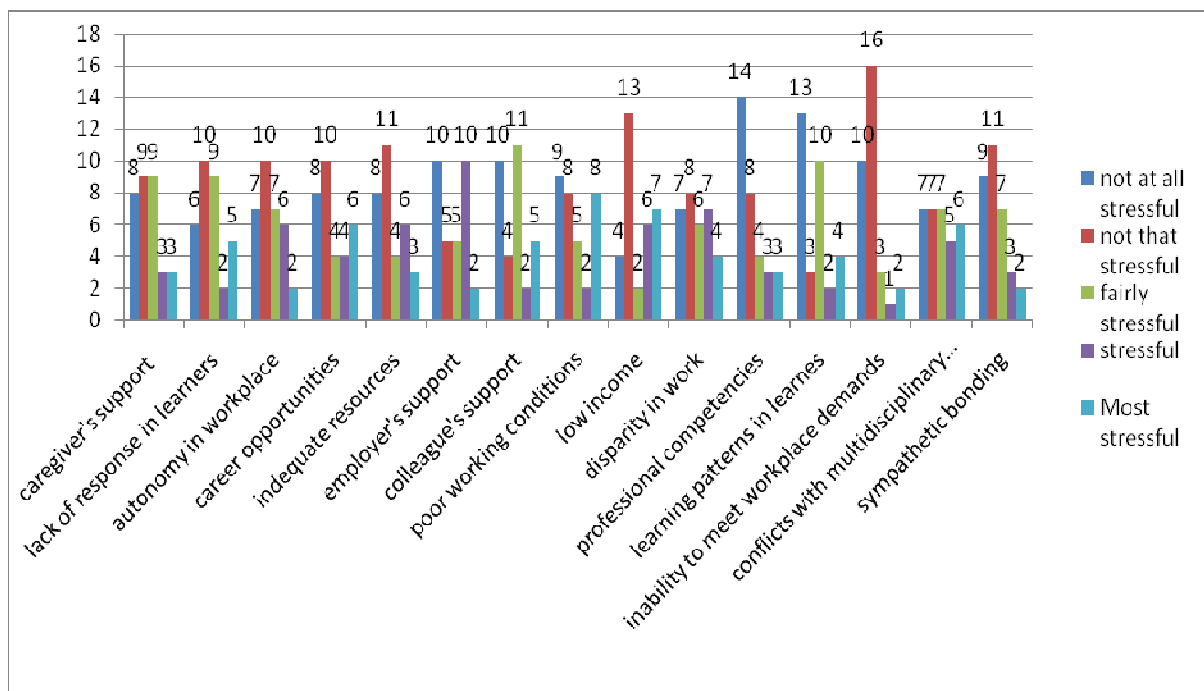


Figure 2: Level of Stress on Job and Profession Domain

The results revealed that, in the domain related to job and profession, poor working condition created more stress among the teachers followed by low income and conflicts with multidisciplinary team, which was quite evident from the bar diagram shown above. Professionals require a conducive and encouraging work atmosphere for self-motivation and maximum outcome. Hence lack of good working conditions lead to stress among the teachers which has been depicted in the bar graph above. Similarly, when teachers are not able to fulfil their financial obligations towards their family leads to stress among them thus leading to lack of interest in the work. The above figure also shows that lack of optimal collaboration as well as lack of opportunities leads to stress. Koustelios and Koustelios(1997); Miller et al. (1999) and Singer (1992) all supported the above findings which states that low wages, limited opportunities for higher growth (promotion) are sources of stress as well as one of the primary reasons for attrition.

Level of Stress factors in Social Domain

Under the social domain, the factors like low socio status, lack of acknowledgement and appreciation, lack of social status and security and social stigma associated with disability. This data was also analysed by computing the average score.

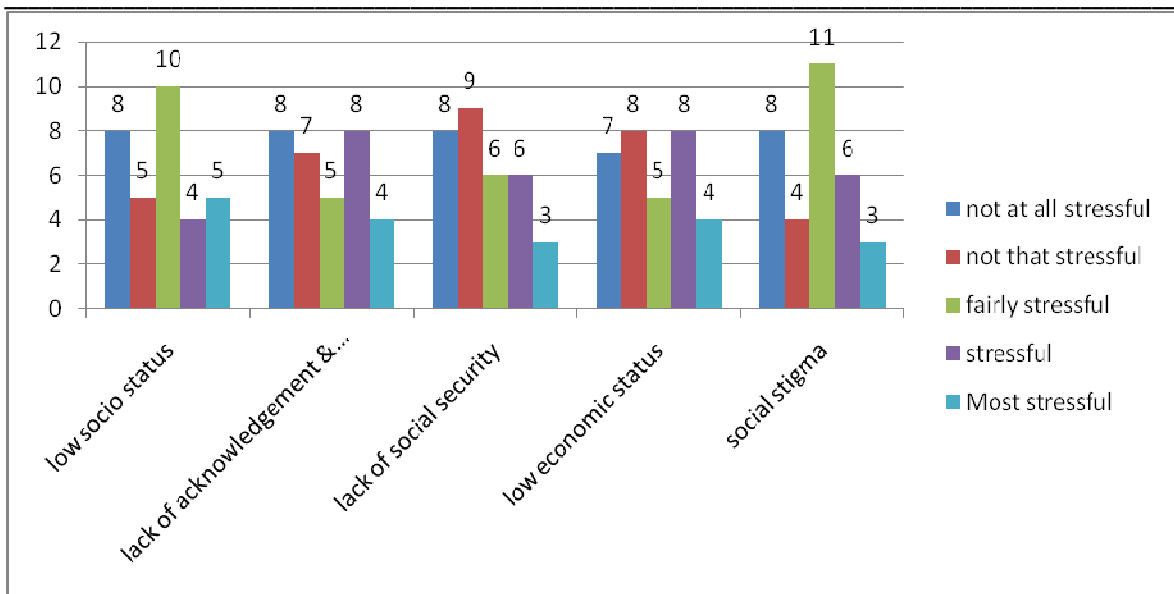


Figure 3: Level of Stress factors in Social Domain

The social factors which triggered the stress are the low socio status followed by lack of acknowledgement and appreciation from fellow colleagues. Smith and Smith (2006) found that teachers left school for stress related reasons like lack of feeling of safety and poor community involvement, which has shown in the above results. However, teachers do not feel stigmatized in handling special children

Comparison between the domains

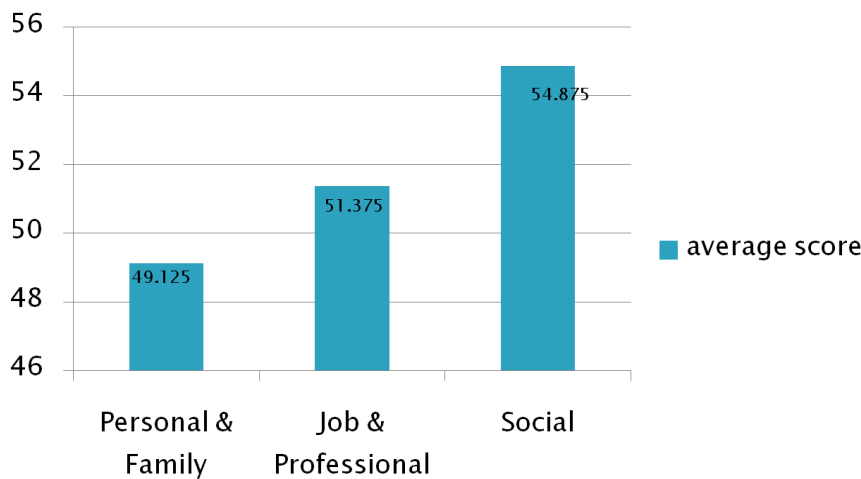


Figure 4: Comparison between domains

It was observed that social factors were more stressful followed by job and professional related factors. Comparatively the sources of stress arising from personal & family factors were relatively low.

Other factors influencing stress

Further investigation was carried out to see if any other demographic and professional factors had influence on the stress levels in teachers. The major factors taken for investigation were age, gender, nature of school and years of professional experience.

Influence of Gender

The correlation between age and experience with the stress scores revealed no significant relationship and hence the data was not further deliberated. The next factor taken for consideration was gender. Results of the comparison between male and female participant using Mann-Whitney U test is presented in table 2.

Mann-Whitney U test is used because Shapiro Will test revealed that data did not follow normal distribution and hence non-parametric test Mann-Whitney U test was done to see the effect of gender and type of school on stress scores. It is a non-parametric test that is used to compare two population means that come from two different population and it is also used to test whether two population means are equal or not.

Comparisons of stress factors between male and female participants

Table 2

Comparisons of stress factors between male and female participants

Sex	Central Tendency	Personal and Family Domain	Job & Profession Domain	Social Domain
Male (N:10)	Mean	8.80	35.00	13.10
	SD	5.75	10.01	6.19
	Median	6.00	34.50	13.50
Female (N:26)	Mean	12.88	39.81	13.69
	SD	5.50	12.09	4.89
	Median	11.50	38.00	13.00

Results of the above table clearly shows that females are more stressed out in personal and social domain as well as job and profession as compared to male. The same was reflected in a study by Singer (1992) which found that young female special educators left the job at a higher rate than male counterparts.

The next factor considered was stream of profession whether special or mainstream

Comparison of stress factors between special or mainstreamed teacher

Table 3

Comparison of stress factors between special or mainstreamed teacher

Gender		Personal and Family Domain	Job & Profession Domain	Social Domain
1(Special School) (N:16)	Mean	12.44	39.06	14.19
	SD	5.55	12.89	6.11
	Median	11.00	37.00	14.00
2 (Mainstream School) (N:20)	Mean	11.20	38.00	13.00
	SD	6.07	10.84	4.43
	Median	11.00	38.00	13.00

The above table clearly shows that teachers teaching in special schools are more stressed as compared to mainstreamed teachers. The stress among the special educators could be due differential learning needs and consequent learning needs of the children and lack of support from the authorities. As was earlier reported by Williams and Gersch in a study during (2004) wherein they identified the sources of stress in teachers teaching students with special educational needs. They opined that special educators experience high levels of stress as compared to their mainstream counterparts due to disruptive pupils, poor attitudes to school work by the pupils. special educators also fell that they have inadequate time to spend with individual pupils.

Conclusion

The above study highlighted the sources of stress among the special educators as well as teachers teaching children with special needs in an inclusive set-up. As Maslow correctly puts that creating a proper climate wherein the employees can develop their fullest potential, the failure of doing so would theoretically increase employee frustration leading to poorer performance, lower job satisfaction, and increased withdrawal from the organization. He further adds that inability to meet the employees need could lead to burnout, which is clearly indicated in the above findings

Thus this study brings out the need for improving the working conditions and more opportunities for professional growth as well as there is a need to pay more attention to the vulnerable section of educators like women who are doubly stressed both in domestic and social front.

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Education is considered as one of the most potent instrument of social change and also a significant means to prepare people to adjust to the emerging needs of the society. In a democratic country like India, education plays important role to bring political, social, cultural and emotional change (Agarwal, 2012). The true wealth of our nation lies in its citizen especially in its youth. So the modern education is concerned with the development of the 'Whole man'. For building a developed India apart from resources and human power which we have in abundance, we need young leader or youth who can comment the transformation (Laxman, 2004).

In our society we generally observed that there is a lack of respect towards our culture, religion, moral and social values among the youths. Due to the rapid growth of scientific and sociological development the relation between teacher-students and parent-children are deteriorating. The growth of the nuclear family in the society has influenced in creating problems among youths. During the present decade, speedy erosion of moral, social and spiritual values has been created hurdles in the path of progress of the nation. Today, newspapers, magazines and other news media are flooded with reports of crime, murder, agitations, violence, immorality, rape, corruption, bribery, self-centered egoism, youth unrest, communal violence, cybercrime, etc. Everyone reads such occurrences which have adversely affected the development of knowledge, creative attitude, positive thinking, literature, culture and the formation of well-balanced personality of the future generation.

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