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THE NEED FOR WRITING

- Padma Sarangapani

When I began my studies in Education, in 1989, one of the first things I had to learn, was the art of writing and argumentation in the social sciences. The requirements I learnt were quite different from what I had cultivated as a student of science, where representing understanding in tabular form, drawing out essence in numbered points, visualising arguments and relationships in flow diagrams and equations, and describing through labelled diagrams, were valuable. It took me quite a while to develop, rather relearn, paragraph and narrative writing (relearn—as I had enjoyed these in school and college English classes), and only after a long time understand and appreciate the need and value of this writing form. I recall Professor Krishna Kumar returning one of my answer scripts after a test with the remark against my point wise answer reminding me that this is not a paper in science, and to rewrite in paragraphs! It took me a few years to learn the need for formulating ideas in paragraphs and text, and why enumerating in points was not suitable to present one's understanding, I learnt that this is a tool to form and develop understanding. Unlike in the writing up of science, where it seemed that the purpose was to communicate what one has found or understood, I discovered that in the social sciences, the effort to communicate in writing, opens up the exploration and paves the way for understanding. Indeed I have found that it is in writing, and not in speaking, that we are best able to explore facts and ideas, and relate them to other facts and ideas. I learnt that the process of writing is painful, and needs effort, discipline and deadlines, and that just because writing may come 'naturally' to some people, others are no less obliged to write! I learnt that drafting and revising one's writing in order to edit and develop ideas is an essential part of writing. Tim Poston, a mathematician and colleague from an institute I used to work in put it well when he said: 'there is no such thing as good writing, there is only good rewriting!' And over years I have developed that conviction that one of the objectives of a good, rigorous, Masters programme should be to teach all its students to write, as much as it is expected to teach students to read! 'Riyaz' is our forum to learn to write, rather rewrite, for each other, and to read each other's writing.



FREEDOM IN EDUCATION, CELEBRATING PRACTICE

-Gomathi Jatin Shah and Anusha Ramanathan

Dear Readers,

When 15 August rolls around the corner we in India will be celebrating our 73rd Independence Day in 2019. We are the largest democracy in the world and are a rapidly developing economic powerhouse. We have come so far as a country because of the foundations laid down for us. It is in this context that the first issue of Riyaz, the journal we conceived of for our academic community of teachers, students and staff to actively contribute to and learn from, brings forth this editorial piece.

Education is the founding stone of most of our achievements. However, it behooves us to ponder on a few questions. Is education today enjoying the space of freedom to fulfill its purpose and objectives? What is the purpose of education?

It is not just to acquire learning of facts and information and applying these blindly to situations without adding any meaning to it but much beyond that. Education should be able to add value to the learners by transforming them, leading to a better society and a harmonious cosmos at large. A society free from bias, prejudices, bigotry, indiscrimination, power struggles, exploitation etc. automatically reflects a sense of freedom that can be achieved through the vehicle of education. It is not just the freedom of the physical self or the physical place that is being referred to, but it is the attitudes, habits, behaviours of the individual in society, the social and political elements in the society, economic dependence in society, the moral fabric of the individual that together constitute freedom of the individual, society and the world.

With this consideration, is freedom manifested in our education system in the true sense?

What kind of freedom are we referring to in the realm of education?

Are the classrooms of today, places for 'practice of freedom' where teaching and learning is engaging and exciting for teachers and students alike?

These are questions that arise when we contemplate on the activities of learning in learning spaces especially classrooms where formal learning takes place. This space can contribute in its own unique ways to liberate the individual and the society through educational approaches, the roots of which are quite deep in history.

An educational space comprising equal partnerships of teachers and learners exercising the give and take experiences of learning is a strong agency for freedom in educational practice very much aligned to John Dewey's rejection of the absolute distinctions between teachers and students and viewing children as lesser adults. Such a space should enable students to develop their own autonomy and identity and free them from the chains of indispositions in the society.

Paulo Freire, one of the most important critical educators of the twentieth century referred to literacy not as a means to prepare students for the world of subordinated labor or 'careers', but a preparation for a self-managed life. The classrooms should be a democratic space where learning is meaningful to students empowering them with the ability to take responsible intelligent choices and decisions leading to the good of the society. Dewey's views on the relationship between democracy and education too is of great relevance in today's scenario which witnesses an alarming state of the individuals' disposition towards life and society.

If the learning space has to exercise freedom in education, then the conception of academic freedom has also to be given a thought. The principle of academic freedom is derived from the notion of freedom of thought. Freedom of inquiry is the fundamental mission of academia. However, we realise that this freedom is often constrained by political compulsions and socio-economic factors. Sometimes it is limited by our own imagination and willpower.

In this day and age of globalisation the need for academia is to stand up as one and argue for freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry and institute processes that enshrine these freedoms for learners and teachers alike.

This issue has articles on the New Education Policy deliberations that TISS undertook, on the use of ICT in the educational space, on what it means to be inclusive for current parctitioners and experiences of faculty in teaching in places such as Afghanistan. Freedom to move, to explore freely, freedom to reach out and connect remotely, freedom to argue for ones' beliefs and rights are not just a one time exercise. It requires rigorous practice of these freedoms, to reflect on the practice and to constantly strive to improve the freedoms enjoyed. So Riyaz!

We hope you enjoy this first edition and contribute to our future ones. We look forward to hearing from you suggestions, ideas and other stories that will take us on new paths.

शिक्षा

- मोनिका कंवर

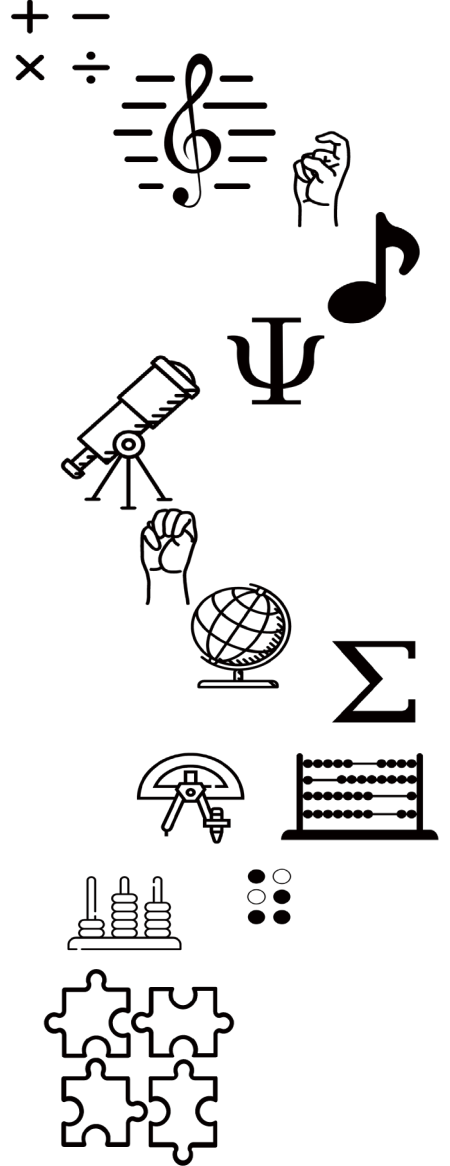
(1st Year, MA Education)

शून्य से पूर्ण बनाती,
कार्यों में दक्षता लाती,
संघर्षों में ताकत है लाती,
आपस में सामंजस्य बैठाती,

शब्दों से स्वर में,
विद्या से विज्ञान में,
तर्क से सतर्कता में,
मूल्यों से अभिमुल्य में,
धरा से अंतरिक्ष में,
वेद से विज्ञान में,

प्रत्यक्ष से अप्रत्यक्ष तक,
सगुण से निर्गुण तक,
संगीत से गणित तक,
धर्म से राजनीति तक,

ज्ञान की कोई सीमा नहीं,
अपार है ये धनसंपदा,
बस एक पथ पर अग्रसर है होना,
मिट्टी की इस देह पर,
विवेक से हमें प्राणियों में भिन्न हैं बनाती,
समयानुसार कार्य से स्वयं को हम,
शिक्षा से शिक्षित कर पाएं,
यही है उद्देश्य धरा पर,
अपनी अलग पहचान बनाएं।।





CLASSROOMS AS SAFE SPACES:

Reflections from Teaching in Afghanistan

- Anusha Ramanathan, Poonam Sharma and Ajay Singh

This article is based on some of the reflections of three faculty members who had gone to Kabul from 25 June to 6 July 2019 to teach two courses to 40 select teacher educators (TEs) in Afghanistan. This was done as part of the MA Teacher Educators Master's Programme (MA TEMP) run by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in conjunction with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) and the Teacher Educator Department in the Government of Afghanistan. This two year programme has been offered in the blended mode since the year 2018. Each of the 6 cycles of the programme begins with a face-to-face classroom interaction. For two cycles of the year (the first and the third), the TISS faculty go to Kabul to teach while for one cycle (the middle) the TEs come down to India for about 3 to 4 weeks. Dr. Amit Dhakulkar, Dr. Arindam Bose, Prof. Mythili Ramchand and Prof. Padma Sarangapani have been the other faculty members who have interacted with the TEMP students in Kabul, Afghanistan. This piece tries to trace the reasons for travelling to teach in a known conflict zone country and the learning for the faculty in enabling conversations of trust leading to inquiry-based learning.



*Establishing lasting peace is the work of education,
all politics can do is keep us out of war.*

-Maria Montessori

What does education mean to a land torn by conflict and striving to carve out its identity even as terror looms every day? 50% of Afghanistan's children who are out-of-school as a result of conflict and in just 2018 the attacks on schools tripled to 192 from 68 in 2017 (UNICEF, 2019). On 1 July, while we were in Kabul, a car bomb was detonated followed by hours of gun fighting by the Taliban near a military compound injuring over a hundred people, many of whom were children from a nearby school (Reuters). On 19 July, when we

were in India, a suicide bomber attacked Kabul University where fourth year Law students were taking their exams (Zucchini and Abed). Increasingly, there are systematic attacks on schools and educational institutions around the world (UNICEF, 2018). In this context how can education help? What means do we employ to ensure that the aims of education of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, tolerance and creativity among others are inculcated?

Perhaps some of the answers lie in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out by the United Nations. Goal 4 on universal and equitable quality education and Goal 16 lays emphasis on peace, justice and strong institutions. In 2005, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) recognised this as it too highlighted the importance of peace.

Peace as a precondition for national development and as a social temper is proposed as a comprehensive value framework that has immense relevance today in view of the growing tendency across the world towards intolerance and violence as a way of resolving conflicts. The potential of peace education for socialising children into a democratic and just culture can be actualised through appropriate activities and a judicious choice of topics in all subjects and at all stages. Peace education as an area of study is recommended for inclusion in the curriculum for teacher education (p. x).

It is in this context that the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) along with the Teacher Educator Department in the Government of Afghanistan have got together to strengthen teacher education through the MA TEMP blended programme enabling not just teacher educators from Afghanistan to come down to India to study for three weeks to a month each year, but also faculty from India to visit Afghanistan to conduct some courses. Visits to a conflict zone region come with their own caveats, of course, but the rewards are many as well. The learning is immense.

The impact of constantly living in a conflict zone could be seen when the 40 select teacher educators across the various provinces of Afghanistan did not even ask for a 5 minute break even as news broke out of the attack not far from the place where the classes were taking place. The classes continued through the day and the faculty from India took their cues from their students.

Why, you might ask, is it important to conduct classes in such a stressful environment? Why cannot the students come down to India or learn entirely online? After all, they are adult learners. They are teachers of teachers in most cases. They should be able to manage learning without much face-to-face interaction or by merely restricting their interactions to ones in India. How-

ever, this approach does not address some fundamental underlying issues of education.

Educational psychology has long argued the benefits of fieldwork and the resultant enhanced cognitive and affective gains (Fuller et al, 2006 and Nairn, 2005). Moreover, the importance of appreciating the direct, personal experience of the students in their learning processes cannot be overemphasised. How does a teacher connect to this personal experience of the student without at least partially immersing herself/himself in the same environment? Research in education has many ethnographic studies for this very reason. Merely acknowledging the importance of the learners' own experiences does not suffice. The smell and taste of danger, of safety, of poverty, of affluence, of exclusion, of inclusion, each leaves a lasting impression that affects one's cognitive response to any stimuli.

The sense of danger was not that high for the TISS faculty when teaching in the classroom. The heightened awareness of the possibility of attacks was ever present at all other times. The hallmarks of safeguards - the uber-armed security personnel, the thick, thick walls, the armoured vehicles, the precision timings to be adhered to for leaving premises - were meant to be reassuring but were also constant reminders of the threat to one's safety. What does it mean to teach in this environment?

Perhaps a more important question is how does learning occur in such an environment? Education aims for inclusion, multiculturalism, critical thinking, collaboration and innovation. War, on the other hand, often thrives in minds obsessed with differentiation, ethnocentrism, centralism and indoctrination. How does this dichotomy of real life experience of conflict and the better world ideals promised by education play out in the learners' cognitive processes? How can learning be facilitated to ensure that education's goals are not just nebulous ideals but real time, real world ideas that can be materialised in classrooms and contexts situated in conflict zones?

The answer to this was reiterated on 1 July 2019 and the following days as the faculty from TISS continued teaching (and learning from) the MA TEMP students in Kabul. The answer lay in our constant effort to create in the classroom safe spaces to express one's opinions, to hear all student voices to show them that they belong, to appreciate alternate points of views, to share one's lack of knowledge but more importantly to share one's curiosity and processes in teaching and learning. We can theorise this as well, but somehow the demonstration might just be more effective. It is important to build an atmosphere of trust that enables the learners (and the teachers) to then challenge

existing belief systems and practices to develop an inquiry-based learning culture.

How do these trust-based interactions occur? The process is also inquiry-based. The teachers ask questions more than provide answers. However, the questions are not merely academic. There is a sense of sharing of knowledge when students are confident that at least in some areas they are the masters. As information is shared on customs and traditions, on shopping places and their ways of living, the students open up to other comparisons.

The discussion on assessment and evaluation systems in Afghanistan took almost ten lecture days of conversations to lead to a revelation from the students on how 80% is the minimum students need to aspire to a promotion in their workplace. The stark difference between Indian and Afghani systems and the varying perspectives on marks were then debated at some length. The ideas of knowledge, of critical thinking, of creativity, of violence, of religion and of peace perhaps seemed most relevant as discussion points when they occurred in the midst of the very culture that these ideas had to take root and grow.

Perhaps travelling to the learners' environment helps engender mutual trust. Freed of the need to adapt to another country, another system, another dining tradition, another climate, another culture the students seemed better able to focus on the ideas themselves.

*The author would like to thank Dr. Poonam Sharma and Prof. Ajay Kumar Singh for their valuable inputs.

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TALEEM KABUL

- Anusha Ramanathan

No excuse. How can there be?
Children cannot be made terrorism's casualty.
One can argue, debate, hold a contrary position,
But violence cannot, should not, be a solution.

'No matter what we will be educated'
Says a post of a student frustrated
By attacks in his country
Yet won over by a child's piety
As the child wounded clutches his book
One can only with wonder and hope at the child look.

Another has posted a child's face dripping with blood,
Anger, pity, worry all through one's being flood.
Yet another says a friend has died
What words of comfort can suffice?

In a class I heard recently this question
'What is there to know?'
There is misery and terror, so much emotion
But is this worth knowing? A resounding NO.

Children know this today unfortunately,
We fail as adults to protect them from tragedy,
We fail to create a constructive reality
We fail as a society.

But perhaps in education lies hope,
Perhaps the next generation will not like us grope,
Perhaps they will know to not fight wars,
Perhaps they will know what is truly a just way and cause.

Perhaps they will live, thrive
And not just survive,
Perhaps they will help each other.
I hope their world will be much better.

HOMOPHOBIA IN INDIAN SCHOOLS

- Ashish Shinde and Uchita Bakshani
(1st Year, MA Education)

Background

Indian society is deeply stratified and observes various disparities based on caste, religion, gender and sexuality. Today, despite the fact that the concept of sexuality is more acceptable than ever before. Talking about sexuality still remains a taboo in our society. It's a constant struggle for people to embrace their sexuality, even more so for homosexuals. This due to the negative approach of the society towards these people. The existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-heterosexual community(LGBTQ+) cannot be denied and neither can the stigmatization they face.

Homophobia is the fear, hatred, discomfort or negative attitude towards people who identify themselves as homosexual or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender etc. (LGBTQ+). Prejudice against LGBTQ+ is widespread in our society. They have long been stigmatized for their sexual orientation. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 377, a British-era law, criminalized homosexuality, deeming it to be “against the course of nature.” Sexual orientation is a biological phenomenon, any discrimination on this grounds is violation of fundamental rights. After 160 years of subjugation and criminalization, Homosexuality which is considered to be disgusting and “against God’s law” was decriminalized on September 6, 2018 by Supreme Court of India. But this is only a small step towards ending the prejudice against this community.

Homophobia in Indian schools is difficult to explain. Its existence is largely disregarded (See Figure 1). Bullying is common in Indian schools and is often on the basis of academic performance, physical appearances, gait, sexuality, personality of the child and many other reasons. This kind of bullying can leave a child physically and emotionally scarred and isolated. Many LGBTQ+ students experience harassment and discrimination in schools and these experiences lead to increased negative social-emotion denouement.

The Study

To better understand the attitudes driving homophobia in students, we had to explore why and how it exists in our school systems. We used an informal

online survey, which was shared across various social media platforms, to investigate about the instances of homophobia people have experienced and their opinion on how we can eradicate homophobia in Indian schools. There were approximately 120 responses from all over the country. The identity of the respondents was kept anonymous. We asked ten questions in our online survey. In addition to age and state of residence we also asked the respondents if they had ever face or seen any sort of discrimination on the grounds of sexual identity in their school, if they think children should be made aware of the LGBTQ+ community and their opinion on how we can help eradicate homophobia in Indian schools. The respondents varied from 20 years to 48 years of age, and comprised of heterosexuals as well as homosexuals.

Do you think Homophobia exists in Indian school?

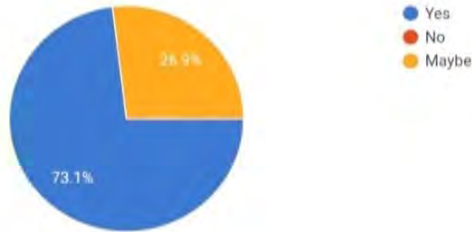


Figure 1: Online survey on homophobia in Indian schools - 73.1% of the total respondents think homophobia exists in Indian

These responses showed us how deeply homophobia is embedded in our schools. We were aghast by the responses. One of the respondents from Tamil Nadu says *“I was in school. I have always faced discrimination in school. Teachers always acted like I am the odd one out in the class. They made jokes about whether they should call me boy or girl. This was the reason I dropped out of school”*.

Another student from Jharkhand writes *“One of the guys in my class had feminine qualities. He wasn't openly gay and I don't even know today if he is gay, but everyone assumed so during school. He was physically assaulted by 3 girls, who harassed and bullied him.”* We evaluated the responses and found 57.1 % of the respondents have faced discrimination or violence because of their sexual identity in school.

Give an account of your experience. *

In school everyone felt I am girlish. My friend use to tease me calling third gender. My PT teacher gave me punishment to write "I am a boy" thousand times.

Figure 2: A female student's experience of homophobic incidence from the online survey

Give an account of your experience. *

In school I had a girlfriend. My class teacher knew it. She called us to her house and asked us to strip. She wanted to know what was wrong with us. I couldn't tell my parents neither my friend. So we broke up and started sitting separately. But my teacher would always ask us to sit together and tell us she is trying to study us(lesbians). This happened for a year till I left the school.

Image 3: A male student's experience of homophobic incidence from the online survey

Discussion

In our opinion homophobia can be more of disgust than actual phobia. This fear and disgust tend to arise out of different situations, and they overt in very different manner. Children are often confused about their own sexual identity and may feel compelled to hide it due to negative attitudes of their parents and teachers, the need to prove their heterosexuality or the fear of being bullied by their peers. Most LGBTQ+ students who face harassment in school do not report the incident to school authorities because they believe that the school would not do anything about it

Everyone in the school community has the right to feel valued for what they are and should be included as a part of the community irrespective of their sexual orientation and identity. There shouldn't be any sort of discrimination or bullying at school on any grounds.

According to the online survey 94.4% respondents agreed that students should be made aware about the LGBTQ+ community and the problems faced by them. Formulating inclusive anti-bullying policies and practices may exert protective effects for the mental health of the students, including reducing their risk for suicide attempts and self-harm. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) ordered the setting up of Anti-Bullying Committees in 2015, by issuing guidelines for prevention of bullying and ragging in schools. Homophobia is one of the major reasons for bullying in schools. Which has an intense effect on a child's emotional and physical health, increasing the risk of self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug consumption. It also affects the students' academic

performance and they may start missing classes and are likely to drop out of school. There should be a positive open discussions on sexual diversity. This will help students understand that certain remarks or actions may be offensive to students belonging to a sexual minority. Breaking the stereotypical norms of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' can help understand sexual diversity

The respondents suggested numerous ways in which we can help eradicate homophobia in schools. We must respond to anti-LGBTQ+ behaviour as and when it arises. Raising social and emotional awareness about LGBTQ+ is one of the major steps towards it. Also including information about the diverse sexuality or issues faced by them within our learning areas is important. Schools can organize seminars or special classes for discussion on such issues. Not just an inclusive school environment will help in eradicating homophobia but the school teachers and other authorities must offer support to the students, they must be careful before disclosing someone's sexual identity to others. Not all parents are supportive about their child's sexual identity, the teachers should respond sensitively and help them approach the school counsellor.

There could be various reasons behind the negative attitude of people. One of the main reasons being heteronormativity, which is the belief that heterosexuality is the norm or default sexual orientation. 'Gay' is considered as an offensive word. In many cases the negative attitude of people towards LGBTQ+ stems from cultural and religious mind-set which inculcates orthodox thinking in children. Talking about the LGBTQ+ community is almost like a taboo in our society. And one of the most important factors contributing to this taboo is lack of knowledge.

India is known for its diverse culture, religions, food, languages and traditions but why can't we address diversity in ourselves. Our society is reluctant to adapt to change. Do we really have equal rights? How do we break these stereotypes rooted in ourselves? People aren't born with prejudice, we often knowingly or unknowingly learn these stereotypes. Addressing diverse issues like homophobia in schools will have a cascading effect on our society.

मैंने की पढ़ाई

- दिशा नवानी

ना जाने सिकंदर ने पोरस से किसलिए की लड़ाई
अपने ही बस्ते के बोझ तले ना दब जाऊँ
मैंने तो इसीलिए की पढ़ाई



गुमराह करती परीक्षा में फेल ना हो जाऊँ
बैवजह नाराज़, अपने से बड़ों की मार ना खाऊँ
मैंने तो इसीलिए की पढ़ाई



पढ लिख कर भी रूढीवादी सोच ना अपनाऊँ
किताबों को रटने की परंपरा पर अपना विरोध ना जताऊँ
मैंने तो इसीलिए की पढ़ाई



दुनिया को देखने का अपना एक नज़रिया बनाऊँ
मुश्किल नहीं, आसान सा ही कोई सवाल उठाऊँ
काश! इसीलिए की होती मैंने पढ़ाई

किताबों के बाहर भी अपनी कोई समझ बनाऊँ
अनगिनत लोगों के बीच अपनी इक पहचान बानाऊँ
काश! इसीलिए की होती मैंने पढ़ाई



बाहरी दुनिया से स्कूली शिक्षा का एक संबंध बिठाऊँ
कुछ औरों से सीखूँ, कुछ उन्हे भी सिखलाऊँ
काश! इसीलिए की होती मैंने पढ़ाई



Illustration- Kavin Ghatak

SURVEILLANCE V/S AUTONOMY

- Soham Bhattacharya,
(1st Year, MA Education)

Overview

'49% of the children in Grade 5 aren't able to solve basic grade level Mathematical operations'

– National Achievement Survey Report, NCERT 2017-18.

Who is to be blamed for such an academic baggage of our students? It is 'teachers.' Citing the 1986 policy on education, "The country has placed boundless trust in the education system. The people have a right to expect results. The first task is to make it work. All teachers should teach and all students study." In the Indian context, the sole responsibility of a child's education is entrusted upon teachers. The correlation of a student's performance with teacher's performance is viewed in binary. Basically, if a child performs badly in an assessment, then the teacher is held responsible for that. Certain education commissions and various state education ministers have suggested teacher appraisals or promotions Should be connected with student performance.

Implications

Where does such a narrative lead us to?

"Look Professor, I can check if she (the teacher) is writing the correct formula" – says a confident Principal in Gujarat.

The statement in itself portrays how our teachers are becoming symbols of distrust and suspicion in the society which is so contrary to its nature of job, the freedom and autonomy it demands. So, Prof. Krishna Kumar speaks of a common argument that exists, 'The teachers have lost all integrity and worth so, they deserve no autonomy.'

Some questions to ponder over

Can the root cause of these dismal statistics of achievement be so black and white? Aren't we undermining the pressure on teachers due to the non-academic activities? What level of entrance criterions are we having for our teachers? Are

the teachers from our schools well represented while making a policy or framing the curriculum? Let these be a good food for thought to ponder about.

Scope of Surveillance

Is surveillance just restricted to teachers?

It certainly isn't. The Delhi Government is reportedly ready with the/a budget to install CCTV's in classrooms. The CCTV footage will be handed over to parents at the end of the month, says the Delhi CM. Imagine yourself as a child, you are growing up and learning under the shining eyes of a CCTV. Parents will watch footage of you in real time, whispering in your classmate's ear, hesitatingly standing to answer a question in the fear of right or wrong. Can we seriously avoid the dangerous implications it might have on a pressurized child?

Is surveillance restricted to CCTV's?

It isn't. The Nagpur Municipal Corporation has asked the civil administration to plan a detailed estimate for GPS enabled watches for the teachers of NMC-run schools. This is in connection with bringing discipline among teachers. Even bio-metrics have become a common commodity of schools across the country to monitor on teacher's absenteeism. So, has there been a shift in that?

At the all India level, no major change is seen in teachers' attendance. Average teacher attendance has hovered at around 85% for the past several years in both primary and upper primary schools. – ASER Report, 2018

Rationale behind Surveillance

There are those who feel that this will definitely improve the quality of teaching. The perception is based on the premise that people tend to put more efforts when someone with more authority and power is watching them. Also, on the other hand, these kinds of systems provide school authority a kind of satisfaction about their vigilance on the teachers and students.

Contrary thoughts

Firstly, teaching is a professional activity that is best pursued when there is freedom and trust. If there's a lack of trust and autonomy in the first place, it automatically demeans the attraction of this profession which contributes a major role in the learning of our children. Also, educational problems cannot be solved by putting all blame on the teachers. Such will be a narrow view of learning and childhood.

Concluding thoughts

Is Surveillance all bad?

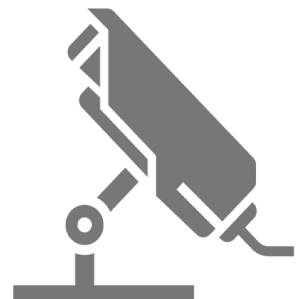
These systems definitely provide strong evidence when things go wrong. They become the premises for truth and justice in the days when outrage is so normal. Issues like ragging, bullying, illegal intrusions in campuses or any emergency situations can be handled much at a better pace with surveillance in place.

This surveillance cannot be at the cost of the autonomy of our teachers. There is a huge need for value addition rather than spying on the teachers. If we need to prosper as a generation, we need to have credence and confidence on our teachers.

“If you have to put someone on a pedestal, put teachers. They are society’s heroes.”

References:

- National Achievement Survey Report, 2017-18 by NCERT
- National Policy on Education, 1986
- Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2018 by Pratham
- ‘No CCTV please’ by Krishna Kumar (Indian Express)
- ‘GPS enabled watches for teachers and doctors’ by Proshun Chakraborty (Times of India)





A NEW CHAPTER: DISCUSSION ON DRAFT - NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2019

- Nishevita Jayendran

The National Education Policy 2019, drafted by a committee set up in June 2017 and chaired by Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, was released to the public for comments in July 2019. The MHRD invited suggestions on this draft before finalizing the policy.

CEIAR held a half day meeting to discuss the Draft - National Education Policy 2019 on 27 June 2019 and invited suggestions from experts in the field in four areas discussed in the policy. These were Teacher Education, School Education, Inclusive Education and Technology in Education.

The objectives of the discussions were to:

1. Ascertain whether the section under review is aligned to the constitutional
2. vision for India, the current discourse in the sector and future-oriented in terms of chalking out a path to allow for growth of the sector in the next three decades or so.
3. Review whether the section adequately responds to key concerns facing the sector, including political economy.
4. Review the flexibility of recommendations to meet the diverse needs of the country and robust enough to steer practice adequately, taking into account the current issues.
5. Comment on the implications for institutional, financing and other requirements.

The discussions acknowledged the complexity of the task undertaken by the committee and considered its implications for the translation of the vision into practice. Here are some of the highlights of this discussion.

The panelists opined that teacher education needs to prepare teachers for a wide range of classroom environments in various kinds of school settings, while catering to diverse needs of children and preparing them for a dynamic, rapidly changing society. No single type or model of teacher preparation programme, however well conceived and planned, can hope to cater to all these needs. The country must therefore open up to multiple models and pathways to teacher preparation, without compromising on essential quality and rigour.

Recruitment of teachers on the basis of a 5 to 7 minute demo, it was felt, projects the teacher as a performer. Teacher assessment for recruitment must be based on a more nuanced understanding of teacher preparation. Portfolio assessment can be one approach, where prospective teachers can showcase artifacts of teaching and growth in understanding of their ideas on teaching and learning as well as content knowledge, during the course of their teacher preparation programme. Assessments based on analysis of good cases or writing up a teaching case can also be part of the repertoire of assessment.

Teaching and teachers cannot thrive on mere passion. The profession has an epistemic and cognitive force that needs to be recognised and highlighted as part of the professionalism of the field.

The panelists on Inclusive Education felt that while having an explicit section on inclusivity in a policy document on education was a welcome move, a separate chapter on equitable and inclusive education is an anomaly, both ideologically and structurally. Inclusive and special education should ideally permeate each of the chapters on teacher education, school education, higher education, use of technology, etc. They stated that special educators should be seen on par with regular teachers and that regular teachers' capacities should also be developed in the areas of disability studies and inclusive classroom practices.

Technology for learning should include instructional design and design of teaching-learning interfaces. More importantly, the policy must expand its scope to focus on learners as producers of content and not merely consumers. Accordingly, steps should be taken to ensure capacity building of educators and practitioners to enable active learning in schools and colleges. This would also include envisioning assessment patterns using technology that go beyond the MCQs (which can become behaviourist) and consider other constructivist, learner-centred methods.

A detailed report has been prepared and sent to MHRD and NCERT for further consideration. Interested readers can procure the copy from CEIAR (riyaz@clix.tiss.edu).



Topic - State of education - children with disabilities,

Speaker- Prof. Archana Mehendale, Prof. Mythili Ramchand and Ms. Bhagyalakshmi Velugu

11 July 2019

Abstract-

“The past twenty years in India have seen significant legal and political commitments towards universalization of education and right to education. UNESCO commissioned TISS to review existing research and prepare a status report on efforts undertaken in the country to protect the right to education of children with disabilities (CWD), and outlines what remains to be done to achieve its full realization.

Prepared by Tata Institute of Social Sciences and commissioned by UNESCO New Delhi, the report is based on extensive research of national and international literature and attempts to provide comprehensive information on the current status of education of CWDs, evidence of achievements and continuing concerns. It extensively draws upon a series of thematic research studies commissioned by UNESCO New Delhi between 2017 and 2018. In this talk key findings from this report and implications will be presented and discussed.

Please find the link to the report below :

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368780>”

Topic - Digital badges and learning design for teacher professional development,

Speaker- Dr Simon Cross, Senior Lecturer at the Open University (OU) UK

18 July 2019

Abstract-

“In this presentation, Dr Simon Cross, Senior Lecturer at the Open University (OU) UK, will discuss how open digital badges can reward and evidence improvements in classroom practice and pedagogic competencies, help engage teachers in professional development, and support the planning of future learning. He will first present an overview of recent research undertaken at the Institute of Educational Technology at the OU focusing on three areas: assessment practice and feedback, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and Learning Design and analytics. He will also review the successes of the TESS-India programme, a multi-award-winning initiative that aims to strengthen and transform professional development and classroom practice in India by providing practical, localised and scalable Open Educational Resources that emphasise participatory child-centred pedagogy.

Effective use of badges requires a badging scheme, which in turn requires careful design. A Learning Design approach such as that developed at the Open University, UK can support this process. This approach can help educators understand the connections between learning outcomes, learning activity and assessment of (and for) learning. Dr. Simon will conclude by outlining a new project that seeks to better understanding potential roles for digital badges in supporting teacher professional development in India.”

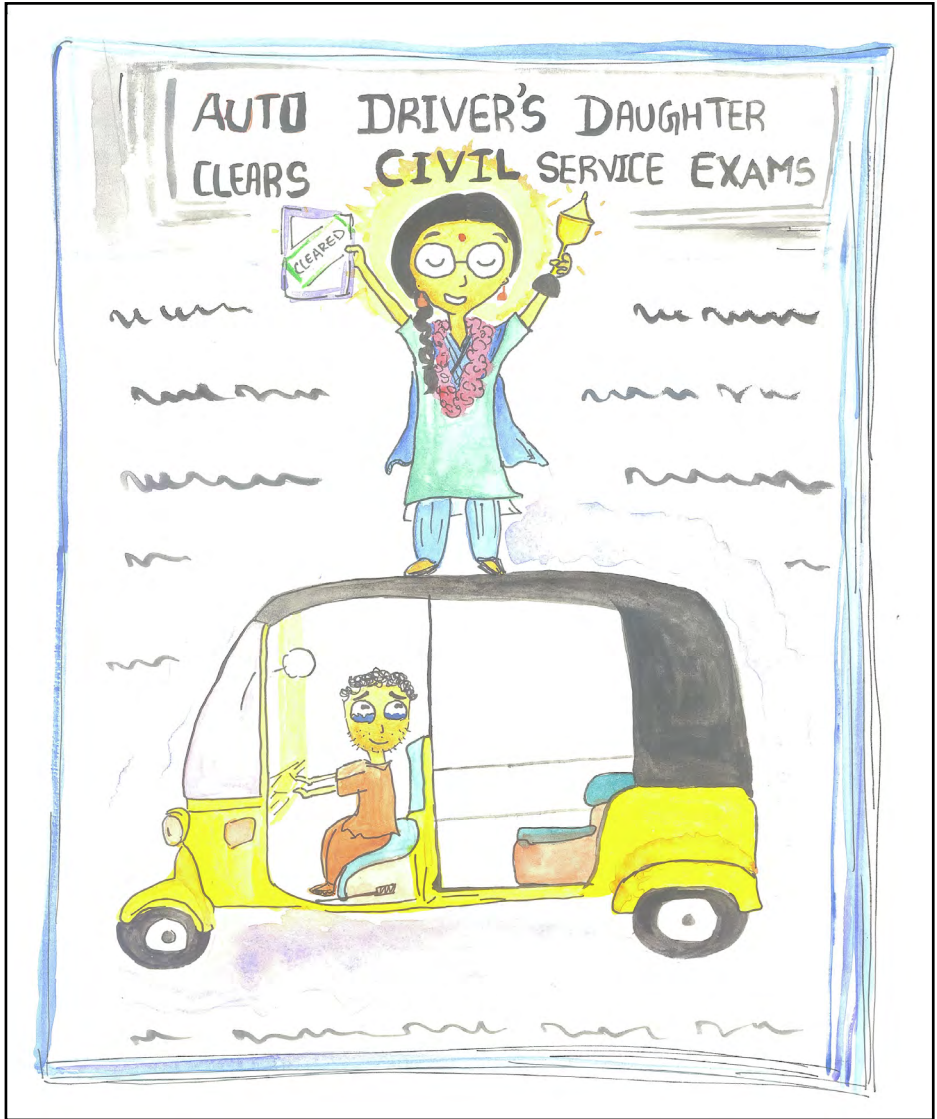


Upcoming Events

<p style="text-align: center;">epiSTEME-8, <i>January 3 - 6, 2020, Registration deadline : 10 October 2019,</i> Place: HBCSE, Mumbai, India https://episteme8.hbcse.tifr.res.in</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3rd International conference on Education, <i>28-29 November 2019, Registration</i> <i>deadline: Early bird: 27 September 2019 Extended: 31 October 2019”</i> Place: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia http://educationconferences.co</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Designing for Children with focus on ‘Play and Learn’ <i>6-8 December 2019, Call for paper: Over now</i> Registration deadline: Open now Place: IDC, IIT, Bombay, India https://www.designingforchildren.net</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CESI: Comparative Education Society of India (A Constituent of the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies) <i>9-11 December 2019,</i> Call for paper: 15 August 2019, Registration deadline: 20 August - 20 November 2019 Place: Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU, India http://www.cesindia.net</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OCCE: Open Conference on Computers in Education <i>6-8 January 2020, Registration deadline: 31 October 2019</i> Place: TISS, Mumbai, India http://www.occe2020.tiss.edu</p>

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If we all have access to the same education,
then why does this become news?

- By Dhipthi Dona
(1st Year, MA Education)