

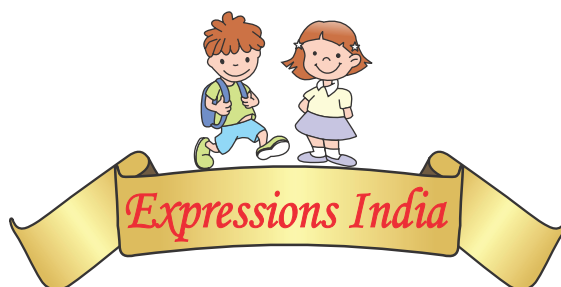
# *Indian Journal of* **School Health** *& Wellbeing*

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•Health Services • Life Skills Education •Healthy School Environment

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**The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program**

*Healthy Schools ..... Healthy India*

*Education is not preparation for life..  
Education is life itself  
- John Dewey*

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## Editors' Note

Schools, along with family, serves as primary socialising agencies for children and adolescents. As educational institutions, the focus of schools is often curricular areas, such as, Mathematics, Science, and Languages. Much of teaching of subjects in schools is aimed at preparation for what students would undertake as professions later in life. In addition to subject knowledge, socialisation processes in schools also aim at developing behavioural patterns that meet social norms. In the previous decade, one finds that there is an increasing emphasis on raising children to be 'smart' by parents and schools alike, which has led to provisions of multifarious opportunities for children that go beyond the curriculum. Thus, expanding children's experiences beyond academics.

The time that children spend in schools is also marked by engagement with people outside of their families. Interacting with teachers and peers from heterogeneous backgrounds serve as initiating points for learning to live in a world that is different from what is their immediate social world. Interactions and discussions in schools play an important role in what children learn: acceptance, tolerance, respect, sensitivity or discrimination, prejudices, and intolerance. These are also significant in helping children to develop and become more aware of their own identities, particularly their immediate identities of caste, class, gender and the like. Although beginning in primary years, these processes are likely to be more profound and have a more pronounced impact during adolescent years. Learning to question and distinguishing between assigned and chosen identities are important growing processes. At this juncture, space for questioning, exploration, engagement with peers, teachers, and parents are important in a search for self.

Through overt and tacit ways, schools also work towards preparing children for fitting into a society that demands alignment with existing norms. Processes of admission, disciplining, relationships between students and teachers, school ethos, the nature of activities organised in schools, textbooks and curriculum, classroom structures, evaluation system, and administrative processes are conspicuous in their influence on ideas and ideologies that children grow up with.

With this conceptualisation, this issue of the journal focuses on **Vital Issues in Schools: Mental Health Concerns, Challenges, and Possibilities**. Papers were received from those engaged in teaching at schools as well as college level. In addition, parents and researchers came forth to share their views on various aspects of education. Papers also address what students are preparing to face later in life, thus opening the discussion to the preparation that schools and homes are providing to them. The journal thus hosts articles that are **Reflections from the Field, Research Articles and Perspective Papers, and Book Reviews**. The concerns that this issue attempts to address place the child in the center. This issue thus begins by presenting voices of adolescents from the field. It is hoped that this would set the tone for developing perspectives from all subsequent papers.

**Toolika Wadhwa**

**Namita Ranganathan**

Professor

Department of Education

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## MESSAGE

It is a matter of great happiness to note that the latest issue of the Indian Journal of School Health & Wellbeing published by the Expressions India is being released. It is a well known fact that Research publications and Journals in particular are the most authentic sources of verified knowledge and experiences. The sharing of such knowledge and experiences not only amongst the Researchers, Scientists, Policy Planners and Implementers, but also the Activists working in the concerned area and persons having special interest in that area benefits all. It is our privilege to reiterate that the Expressions India has been doing pioneering work since long, in the field of Health Education under its banner of “Holistic Health and School Wellness Programme” to enable the school education and teachers holistic facilitation in realizing the goal of Health Education in Schools. The present publication is a momentous indicator of this initiative.

The major bottleneck in the way of achieving the objective of Health Education has been the particularistic conceptualization of its transaction process. The goal of development of holistic health and wellbeing of young learners cannot be attained by making them gather certain information and rote-learn those. It can be attained only by a transaction process focused on experiential co-scholastic methodology that ensures active participation of learners and substantially contribute to the development of life skills enabling young children to manage their lives more competently and grow as truly empowered human resource of the nation and human society at large. To facilitate this process it is very critical to encourage and empower the teachers, so that they act like facilitators and mentors.

The formal school education system need to look towards interacting and taking the support from the initiatives like the one taken by Expressions India under its National Life Skills Education & School Wellness Programme aimed at realizing the Goal of “HEALTHY SCHOOL.....HEALTHY INDIA”. It is pertinent to state that the Schools and other educational institutions that have been associated with such endeavours have strongly felt the need for such programs to be adopted by all schools including Higher Education System.

It is in this context the Journal of School Health has potential to reinforce the process of realizing the vision of Health Promoting Schools getting integrated into the education system in India. We are more than confident that the present issue of the Journal will strengthen this grand endeavour and empower all who are creatively engaged in the promotion of Health Education in Schools. With immense pleasure we would like to express our gratitude for Advisory group, Editorial Board and Members of the Executive Editorial Committee for their valuable contribution, ungrudging cooperation and keen interest and also for making available the benefits of their rich experiences and knowledge.

“If there is will, there is way, and if the will is reinforced by enlightened path-breakers, the way would lead to the destination at the earliest “.

**Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, M.D., D.N.B.**

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## GUIDELINES

### Submission Guidelines

- All submissions should follow the APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition style.
- All submissions should have an abstract summarizing the main points.
- The submission should be of 2000 - 3000 words
- The submission should have a clear and informative title.
- The submission should be original and should not be in the process of consideration by any other publication at the same time.
- The submission should have rigorous and reliable information and provide a deeper level of understanding.
- Submissions should be engaging and accessible to non-expert readers as well.
- Brief information and a line of works of the author should be sent as a separate cover note.
- Initial acceptance of any submission does not guarantee publication. The editorial board shall do the final selection.
- If necessary, the editors may edit the manuscript in order to maintain uniformity of presentation and to enhance readability.

### Types of Manuscripts and Word Limits

1. Original Research Papers: These should only include original findings from high quality research studies. The word limit is 5000, excluding references and an abstract (structured format) of not more than 250 words.
2. Brief Research Communication: These

manuscripts, with not more than 1 table/figure, should contain short reports of original studies or evaluations and service-oriented research which points towards a potential area of scientific research or unique first-time reports. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract (structured format) of not more than 150 words.

3. Case Reports: These should contain reports of new/interesting/rare cases of clinical significance or with implications for management. The word limit is 1500 words and an abstract of not more than 150 words.
4. Review Articles: These are systemic and critical assessments of the literature which will be invited. Review articles should include an abstract of not more than 250 words describing the purpose of the review, collection and analysis of data, with the main conclusions. The word limit is 5000 words excluding references and abstract.
5. Grand Rounds in child psychiatry/psychopathology (Case Conference): This should highlight one or more of the following: diagnostic processes and discussion, therapeutic difficulties, learning process or content/technique of training. This may be authored by an individual or a team, and may be an actual case conference from an academic department or a simulated one. The word limit is 1500 words.
6. Viewpoint: These should be experience-based views and opinions on debatable or controversial issues that affect the profession. The author should have sufficient, credible experience on the subject. The word limit is 3000 words.
7. Commentaries: These papers should address important topics, which may be either multiple or linked to a specific article. The word limit

- is 3000 words with 1 table/figure.
8. Literary/ Child Psychology / Developmental studies/ Psychiatry/ Disability studies/ Education for mental health: Original contributions are welcome which cover both literature as well as mental health. These can be in the field of poetry, drama, fiction, reviews or any other suitable material. The word limit is 2000 words.
  9. My Voice: In this section multiple perspectives are provided by patients, caregivers and para-professionals. It should encompass how it feels to face a difficult diagnosis and what this does to relationships and the quality of life. Personal narratives, if used in this section, should have relevance to general applications or policies. The word limit is 1000 words.
  10. Announcements: Information regarding conferences, meetings, courses, awards and other items likely to be of interest to readers should be submitted with the name and address of the person from whom additional information can be obtained (up to 100 words).
- NB - Specific innovative/new ideas or newly emerging concepts for the sections are actively encouraged.

### **Sending the Manuscripts to the peer-reviewed and refereed Indian Journal of School Health and Wellbeing (IJSHW)**

Entries are to be submitted via e-mail to:

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# Reflections from the Field

# Unheard Voices - Listening to Adolescents

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## Abstract

*Schools, like other formal institutions, have many stakeholders. Concerns of school children are often put through the lens of these stakeholders, viz. teachers, parents, and community at large. An in-between stage of adolescence is often as unheard as childhood. Voices of adolescents is dismissed as immature and thus, unimportant. In this paper, the attempt is to document the voices of adolescents from different schools, with the specific purpose of highlighting the need to hear those who are often unheard. The purpose is to only collate the voices without analysing them from a framework designed by adults.*

Ageism is the stereotyping of or discrimination against people on grounds of their age (Butler, 1969). Referring to the kind of ignorance, aggression and disrespectful practices towards the elderly, the field of gerontology has advocated for the rights of the elderly and the need to treat them with respect and compassion. However, it is not just the elderly who are stereotyped on grounds of age. On the other end of the age spectrum, children and adolescents, are also equally stereotyped as immature, insensible, disrespectful, and rebellious. “*Bade hog aye ho magar bachpana nahi gaya (You have grown up but childishness has not left you)*”, “*tumhe abhi samajh nahi hai (You don't have wisdom yet)*”, are commonly heard statements. This attitude of dismissing the words, thoughts, ideas, and opinions of adolescents as irrelevant can have a lasting impact on them. They are likely to feel unwelcome, misunderstood and unimportant. It further enhances inter-generational gaps sometimes leading to broken communication channels between caregivers and adolescents. Research literature also points

towards an adult notion of what adolescents are undergoing. These are based on theories, field observations or anecdotes from teachers and/or parents. When talking to adolescents, they are given a theme to talk about specific issues such as problems in school, aspirations, preferences, etc. Here, the attempt is to understand the concerns of adolescents through what they think of themselves and their experiences. The following paragraphs will provide write-ups of adolescents. Adolescents were asked to write about dilemmas and concerns that they are facing. Permission was taken to publish their details (Name, Age and School). The excerpts have been only been edited for grammar and spellings so that authenticity of expression and thought can be maintained.

*The problems that might have haunted my father or his father during their teens, are usually not the ones we are facing. In a boarding school, specially, we have less knowledge of the outside world and are unaware of the happenings around us. We tend to only pay heed to the things that*

*happen to us inside the walls of the school. Inside the school walls as well, we face problems. Things like racism and verbal abuse. Maybe it's usual, but they keep haunting us deep in our brains and sometimes even leads to lack of concentration elsewhere. These things that happen between peers are then discussed with the older people and in some situations, things get worse, and that, later, leads to depression and exclusion from the peer group. Maybe what happens with us should SOMETIMES be left with us to solve. If not, the whole purpose of being independent is lost.*

~Shreya Neogi, 17 years, Selaqui International, New Delhi

*They try to read my mind. They try to act like they know all about the endless river of hormones flowing inside of my brain, all about the reckless mood swings and all about the teenage politics these days. Life, they say, is for studying right now. You have an entire lifetime left to enjoy, haven't you? And then, they would say do all your work today. Who knows if tomorrow exists or not? So basically, when they tell me about what paradox is, they illustrate it with being one too.*

*Tell me about being a paradox though. Life of an adolescent seems like a simple simile to them, god knows how much of a oxymoron shaped nightmare it is. By now you can probably see how much I adore English, but adults, they are too naive to see. Science is something that will set your life and language? It's a time pass craze. Science is like god, reference goods are our bible and teachers? They are satan without the horns. When it comes to teachers, they never probably understand what it is to be a teenager, with a brain of an adult which throws tantrums every second. I mean come on, they never understand the craving we have for food while they teach. Inhumane at times, aren't they?*

*When it comes to parents, all they say is, "beta*

*baaki sab moh-maya hai, padhai par dhyan do". But what if I want to be a guitarist and not learn about the physics involved in the strings of a guitar, what if I want to be a scuba diver and not learn about how the mixture of gases in the scuba tank work? Who understands? No one really.*

*Maybe it's the generation, I feel. Sometimes I can see the elders running behind us to catch up as we fly off with the latest trends. I can see the struggle, probably sense it. But when the teachers give us 0 marks on the paper, no marks for trying, then why should we give them credit if they are just trying to catch up but can't?*

*As soon as the school day ends, all of us retreat to the room, whispering on phone calls hoping the walls are sound proof. Because parents won't understand and honestly, we can't make them understand.*

~ Snigdha Ghai, Delhi Public School, 16 years, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

*There are signs of confinement as we are used to the comforts and discomforts given to us in the boundaries of a boarding school. We do not know what is happening outsider our school premises as we are not connected to the outside world. Sometimes people face social interaction problems as we are not used to interacting with people outside the school boundaries.*

*In simple words, we get used to living our lives inside a cocoon not wanting to break it because we don't want to know the conditions outside.*

~ Vikramjeet Singh Mehta, 17 years, Selaqui International, Dehradun

*When I turned 13, it was the beginning of many new things in my life. I didn't know that. It is the in between state of adult and child. During this stage, I really had to cooperate with society and I look for the way, way of my roots. I am trapped*

*into the feeling of depression, shyness and fear. Every damn thing is getting fluctuated, my body, my relationships with people and my feeling. I am feeling confident but still, I am insecure and it is the flash of contradictions... contradictions between lots of indescribable things. And surprisingly I realised one thing, and that it people are not letting me grow. "No one understands me" that what I feel. But this is not true.*

*It is the age where people want you to learn lot of things. If someone discourages you, then show them how to be encouraged by the things you do. Don't search for the hand, a helping hand of support and love, because you have the skills and capabilities to learn from your personal experiences. As if you want to be the best at something then you need to fall and this period is your falling period. After this stage will pass, you would be laughing and having fun. The phase of teenage is the crucial stage in which you grow and understand the difference between sadness and happiness, love and develop an attitude and ego, genuine and fake so on... This phase is a challenge for you and you are supposed to handle it with care. Trust me, this age and this period of your life is worth living and live it the way you want to live, because your loved ones would definitely support you, no matter what.*

~ Akansha Dua, 16 years, Government Girls School, Rani Bagh, Delhi

### ***To you, My future Self: Life of a Teen***

*Tears well up.  
Eyes flood.  
Anger rises,  
And there is blood.*

*Muffled cries,  
Stifled shouts;  
And silent screams*

*That the pain brings about.*

*There is silence,  
Yet, chaos inside.  
Thoughts tormenting,  
Everything is chosen to hide.*

*Sleepless nights,  
Long-soothing showers,  
Alongside depressed thoughts,  
Last for hours.*

*Frustrated sighs,  
Annoying headaches.  
Confidence built slowly,  
Again and again, breaks.*

*The need to let go,  
Becomes an urge.  
Reality with fantasies.  
Start to merge.*

*Obnoxious voices,  
That eerie sound.  
Those repetitive memories,  
Hold you bound.*

*You feel the rush,  
It becomes too great.  
Mind is clouded,  
Blinded with hate.*

*When you think you need an escape  
Somehow, at least one may.  
The pent up feelings,  
Grow day by day.*

*You know where to find me,  
I will always be there  
I know what you go through,  
What you have to bare.*

*I'll take your hand,  
Hold you close.  
Maybe only because  
I need you too, I suppose.*

*Those dreams and nightmares.  
The horrors you can see  
That insanity, still  
Prevails over me.*

*We may have different paths,  
Buts it's the same ride.  
I am you, you are me,  
Two different coins but the same side.*

~ Gayatri Ahuja, 16 years, Delhi Public School,  
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

*From a small baby to an old person, a human passes many stages of life. In which there is adolescence which has a very different impression in a learner's life. Adolescence teaches us that what are our responsibilities, rights etc. in adolescence, a teenager has too much pressure of school, friends, parents, relatives. Due to pressure of school, friends etc., a human (teenager) forgets himself, who is he, what are his responsibilities and rights and also dreams or fantasies.*

### **Study, School and Students**

*We hear since childhood that studying will make us a rich person, give us a big house (mainly parents tell us that), etc. But when we go to school for studying, initially we love our school, but during teenage, our view of school starts changing. Now we understand that if we want to achieve something in future, we need to rank first in class, school, state, world anywhere. But in field of education, the teacher, parents, everyone is also a challenge for us. We need to prove ourselves in front of them. Due to this, students forget about their dreams. Now, they have to work for dreams, their parents*

*envision them as a scientist, a teacher, an engineer etc. Teenagers have to sacrifice their dreams.*

### **Friends**

*In teenage, we meet many people, although for short periods of time. At that stage of life when we face too much pressure, our key to happiness is a friend. A good or best friend always helps us. But there are also fake friends who break our trust and only force us for their pleasure. They pull us towards bad habits like smoking etc. but good friends teach us to prevent that kind of stuff. But due to peer pressure, same teenagers thin that this kind of stuff reduces their tension. This leads them to destroy their dreams, families, rights, life and everything.*

### **Parents**

*Teenage is an age when our parents start thinking too much for us. Due to that they start doubting on us, whenever we use mobile or going outside, they try to know with whom we are talking or meeting. But that is not their mistake. They always think about our good and bright future and that we achieve something in life that they haven't been able to get. In this we forget about ourselves and go ahead with parents' advice about studying. So, in any case study becomes important. If we lose and don't achieve then we will expect it from our children and the cycle will never end because of that competition. Because of competition, many teenagers commit suicide for no reason. They just get disturbed from their lives and think that suicide is an easy way to defend themselves. So we need to change the way of education. Parents need to change their self and understand their children, and also what their children want to become, what are their fantasies.*

~Gagandeep Singh, 15 years, Sarvodaya Vidyayala,  
Pitampura

The adolescents who have shared their thoughts are not just aware of their feelings but also show insights into the life stage that they are experiencing. Across write ups, there is an acknowledgement of the pressures of this phase and the changes that they are experiencing. (Shreya, Akansha, Gayatri, Gagandeep).

They are aware of the reasons for the pressure that parents have created and are also thinking in terms of what this pressure can do to them or their friends (Snigdha, Gayatri, Akansha, Gagandeep). The feeling of being sheltered in a “cocoon” is shared by Vikramjeet who reflects on the distinctiveness of growing up in a residential school. This is a far cry from the immaturity that they are often ascribed with. They are aware of the efforts made by adults, albeit fruitless, in trying to understand them. This reflects perspective taking abilities and insights into the way the world perceives them.

Further, their writings reveal the awareness of adolescence being a transient stage. They are writings are filled with hope for a future that will be free of the stress that they are experiencing now (Akansha, Gayatri, Gagandeep).

Although the reasons, magnitude and nature of stress that they are experiencing are different, what is most significant is that all adolescents are experiencing stress. Probably much more than many adults are able to understand (Shreya, Snigdha).

Another recurrent theme is the futility of sharing or discussing issues with adults. Based on their own experiences, adolescents write that sometimes discussions with adults lead to greater problems (Shreya). The need for independence and taking responsibility also figures in. They also mention how even when they try, adults are seldom able to understand their problems (Snigdha).

The write ups here are from adolescents in their late teens. Early adolescents may not be as expressive and may not have the linguistic skills to voice what they are experiencing. What these write ups highlight is that adolescents are reflective and aware of their own life experiences and thoughts. Respecting their voices is important without attaching any adult frameworks for what is right and appropriate. Attaching notions of immaturity and irrationality to their opinions can be disrespectful towards adolescents and be detrimental to the parent-child bond. It can create obstacles in the development of self concept and providing a positive sense of self.

### **References:**

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# Reflections on Processes in School Administration

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## **Abstract**

*In this paper, the author reviews some of the aspects of conflicts that arise between administrators and teachers in schools and other educational institutions. Quite often, there are procedural reasons, ranging from hiring policies to policies, which regulate the daily functioning of the institution, for the conflicts that arise in an organization. The paper therefore dwells, through anecdotal examples, on these reasons and their probable resolutions.*

## **Introduction**

It has been my privilege to work as an educator for the better part of a decade now. Having served in various institutions of school as well as university education in different capacities has given me a somewhat broader perspective on the process of running an educational institution than most. During this time, I started at the bottom like everyone does, and then rose to the top. At this point, I have had the experience of working as the youngest, least experienced member of the team, and also as the senior-most (by rank at least) member of a team. The institutions that I have worked for have all been privately owned and have largely catered to the middle to upper-middle class sections of society. I have managed teams of teachers and have also overlooked administrative matters such as infrastructure expansion, staff hires, etc. In this paper, I endeavour to look closely at some of the issues that arise in workplaces. The paper is anecdotal in its approach and deals with real-world examples wherever possible to bring out certain aspects of conflicts between management and teachers in educational institutions.

## **Aligning Individual and Institutional Goals**

The worlds of the senior management of an educational institution, and the rank and file of teachers and coaches that make up the bulk of that institution often seem widely disparate; separated it would seem from each other in thought as well as priorities. It is an oft heard complaint from teachers that the principal, or the chairman, or the trustee has no clue how to run the school. It is an equally oft heard complaint from administrators that teachers don't understand the complexity of having to run a large organisation with many stakeholders and that very often the self-same inefficiencies of the system that they are complaining about are the result of their own incompetence. This is a serious rift between the two components of a system which, under ideal circumstances, is supposed to work in unison, one supporting the other. It is the job of the management to ensure that the teachers are happy and cared for and have the freedom to devote as much time and effort as they wish to the task of improving student achievement. It is the task of the teachers to ensure that the trust of the management is well founded and that they are doing everything in their power to educate the wards in their charge.

The unfortunate reality however is that it is rarely, if ever, that such strong trust exists between an employer and employee. .

Let us take the example of student achievements to begin with. As a teacher once told me - "I can produce 90 percenter students if you give me 60-70 percenters to begin with! But here we have the admissions office letting in everyone without any quality control and yet the targets upon which I am evaluated remain the same! How is that fair? I can't turn students with a batch average of 20% into academic overachievers. It is simply not possible to do."

The teacher in question had a point. To be evaluated solely on the performance of a batch in the final exams without any thought towards the starting averages of the students at the beginning of the year seems a little unfair. But it isn't just about being unfair. A policy which rewards good performance in the final exams over everything else, engenders a class of teachers who train students with the express goal of getting marks. This is very often at odds with the stated mission of educational institutes. The usual rhetoric of the mission statement of many contemporary schools talks about creating independent, curious and original thinkers. The emphasis, at least on paper, is on teaching students how to think rather than on learning by rote to gain marks. The internal logic of this form of training is that the ability of a highly motivated, free thinking student will translate directly into high achievement in life. While we can endlessly debate whether that is true or not, or whether it is true under certain conditions and if so what those conditions may be etc., it leaves open a very large gap wherein no one talks about how one can reconcile this notion with the notion of rewarding teachers based on average marks of a batch in written assessments. This clear dissonance between the stated goals of the institution, and the seemingly non-aligned incentives given to teachers, leads to a situation where the senior management is dissatisfied with the direction the institute is

taking, and the teachers are dissatisfied with the way their work is being underappreciated. This is a problem, even if we assume the ideal situation where everyone in the organization is competent, hardworking, able to look beyond one's ego, and values the best of the institution and the students, above all else. Of course, we all know that this is almost never the case. Every institution struggles with some percentage of people who do not fit one or more of these criteria. The percentage of these people may be high or low, but it is never zero. This is exactly the point at which I now justify the seeming 'unfairness' of the system.

From the management's perspective, it is very difficult to take qualitative data on every employee every day and work out if they are conscientious and valuable members of the team. It is therefore the task of managers to work out a system which gives them a rough estimate of these qualities. This is easier said than done. In the above case for example, the teacher would not like to be judged on a target of 90% achievement score of students, because in their estimate the starting abilities of the students in question are not of that calibre, that is to say that it is unreasonable to expect such a leap in marks in a student in so short a time. Fair enough, a manager might say, what goals would you set? This is a common practice amongst administrators today to let the teachers set their own goals on which they may be evaluated. To overcome the problem of a few teachers setting unreasonably low goals, we put in a safeguard that the goals must be approved by, let's say the academic coordinator, or the head of department, or whoever the organisation might deem fit for the job. This seems like a good way to do it at first, but it comes with its own set of problems. The frequency with which this exercise is undertaken, and the level of punitive measures set for non-achievement, and complementarily the reward for achievement or over-achievement of goals need to be fine-tuned so as to ensure that the process is taken seriously. This is where it gets tricky. Financial incentivisation is the only kind that is taken seriously in most sectors.



It stands to reason, therefore, that performance evaluation in this fashion must also then be linked to remuneration. However, in a lot of schools, the authority to pay out cash bonuses does not lie with mid-level managers, and in many schools it does not lie with the senior management either. School owners, or trustees, or chairmen typically hold control over pay decisions. This leads to lots of layers of approvals and convincing before anyone's pay can be changed drastically, thus fostering a sense of futility in the appraisal exercise as well as low levels of faith in immediate superiors.

### **Keeping up morale to boost productivity**

The question of motivating students and teachers is a complex one. Consistently high morale amongst students in staff is essential for a healthy and productive school atmosphere. However, maintaining such high morale consistently through the school year is difficult, if not near impossible, to do. Many factors play into an individual's level of motivation and productivity at any given time. Broadly, we may classify these into factors that stem from personal affairs, and factors which stem from the institution itself. There would, of course, be a lot of overlap in these, and there would be many situations and circumstances which would resist being classified in to either. Personal reasons for motivation, or loss of it, might range from interpersonal conflict, problems at home, health related concerns, etc. Institutional reasons might include long working hours, additional responsibilities without adequate remuneration, rude colleagues and/or boss, work culture, lack of appropriate down-time etc.

It is incumbent upon the middle and senior leaders of an organisation to manage these factors in such a way as to minimize their influence on efficiency of teachers. This is hardly an easy task. An administrator must think deeply about the processes and policies that they can put in place to increase what I would call the 'feel good quotient' of the work place. This may be through something

as simple as installing a free coffee machine in the staffroom, or instituting a 'fun-hour' every Friday, or it could be through putting in place employee friendly policies for gratuity, insurance, bonuses, children's education etc. In most scenarios, a mixture of these two approaches is ideal. The short-term steps help in providing instant-gratification to employees and work well with people in all stages of their career. The long term policies tend to resonate more with the older staff members.

While it may seem like an additional cost in the early stages, it makes sense to hire a qualified HR professional expressly for this work. It would be an investment which would pay ten-fold dividend in terms of employee satisfaction and retention.

It is very often the case that weak or bad leaders in middle and senior positions lead to high rates of attrition in the school and cause an atmosphere of dissatisfaction to fester. This happens because a lot of times, senior positions are given to people based solely on years of experience, rather than their leadership skills. This is a practice which is, unfortunately, extremely prevalent across schools. Ten years of experience as a teacher doesn't necessarily qualify a teacher to become head of their department or school. While experience is certainly a prerequisite for such a job, it is certainly not the only requirement. I would go so far as to state that experience should only be a secondary consideration while selecting a candidate for higher leadership roles. Their ability to motivate teams, to build coherent working units, their efficiency as administrators, these are the qualities that should take precedence over a simple number indicating their years of experience. While most schools of repute thoroughly whet prospective candidates for Principal or Director, they fail to do so for the lower order, but no less important, roles such as coordinators, heads of department etc. This leads to situations where highly competent principals are stuck with a team of heads who leave much to be desired. As one can imagine, this is a less than ideal

working arrangement and can lead to frustration both in the principal as well as in his or her team.

### **Personality driven conflicts in the workplace**

No institution is without its share of unpleasant people. These people can take the form of a rude boss, a nagging co-worker, a gossip-mongering intern etc. The whole gamut of human failings can be found in workplaces. The role of the senior leadership of an organization, amongst other things, is to minimize the intake of seriously damaging personality types in to its employee mix. As one can appreciate, there is no fool-proof method to do this. In fact, not only is there not an infallible method, most organizations do not even have a method. Cost and expertise is usually a huge barrier to having psychological evaluations as part of the recruitment process. This problem is compounded in schools by the fact that teachers do not have to deal with only adults as part of their daily work. The bulk of their day is in fact spent in the company of children and adolescents. This makes a hiring mistake an even bigger problem since it is very easy for students to model themselves on the examples set for them by their teachers. A rude teacher will subconsciously send the signal out to her students that this kind of behaviour is acceptable. Similarly, a teacher who enjoys denigrating others is likely going to produce a few students at least who emulate similar behaviour. Agreeableness is a highly desirable characteristic in employees and many times the success or failure of a team hinges on the overall ability of each member to get along with every other member. Agreeability in itself is not usually enough, after all if every member of the team is really amicable but also incompetent; the efficiency of the team won't be very high. But, all other things kept equal, agreeability does generally lead to better performance at work. This is something that corporations understand quite well now, with a lot of big companies making it a mandatory part of their recruitment test to check if a prospective employee would 'fit in' well. However, schools are yet to formally embrace

this concept even though it can be argued that it should be, if anything, even more important for a school to evaluate the emotional well-being and psychological suitability of prospective candidates before hiring them.

Take for example the case of a former junior colleague of mine whom we shall call 'X'. X came to us highly recommended by her previous colleagues and with excellent credentials as an English teacher. As a routine procedure, I made a call to her immediate supervisor at the previous school she taught at. While the supervisor was largely positive in her assessment of X, when pressed she hesitated in giving a full 5-star rating to X. This bothered me at the time, but seeing as X was, on paper at least, the best candidate we had had for a while and because I could not afford to keep the post vacant for too long, I hired her. Within two weeks of joining, X had fought with at least 3 different colleagues on matters as trivial as who gets to use the common printer first, or who sits closer to the fan during a meeting. Over the next couple of weeks it became clear that X was a bad hire, she was unnecessarily harsh with students, exceedingly abrasive towards her colleagues, bluntly un-open to suggestions, and yet consistently rated her own performance as being above average and resented not being given additional responsibilities. This in turn, led to a general sense of displeasure amongst other colleagues, who, partially at least, blamed me for having to engage with her. They were right. I made a mistake in hiring her, and my mistake was compounded by the fact that it is almost impossible for a principal to fire a teacher mid-term. It hampers continuity and is very hard to explain to stakeholders like parents and school governors. While I let her go at the end of the term, the few months that she was with us were enough to severely set us back in terms of the goals that we had set. My defence, naturally, would be to say that I did the best I could, given the constraints of the situation – the unexpected departure of the previous teacher, coupled with the dearth of qualified English teachers in a tier two city, and

the complete lack of any rigorous method of psychological assessment of candidates, led me to make a judgment call which turned out to be, in hindsight, wrong.

This is not an isolated incident. Every one of us can think of many an example of bad colleagues ranging from the simply lazy to the actively unpleasant. The organizational nature of schools is such that it makes it difficult to screen such individuals at the entry level, and having hired them, to weed them out of the system. However, schools which are able to get this right more consistently than others tend to build a culture of getting it right, a sort of positive feedback loop. One can learn from these schools and put in place hiring policies which value the right attributes in every prospective candidate and then build a culture of upholding these values.

### **Making sense of processes**

Nobody likes paperwork. I have a particularly severe aversion to paperwork. But, over the years, I have grown to appreciate the importance of well-monitored and well-documented workplace processes. While it is true that a badly designed documentation process can turn a workplace into a graveyard of good intentions, it is equally true that no truly great institution can be built without a system of well-designed and sustainable processes. The difference between a well-managed, well-run institution and an institution which isn't well run is immediately apparent even to a casual visitor. To take an example, I once interviewed for a position as a science teacher at a school in western India. I was asked to be at the school by 9.30 AM and so I arrived five minutes early. On arrival it became quickly clear to me that nobody at the school had any clue that I was expected. The guard station had not been informed and I had to wait a good ten minutes before I was let in. At the reception there was a similar delay before I was asked to take a seat in the

visitor's lounge. The person who was supposed to interview me did not arrive till 11. Through all of this, there was no apparent apology on anyone's face and no one thought it weird that the school was so ill-prepared to receive a prospective candidate for an interview. Consequently, my interview process was a joke. The questions asked were trivial and did not probe deeply. The demo lesson that I gave was unscheduled and was observed by the two teachers who happened to be free at the time. My travel and other costs were not reimbursed because the accounts office had not been given any prior notice. Through all this, not only was it apparent that their HR person had made a mistake, it was also apparent that they had no contingency plan in place for such a situation. The receptionist did not even know whom to call in such an event so that the matter could be sorted out with minimal delay.

Take by contrast another school I was able to observe the interview process at. The candidate was immediately offered a place to sit and some refreshments. Any confusion about whom the candidate had to meet was not expressed in front of the candidate and was discreetly expressed to the head of HR. The interview process was comprehensive and took in all aspects of working at the school. All relevant heads and colleagues had been informed and were expecting the candidate and had a set of questions they wanted answered. The CV of the candidate had been circulated to everyone concerned in advance and their comments and observations had been gathered and documented. Post interview comments were similarly solicited and filed for reference. Throughout all this, the comfort and availability of the candidate was prioritized and his approval was sought before any change in the order of the day's interactions.

The differences between these two institutions indicate the difference between an institution that is likely to do well and one that is likely

to struggle. As a proof of this statement, both these schools started out roughly 15 years ago. Both have similar levels of resources, land etc. However, the first one has seen a steady decline in its student as well as teacher retention in the last seven years, while the second has grown so much that it now has three separate campuses in the same city, all working at full student strength. While it would be naïve to think that this factor

alone is the reason behind the difference in their success, it would be even more naïve to suppose that these things don't matter. An institution's character needs to be built and nurtured exactly as a child's must. Small things can have a big impact on the nature of an organization and consequently can be the determining factor in the institution's success or failure.

# Expectations from a School: A Parent's Reflection

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## Abstract

*This paper is a reflective account of a parent on expectations from school. As a mother of two daughters and a teacher educator, the author uses personal reflections to share the expectations that a parent has from a school. This holds particular relevance when we send a young child to school for the first time. The significant change in the environment requires a lot of expectation from the child. The child will be well adjusted when the expectations of parents and schools match and the two work together to help the child to learn and grow.*

When I thinking about the perfect school for my child, I see my child getting love, care and all the required attention from the teachers. Being a girl child, before going to school, she would have always had a sense of security and protection at home. As it is said, 'school is a second home for the child', therefore, as a parent, it is an inherent expectation that she should be comfortable and that she feels safe in the school. Also she should feel that she belongs to the school. She can share her feelings with the teacher. She gets appreciated for each effort she makes, each step towards progress should get appreciated so that she is encouraged and motivated to actively participate in school activities, and at the same time, she would look forward to a new day at school. The teacher should be able to identify the child's interests and special talents and help her perform to her fullest potential. The teachers are I think, like role models for the child, so they will inculcate the right values and attitudes in the child. As per my aspect, the school will develop awareness about the environmental issues and sensitize my child towards issues like pollution, widespread diseases, health and hygiene etc. The child will joyfully and willingly learn new things. The learning processes should be joyous, filled with new personal discoveries.

The child would be encouraged to learn and discover something new each day. Learning by stirring the child's curiosity will help making the entire learning process more attention seeking. Parents and teachers interact productively for the betterment of the child. Learning should not be a stress. Teachers will treat my child with respect and help her develop knowledge, character and an amicable personality. The teacher will win trust of my child by respecting her as an individual and believing in her potential. Each student of the class should be respected as a human being, regardless of their talents, abilities and beliefs. When students know that their teachers believe in them and would never abandon them, it can become a source of tremendous courage, enabling them to achieve immeasurable growth. No a days, economically weaker section of the society a part of school admission quote, so my child will be able to respect them and understand and relate to the discrimination free country more than a concept. The school will identify the strengths of the children and share it with the parents. The school will provide the best possible environment through greater communication and teamwork between the school and families to nurture our children.



## Can we Help our Science Students?

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### Abstract

*The class twelve board results are considered life changing. The pressure of doing well in these exams begins much earlier than when the student reaches class twelve. The conflicts and stresses experienced by a class eleven student of Science are only furthered by the pressure of studies. This paper presents reflections of the author on what her son's experiences of preparing for class eleven examinations*

This paper is a reflective account of the academic stress which a class XI science student has to deal with; complexity of science content (both in terms of quality and quantity) in comparison to class X, coaching for competitive classes, pressure of expectations of parents, teachers, school and society make their life challenging. The author being a teacher educator and a parent too thought of sharing how stressful the life of the class XI science student is and how he/she is left to struggle on their own.

The author being the parent of a class XI science, observed and analysed the lives of class eleventh science students closely and felt sorry for the kind of academic stresses these students face. It led me to wonder if the teachers, parents and our education system at large in a position to help our students in dealing with the academic stress.

To begin with, some voices of parents, teachers and peers are shared to highlight the stressors that students face and then the authors' reflections follow.

Parents----“our child has scored a very good CGPA in class X, so we have decided that he will take up science stream. We will enroll our child

in competitive coaching as well. We are ready to spend money on our child, but he must clear the competitive exams, at any cost, so that we have a good reputation among our relatives and in the society.”

The child is not asked, whether he has an aptitude or interest for science or, whether he can or if he wants to simultaneously handle school and coaching classes. He has to simply follow the routine what his parents set for him.

Teachers----“You are in class XI now. Irrespective of whether you have joined any competitive class, you have to be regular in attending the school. Sitting for Monday tests and unit tests is compulsory. As next year will be board exams, so this is the last year when you can participate in co curricular activities of the school, but mind it no exemption from Monday tests and unit tests”

Here again the child is the sufferer, Whether he plays for school's football team or participate in theatre/ debate/dance competitions, he is left to fend for himself to compensate for any theory and practical classes which he might have missed. No extra classes are organized to help these students. They are also not provided any relaxation with respect to

Monday tests or the amount of content covered in these tests. It would appear that participation in co-curricular activities is a punishment for the child.

With lots of expectations to perform, a child enters the class XI. As a child is very clearly told that the ultimate aim of life is to clear competitive exams, so he hardly pays any attention to what a teacher is teaching in the class. Then comes the Monday test and suddenly the child realizes that the syllabus which is coming for Monday test is not being covered at coaching class, and in the class when teacher was doing it, they didn't pay attention, so a very panicky situation and stressful too. The content of class XI science books is quite complex in comparison to class X and so the child finds it difficult to manage on his own. As a result some children end up taking some special lessons from private tutors while some struggle on their own.

Friends-----“Hey guys, irrespective of any busy schedule, please keep posting, sharing and messaging on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Whatsapp etc.”

Under peer pressure, whether a student gets the time to eat or not but he must take out some time for engagement with peers on social media as this is the only recreational platform he feels he is left with. Moreover the fear of losing friends compels him to hook on to the mobile phones.

The daily routine of most of the students is: school, coaching classes, private tuitions, and the most compulsory task of the day; facebook, instagram, snapchat, whatsapp etc. No time for self study/ outdoor activity or to even reflect on what's happening in their life?

By the middle of the class XI, many students start feeling highly pressurized, frustrating and feel like quitting. But they can't. They continue with this stressful journey till the final stress test i.e. the final exams. Till now, somehow, the students manage, as preparing one and a half chapter for Monday

tests or five chapters for first term exam is still manageable in comparison to preparing fourteen to sixteen chapters for final exam.

Thorough preparation of one chapter includes: reading the chapter in between the lines, understanding it, doing solved example questions, doing NCERT book questions (which are ~40 to 70), going through reference book questions (which are ~ 200 to 300). And all learning (definitions, laws, theories, application, conceptual understanding, structures, formulas, derivation etc.) is to be done in the form of questions only as in the exams only questions come. So approximately for a particular chapter a child will have to prepare ~100 to 200 questions and for fourteen chapters the number of questions to be prepared are ~1400 to 2800.

Now the question comes why for attempting 27 questions in the final exam of three hours, a child has to prepare almost 2800 questions? Further to be able to answer questions confidently in the exams, one has to keep practicing them again and again. Is it easy practicing such huge questions again and again? Aren't we promoting rote memorization, drill and practice which is very contrary to aims of teaching science as specified in 'NCF 2005'? Why all the chapters have to be tested in those three hours? What are we testing? Whose brain nerve is most strong and robust that it can retain these huge questions at a time and whose can burst? Why only a three hour test is the only decisive criteria of how much proficient a child is in a particular subject?

During final examinations, students are seen making frequent calls to their friends. Some of their conversations are, “yaar itna saara syllabus kaise hoga teen din mein? Pehle kiya hua saara bhool gaya. Chaar numerical paper mein aane hain par ye nahi pata kis chapter se, uske liye saare chapters ke numerical kyon karne?

“I used to love science and now I hate it. I feel like crying. I am feeling very nervous. Sometimes I feel like running away or committing suicide”

By working so hard, somehow managing with

stress and pressure, helping each other, giving pep talks to each other, these students brave the exam and when it comes to result most students satisfy themselves with 40 to 70% only. While many students are not able to clear their exam. They have to again prepare for their re exam. From this whole exercise the objective of teaching science seems to be creating non thinking machines who work from morning to night, doing drill and practice all the day to get some good percentage in final exams.

Irrespective of any percentage a student of class eleven is getting, after completing one year of class XI science, how many students are trained in the processes of science? How many have developed scientific attitude, problem solving

abilities, logical thinking, sensitivity towards environment? How many have become aware of the nature of science? How many have inculcated the value of truth, objectivity and honesty? Why so much of gap between what is written in our policy documents and what we practice? Can we help our science students?



# Research Articles and Perspective Papers

# Attitudes of Teachers: Striving Towards a Positive Teaching-Learning Environment

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## Abstract

*Every society believes in education as a potent instrument of social change, and thus attaches a lot of importance to its schools. In developed and developing societies like India, school is the only means through which children may begin to acquire the education which will help develop their intellectual, emotional, and social selves, and shape their adult characteristics. The attitude of teachers plays an important role in helping a child grow holistically. The teaching and learning styles in the schools are seen to be quite traditional in nature, with very low involvement of teachers within the classroom and outside. An educational approach that includes improving the perception and attention of students through age relevant exposures from observations and experimentation, helps students attain analytical and inquisitive nature, and higher order mental skills. In lieu of this, it is imperative that teachers should be willing to reflect upon their attitudes, behavior, temperament and teaching mode. This brings about a transformation within the whole teaching-learning atmosphere.*

## Introduction

Attitude is a psychological construct; a mental and emotional entity that characterizes individuals for who they are. Change in attitude does not happen overnight and neither it happens when one thinks it should. This change can take months and even years to happen and will only occur if the concerned person tries to inculcate it within him/her.

The present paper, thus, is an attempt to strive towards creating an awareness for the need to change and draws its basis from my own experiences of being a teacher educator in an international school and supervising the fourth year students of the B.El.Ed program during their school internship in NDMC schools. This tryst provided me an opportunity to interact closely with pre-primary, primary and elementary level students as well as with teachers and institutional heads.

## The Setting

From my experience with different schools, I would be discussing about the change required in these schools from an academic and administrative perspective. Before I begin by listing down my thoughts, I want to present an overview of these schools in general.

An academic institute always aims for achieving the best for its students. The international school, that I had an opportunity to work with, is located in a posh locality of Hyderabad, and mainly caters to pre-primary students. The school has the best of equipment and resources for children and teachers together. The classrooms are nicely clad with an eye for detail so as to include the best possible ways to educate children and are aesthetically and kinesthetically appealing. The parents walk

into a fresh ambience, the highlight of which is its playground with the child-friendly swings and play material.

This school invests a lot in the faculty they select to disseminate knowledge. A core team is formed to prepare the curriculum and yet another team focuses on the trainings of the teachers and other staff that are recruited. Continuous training is provided to teachers on classroom management, time management, team work and leadership and curriculum transaction. These trainings help the educators to unfold their thought process, shed their inhibitions, view children as learners who not only learn about the curriculum but also skills that help them develop holistically. These trainings take place every three to four months and last from one to four days. The head of the institute is strong headed but lacks the motivation that she can provide to her faculty.

In contrast to the above, the NDMC schools in Delhi are usually located in and around an upper-middle class residential area. Children from nearby jhuggis and urban slums take admission in these schools. Many of these children enter the school for the very first time, do not recognize any written language and are totally naïve to the school environment. The education, thus, becomes a burden and several related issues emerge. Within this turmoil, the attitudes of teachers and higher authorities, classroom dynamics, usage of school resources, and the school ethos create havoc in the minds of the children.

The teachers tend to struggle with this disparity within the classroom. Stereotypical notions prevail (what boys and girls can and cannot do), with children being the target. They are taught according to a set syllabus. Lack of sensitivity in teachers is quite evident here as they do not focus on children who can neither read nor write. These students have to either fend for themselves or don't bother to question the lack of attention at all.

## The Classroom

Teachers identify themselves by the small universe of the classroom that they are responsible for. When one observes teachers within the classroom, a not very different situation is encountered in contrast to the other classrooms within the same or a separate setup. Teachers struggle towards maintaining class decorum, managing children and completing the desired level of curriculum. A little talk or sound is considered 'noise'. Major focus is on disciplining the class and not on the fact that this noise can lead to some or the other kind of development of the child(ren). Distractions during sessions happen mainly due to 'energetic' children (teachers label them as hyperactive; I prefer to call them energetic) creating havoc in class, others having low attention span and yet others not interested in what the teacher attempts to accomplish in that session. Comparisons also tend to take place between teachers and their classes. Teachers worry about what is happening in the other class, how things are shaping up, what material the other teacher is preparing, and how she is achieving the objectives of the lesson plan, if at all. Needless to state, they mainly never bother to assess the other teacher on their teaching abilities.

In the global school, during a few training sessions, there were many crucial questions that teachers had put forth as hindrances in their classroom transaction. A few of them are as below:

*"Sunte hi nahin hai bachche. Kaise inhe control karna hai samajh nahin aata"* (Children don't listen at all. How to control them is something we cannot understand)

*"Planning karke jaate hain. Sometimes, it just doesn't work"* (We always plan and go for our class. Sometimes, it doesn't work)

*"Bachchon ko control kaise karen? Disciplining techniques se bhi kuch nahin hota"* (How to control children? Disciplining techniques are also not effective)

Hardly one or two teachers voice out their anxiety

by quoting “*how can we improve our teaching so that students gain the best out of it?*”, “*how do we ensure that the students are receiving what we want them to*”, “*assessing students becomes difficult, even though we know how to assess them because they are careless and do not pay any attention*”.

The above verbatims draw attention to the fact that teachers point towards students for their lack of classroom teaching skills. Teaching and learning has always been based on certain assumptions; children are deficient and schools fill them; learning takes place in the head; every child learns in the same manner; classroom teaching should be given more weightage than the co-scholastic attributes of the curriculum; and there are smart, not-so-smart and dumb students in the class who should be categorized and graded according to their comprehending ability (Rai, 2013). These attitudes persist in any school irrespective of its stature.

The teachers of the NDMC schools also orate in a similar manner.

“*Ye bachche aise hin hain. Aap inhe padao ya na padao, ye hamesha aise hi rahenge*” (These children are like this. Whether you teach them or not, they will always remain like this)

“*Do-char thapad maaroge, apne aap sudhar jaenge*” (Give them 3-4 tight slaps, they will then understand)

“*Kya padenge ye bachche? Maa baap ko bhi kuch nahin aata, koi support nahin hai ghar se bhi, to hum kya kar lenge*” (What will these children study? Parents also do not know anything, there is no support from home also so what can we do?)

The teachers and principals, alike, do not give support to children for curricular or other difficulties in life. They do not pay heed to the circumstance or background the students come from; blame them and their families for their inefficiencies and use

harsh, submissive language with them. Humiliating a few select children during the assembly is quite common. If that does not work, a few senior children are given the responsibility of disciplining the others. Within the classroom, the scenario is not very different. The children are split into groups based on their capabilities and class performance.

“*Curriculum hi itna tough hai, to bachche kya seekhenge? (Curriculum is so tough, what will the children learn?)*”, exclaimed one teacher when she saw the curriculum guides for planning her sessions. A few others remarked, “*isko kaise deal karen? Ye sab banane ke liye kitna time chahiye hoga! (How to deal with this? To plan all these things, a lot of time is required)*”. Looking at the story books, a teacher remarked, “*ab ye bhi? Kab time milega ye padane ka? Itni books to humse hi handle nahin honghi! (Now these. When will we get time to read all this? We ourselves cannot handle these books)*”

It is very ironical that teacher characteristics, as they enter teacher education, are heterogeneous and include: gender; background in terms of location within a country (urban/rural); educational experience and qualifications; teaching experience; attitudes and beliefs around teaching and learning (Lewin and Stuart, 2003, Pryor et al., 2012). Such characteristics have implications for the kind of training that will meet their heterogeneous needs (Pryor et al., 2012). The theory of andragogy or adult learning suggests that adults build on these characteristics, and in contrast to children, have their own developed self-concept, have greater learning readiness and can take on practical, problem-solving approaches. Prior experience may also, however, block out acceptance of new concepts or content. Experienced teachers routinise much of their practice, making it habitual and automatic, built on tacit, situated knowledge (Eraut 2000; Knowles et al., 2005). Novice teachers, on the other hand, need to learn their practice consciously, while avoiding cognitive overload (Abadzi, 2006).

My learning from the above experience highlights the fact that irrespective of the kind of school, the teachers and their attitudes remain unchanged.

### Meeting the Challenges

Almost every child, on the first day she/he sets foot in a school, is smarter, more curious, less afraid of what she doesn't know, better at finding and figuring things out, more confident, resourceful, persistent, and independent. How long drawn would these characteristics be depends on the experiences children gain from school.

### Pedagogic strategies

Pedagogy comprises of what teachers do in the classroom and also their ideas, knowledge and attitudes in relation to the learners, the teaching and learning process and the curriculum. The teachers are in effect the principal role-players when it comes to planning and imparting curricular knowledge. Mostly, the curriculum is handed down to the teachers by the authorities. This top-down approach becomes detrimental to the development of teachers and students. The curriculum usually focuses on the dissemination within the classroom and fails to recognize its possible benefits that the teachers can unfold outside the classroom setup. More than training, I feel the attitude or conviction of the teacher towards that subject or the way it needs to be dealt on the part of the teacher is highly important. If the educator herself is not convinced of what is being taught, she can never deliver the knowledge fully.

There is no limit to where and when the curriculum implementation will achieve its level of improvement. Curriculum transaction, as a process, is open to many possible interpretations, but it primarily is an encompassing and continuous process during which any form of planning, designing, implementation and assessment of curricula may take place. It is a continuous ongoing process that reaches its effectiveness through the

combined effects of the teacher and her students. It is within this process of curriculum development that the teacher and students can and should be involved.

Teacher-centered, dominated strategies are the common discourses that voice ineffective pedagogic practices (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Alexander, 2001; Hardman et.al., 2012). These practices include being over-reliant on transmission of knowledge, recall, rote learning, memorization, repetition, recitation, copying and chalk and talk (Lewin & Staurt, 2003; Moloi et.al., 2008). However, pedagogy that is active and student-centered positively influences the learning environment.

Teachers' own positive attitudes towards their training and their students is important, but it is when teachers see pedagogy as a kind of communication with students that their teaching practices become meaningful, leading to positive outcomes for their students.

It has been widely researched that children tend to construct their own ideas and knowledge when given an opportunity and exposure to do so. This idea of constructivism or constructing one's own knowledge stems from Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget has intricately talked of 'Active classroom' (Elkind, 1976), a method which enhances the child's power or ability to work upon one's knowledge or existing skill to create more kinds of similar or new information. The concept involves learning styles to be more flexible, classroom having a lot of ambulatory space, students being taught through both homogenous and heterogeneous grouping to achieve holistic development.

A teacher needs to be flexible in her planning for classroom teaching. Following the plan to conclude a session is the foremost aim of the teacher educator. In doing so, they fail to recognize



whether the children are receptive to what is being taught or not. Sometimes, stopping a lesson in the middle and talking of what interests the children seems to work wonders with them. In this activity based learning environment, a key aspect is the closure of the activity. Many of us do not have the ability to conclude a session we have been dealing with. Sometimes, we ask for the responses of students or give ours but fail to put it all together in the end. This delimits our thought to reach to the children. The closure of the activity takes place when the teacher puts together the children's and her own views to summarize a concept.

Another very important learning mode of 'co-constructivism', a term coined by Lev Vygotsky, is a method of learning which reinforces the fact that children do not learn or construct their knowledge alone. Social constructivism sees knowledge as socially constructed and learning as essentially a social process. Learning involves students gradually internalizing this social activity with higher order cognitive development or thinking directly developed and structured by their external social speech. Children's natural or 'spontaneous' concepts meet with and are further developed by the scientific or more abstract concepts they are taught in school or by an adult through guided instruction (Vygotsky 1986). Such scaffolding or guided support requires a skilful mix of teacher demonstration, praise, minimisation of error, practice and direct instruction (Wood et al., 1976).

A more recent technique being used by teachers in most schools is that of Howard Gardner's 'Multiple Intelligences'. He focuses on the nine intelligences present in a human being. This strategy requires creating various corners within the classroom, with each contributing to the learning of a specific skill. The students are to be assessed on each skill through daily monitoring and observation. If one child lacks or is little inefficient in one skill, then that child needs to be sent to a corner of the class which has material to develop or enhance that learning in the child. It becomes crucial and also

complicated for the teachers to tap all intelligences in a student. Here, a few questions need answers to: Are the teacher educators aware of the significance of the learning centers?, how can these various learning corners be put to use in the classroom?, how much and how well can the students benefit from it? and how should teachers monitor the movement of children from one corner to the other? These questions need deliberate thought and the trainings should incorporate such learning for teachers as well. We should aim at making our teachers competent in understanding the usage of this brilliant technique to enrich students' learning. The truth, however, cannot belittle the fact that teacher attitudes shrug away the possibility of learning through these approaches.

David Wood (1998) proposes that adults, social interaction and communication play a far more formative role in the development of children's thinking and learning. He further believes that learning is not synonymous with schooling. A great deal of what children learn occurs spontaneously outside the school walls as they play, ask questions, observe, experiment and make sense of the world around them.

### **Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner**

#### *Learning, unlearning, relearning*

Learning to speak and learning to listen are two very important skills. As John Holt (2005) in his book 'The Under-Achieving' School expresses that "teachers talk too much, starting from demonstrations, explanations, corrections to criticisms". One of the reasons of too much teacher talk is that children, who used to be turned on all the time, tend to or learn to turn themselves down or off.

In addition, the students, even the very young ones, are aware that teachers have all the answers with them. They know that if they patiently fish for clues, most teachers will rise to the bait and give a really pointed question – the one that would

give the student the right answer. The pre-primary students also look for the right expression from the teacher. Teachers feel that they have tactics to invoke right answers from students, but they fail to understand that students can tap the teachers' body language, voice intonations and expressions to guess the responses. This invariably leads to teachers getting more predictable in their teaching. Also, many a times teachers want children to be engaged in discussions. They ask the students questions which the students are expected to answer quickly. In our exasperation and impatience, we do not give time to the students to think. We tend to rebuke them, demean them and consequently provide an inefficient label to them.

The above argument leads us to a very important aspect of teaching. Reflective action entails a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development. It involves flexibility, rigorous analysis, and social awareness as its main components. When a teacher engages in introspection of her actions and analyzes ways in which she can grow as an educator, she tends to refine her thoughts, plan her classes, and focus on each child by understanding their individual needs and strengths.

Reflective teaching should be personally fulfilling for the teachers, but should also lead to a steady increase in the quality of the education provided for children. According to Stenhouse (1971), teachers should act as 'researchers' of their own practice and should develop the curriculum through practical enquiry. Teachers are principally expected to plan, make provision and act. Reflective teachers also need to monitor, observe and work on their own as well as the children's intentions, actions and feelings.

According to Dewey (1933), reflective teaching requires attitudes of open mindedness, responsibility and whole heartedness. One should be willing to reflect upon oneself and challenge

our own assumptions, prejudices and ideologies, as well as those of others. Dewey (1933) also points out that responsibility is a prerequisite to reflective action.

Reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues. Vygotsky (1978) stresses that wherever and whenever it occurs, collaborative, reflective discussion capitalizes on the social nature of learning.

Reflective teaching enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning. In a study of change in primary education through the 1990s, Osborn et.al (2000) identified four different kinds of 'creative mediation'. Protective mediation require strategies to defend existing practices which are greatly valued. Innovative mediation is concerned with teachers finding strategies to work within spaces and boundaries provided by new requirements. The need is to find opportunities to be creative. Collaborative mediation refers to teachers working closely together to provide mutual support in satisfying and adapting new requirements. Conspiratorial mediation involves schools adopting more subversive strategies where teachers resist implementing those aspects of external requirements that they believe to be particularly inappropriate.

The role of reflection in altering and improving practice has strong currency in teacher learning for overcoming ritualisation, and can be seen as moving teachers from just thinking about how a lesson went, to more immediate 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983), to the more radical approach of getting trainees to reflect critically on their own developing practice and on the societal context in which they find themselves (Zeichner, 1987).

Teachers should develop into more critical, reflective professionals and should view themselves

as agents of change in relation to socialization and learning processes (Brownlee et.al. , 2012).

Hence, reflecting on one's own thoughts and actions is significant for a positive development of self and consequently of the students.

## Conclusion

There is no fixed recipe for teaching and learning. There are nearly as many successful styles as there are successful teachers. Teachers know their work. Due to paucity of time and patience, the educator nullifies the effect of the above in the learning process of children.

Conclusively, teachers are the sole responsible beings for the holistic development of children. Whatever the stature of the school, whatever the resources available, and whatever be the background of the students, it is the difference in the teachers' attitudes which help reform children.

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## Addressing Diversity: Role of Storytelling in Primary Classrooms

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### Abstract

*This paper predominantly validates the role of storytelling as a resource to address issues related to diversity in primary classrooms. By giving narrative authority to children, the author attempts to direct attention towards storytelling as an effective means to be used in classrooms in complementarity with other pedagogies employed. Storytelling was found to be influential for generating intergroup dialogues, engaging children in meaningful discussions, eliciting emotions, and understanding multiple perspectives. It brought to the fore plurality; multiplicity; and collective and individual identity of children, in primary classrooms. The narrative agency of children was brought to the fore by involving them in storytelling activities. The paper concludes by proposing the use of storytelling as a cultural resource in classrooms, to understand children within their socio-cultural context.*

Stories have captivated children and adults for centuries. Stories entertain, reach, convince, evoke, control, explain, justify, and clarify. They are both a product of a developmental process and a vehicle through which development takes place (Engel, 1995).

The emphasis on fixed syllabus-based curriculum in the primary school years ignores the cultural literacy that children imbibe through methods like storytelling. Benefits of storytelling for and by children can be cognitive, social and emotional. In her study done on Socio-Cultural Contexts of Teacher-Taught Interactions, Singh (2002) found that “the oral forms of communication are rich in mnemonic devices that enrich children with useful strategies for intellectual enhancement and knowledge building”. Storytellers used to be keepers of historical events, traditions in preliterate societies and stories have been known for being a means to pass down cultural beliefs, traditions and practices to future generations.

### Need for Storytelling

Article 12 and 13 of the Convention on the Rights of Children, UN created the right for children to their own voice, right to expression, and for their own media. It argues for the role of society and community in creating spaces for children to express themselves freely. The National Curricular Framework (2005, pg. 41) emphasizes that, “orally told stories lay the foundations of logical understanding even as they expand the imagination and enhance the capacity to participate vicariously in situations distant from one's life.” It further reiterates that both in rural areas and metropolitan contexts children can gain a great deal by being exposed to local arts and crafts, stories and folk tales, songs and language variations. The inclusion of these elements makes the classroom setting an extension of the community. Such experiences enhance children's social competence and awareness about the socio-cultural backgrounds of different people. The Position paper states that

Teacher Education must enable student teachers to understand children within social, cultural context and view knowledge not necessarily as an external reality embedded in textbooks but as constructed in the shared context of teaching learning and personal experiences (Teacher Education for Curriculum Renewal, 2005).

This suggests that creating stories allows children to manipulate the connections between inner and outer, public and private. The child telling a story can actively negotiate the distinctions between what is revealed and what is concealed, between following the conventions of one's culture and breaking those conventions. Children use stories (their own and other people's) to differentiate between what they consider to be the domain of fact and the domain of fiction. Narratives allow children to construct domains, and at the same time to create permeable boundaries around those domains (Engel, 2000). Storytelling for children has also been found to lead to meaning making experience, cathartic, to open up their lived experiences, inner subjectivities and fantasies.

In her work with children with disability Krishna (2001) found that storytelling conveys important information to others in ways few other forms of communication can accomplish. It allows children to explore safe and non-threatening ways of expression. It stimulates their imagination and makes them comfortable to reveal their experiences. Children with varying abilities and challenges love storytelling as much as everyone else does.

Use of storytelling in classroom. Storytelling in the classroom has been emphasized as an educational tool that inspires children's learning and curricular understanding. Ability to produce narratives is also linked to academic success, problem solving and invention (Engel, 2000). Studies illustrate that development of vocabulary and syntactic complexity in oral language is enhanced in children who are frequently exposed

to stories. In sociocultural theory, Vygotsky (1978) also saw learning as an active process that was embedded with some social events and occurred as a child interacted with people, objects and events in the environment (cited in Phillips, 2010).

Stories can be important resources in the repertoire of the teacher. It can be a powerful way in which to communicate experiences and to explore ideas. Using stories, the teacher takes her students on journeys that introduce them to new vistas of lived experience. It can be used as an approach that honors cultural diversity and empowers students to reflect on and share their experiences. It can further provide an inclusive pedagogy which can challenge prejudices. It can be a basis for understanding cultural traditions and folklore.

Mello (2001) emphasized the use of storytelling as a pedagogical strategy. Her work demonstrated that the literacy of the participant was enhanced in the academic areas of fluency, vocabulary acquisition, writing and recall. Additionally, she found that storytelling served to improve self awareness, visual imagery and cultural knowledge. She further suggested that, through stories and storytelling, people are exposed to long-standing archetypal models that engage the imagination, stimulate sympathetic responses, and cause participants to think more deeply about their social world. Taken as a whole, these studies suggest that the activity of storytelling has an impact on participants' interpersonal relationships, empathy, and sense of "connectedness" in the classroom. Therefore, telling stories aloud (without the aid of books, multimedia presentations, or other devices) needs to have primacy in classrooms.

Paley (1990) shows a firm belief in the child's ability to make their own stories and considered it to be a process that is simply an extension of the ways in which children negotiate role in their imaginative play. "The classroom that does not create its own legends (stories) has not traveled

beneath the surface to where the living takes place” (Paley, 1990).

Engel (2000) emphasized that through story telling children construct their sense of self, develop a personal voice, learn to communicate their unique experiences and their view of the world. Children also create stories by constructing and reconstructing daily life events. Stories are a means for children to share their experiences with others. The narratives constructed by children reflect their embedded selves.

Keeping the above background in mind, this paper attempts to interpret how storytelling activities in primary classrooms address the cultural knowledge that children from diverse backgrounds bring. It further tries to highlight how storytelling makes the classroom more inclusive.

### Methodology

The participants in the study were children of class II and IV from six schools of Delhi. One section of each class was taken randomly from all the schools. The children were from three State Run schools and three Private schools of Delhi. The State run schools that were part of the study were in the New Delhi area of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. The private schools in the study were located one each in South Delhi, Central Delhi and East Delhi. To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research design was considered to be most appropriate. The very basic premise guiding this work was that children have significant contributions to make and to say and what they say is as valuable as that of an adult. Therefore data was majorly drawn from children as focal participants of the study. The children were in the age group of 6 to 11 years. Individual story sharing and collective story making tasks ensured that both individual and collective voices of children were brought to the fore. The intention was to provide enough scope to match each child's individual needs and interests.

The stories shared and constructed by children were audio recorded and these narrations were then transcribed. The themes emerging from the diverse perspectives were drawn together to construct children's voices and to put their agency in the centre stage. The findings from the study have been discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

### Role in understanding and appreciating classroom diversity

Story-sharing activity allowed children to experience diversity in its true sense. It led to discussions on various themes such as individual difference, multiple views and perspectives on an issue. It further provided a means to deal with many sensitive issues. For instance, one South Indian child narrated a story with a slightly different accent, so all children started laughing. When asked, a girl explained the reason of why they all were laughing. Then she shared the story of a different looking parrot and concluded that each individual has a distinct way of doing the same thing, so we should accept differences. After this incident the class teacher who was sitting at the back of the class correcting notebooks also intervened and discussed the issue with the students. This way a very sensitive issue was discussed and many students opened up and shared that they too were teased by other children. Soon we realised that all were teased on one pretext or the other and how each one felt about the same. They also expressed that they did not like to be teased, and the discussion helped iron out this issue amicably in such a large group where each student promised to stop and think before teasing another child or a person.

Stories shared by children from their family interactions sensitized their classmates to multiple socio-cultural identities. The versatility of storytelling was found to be attractive to children as text book bound learning does not provide enough scope for stoking their imagination. Dyson & Genishi (1994) also argue for the multiple facets

in the use and the need for story in the classroom as a viable means for nourishing children's own diverse cultural expressions. The inclusion of such oral methods in classroom would attempt to give due credit to the plurality and multiplicity of the Indian society. These skills if nurtured in children within families and in the classroom can help children become members of cultural group. The variations in the styles of narrating stories and the magnitude of diverse range of stories reflected children's growing repertoire of stories.

Addressing plurality & inclusion in classrooms. Children with a range of oral abilities could participate in storytelling activities. The very fact that they were allowed to choose a story or characters of their own choice from their oral repertoire included them all in the activity. Children developed understanding of other people and cultures and learnt to appreciate diversity. Sharing own stories and making stories with other children provided the right kind of scaffolding and a supportive arrangement that children needed to give meaning to their information.

During story sharing activity, whenever it so happened that the teller lost the sequence of the story, the storytelling transformed into being a collaborative performance of the whole group if it was a familiar story. It was interesting to note that this happened more frequently in the State run schools as compared to the private schools. This was a very significant finding as children from the State run schools displayed more collaborative efforts wherein a lot of rhymes and even stories were shared in pairs, and groups of three or more children. In one instance, a girl forgot the rhyme after saying aloud the first line. One child said it aloud and then the whole class started singing along with her in chorus. Many children came forward and shared the story while a partner of theirs stood with them. This provided them emotional support as they narrated the whole story. The story-sharing process took the children through journeys of their life experiences. Many of them connected with the

stories and gave examples from their experiences. Some children of class IV quickly discussed a storyline with each other and as they came in pair or in a group of three children, they shared the whole story by taking turns i.e. one child continuing where the previous child left the story. If the story was unfamiliar, the children would often guess, or give clues or ask questions that would make the teller think and sometimes they went ahead with the original story or changed parts of it. Sometimes, on listening to the whole story, other children interjected and said that it had a different ending to it and then several versions of the story were recalled and shared with the group. This gave them an opportunity to learn and appreciate varied possibilities and multiple ways in which a story could be constructed. They also used different characters or different words for the same thing. The children could quickly recall and recollect if they had heard or read a similar story, and also remembered the source of the story, e.g., from a text book, a story book, etc. Sometimes, similar stories had different characters or a different climax and they would point out the differences it had from their version. Collective story making activity helped children to shed inhibitions, specifically of children from the State run schools. Thus this activity became a social event in which children exchanged ideas and shared and co-constructed knowledge in an interactive way.

Children incorporated instances from rhymes or stories that were already in their story repertoire. This way they linked their current scenario to their previous knowledge. The terms and the personal prior knowledge they brought through their stories showed how clearly context was an inseparable part of their lives. Through stories children brought rich experiences and their prior knowledge from their respective sociocultural context. This "cultural knowledge" paved the way for a new way of knowledge construction among them. Children not only shared their knowledge and understanding with their peers but also co-constructed this cultural knowledge.



Since there was no single right answer or “the only story”, story construction fostered creativity in learning. Children participated in the activities wholeheartedly as they knew they would not be embarrassed or judged for a correct or an incorrect response as there was none in this case. Storytelling provided children with a supportive learning environment wherein they were also active participants in knowledge construction based on their prior knowledge and by co-construction with their class mates. Storytelling thus provided a way for children to share such knowledge that does not come to the fore through other formal learning methods. Ramanujan (1991) while discussing about folktales mentioned that to study culture of a particular society their oral tradition has to be known first. He further emphasized that diversity of our country, multiplicity of cultures, language, and religion can be easily known by studying folk tales of India.

### **Empathy and projecting self in the story**

Storytelling touched children in a way that probably no other medium could do. The children related their self to the story and even with the characters of the story. They projected the situation onto themselves and empathised with the characters. Children thought, reflected and then expressed their feelings about the stories they heard. Many said they were feeling the same as happened in the story so it was a lived experience for them that they were going through at that time. Children gave opinions on the right thing to do on behalf of the characters of the stories shared. Children’s narratives involved making sense of the world around them and presentation of events happened to them in the past so they made sense of their experiences by narrating those. It was important to involve them in storytelling or making experiences as it helped them understand self, the world around them, affirm their culture and the one’s around them. Research studies suggest that storytelling increases self-esteem. Children who find sharing stories in front of an audience a challenge often

feel a great sense of accomplishment when the audience applauds. They carry that confidence with them into other areas of life as well. Children who took time to open up initially expressed themselves gradually as it provided them with a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment. The storytelling session led us all through a journey in which we explored, shared and learned about many issues that concerned children but were not part of their day-to-day discussions in school. Children used reasoning, problem solving, thought of alternatives, substitution and imagination while they actively constructed meanings through the stories shared in the classroom. Singh (2002) in her work on “Socio-Cultural Contexts of Teacher-Taught Interactions” found that children’s repertoire of stories and their ability to narrate comprises a cultural resource usually neglected and unrecognized as a source of competence and of educationally significant experiences. By becoming storytellers, children can create for themselves a special presence in the classroom. Building a classroom ‘culture’

Stories played a proactive function in creating group cohesiveness in the classrooms. The cooperation and collaboration infused a sense of belongingness among the children. It is in agreement with Dyson’s (1994) claim that stories are vehicles for diverse voices in the classroom and contribute to representing socio-cultural differences. This way children not only became aware of individual differences but also about rich cultural legacy that each one of them carried along with them to class every day. Knowing about their differences and so many complementarities actually helped them to form cohesive relationships within classrooms.

Storytelling infused peer congeniality and it seemed that children looked for an affective contact in the classroom and storytelling promoted that. Children’s active meaning making and agency came to the fore.

Storytelling helped in building connections within the classroom with those children who they were close to and also with those who were from different cultures. It acted like a ripple effect that kept on creating a storytelling community and story space within classroom. Listening to stories created a shared experience. It further strengthened child to child relationship. It brought intimacy and connect within individuals and groups that existed.

## Discussion

Storytelling acted as a great tool to encourage multiple interpretations of a shared story. It provided a social context as children got exposed to multiple views and perspectives; multiple ends of the story, thereby exposing them to points of view that others hold and expanding their range of perspectives. It turned out to be a powerful way for intergroup dialogues for explaining constructs, engaging participants, eliciting emotions and breaking barriers between groups. These storytelling activities if done regularly in classroom can emerge as new possibilities of reaching the unreached children and the issues that might be untouched in common parlance or become a part of the curriculum. While deliberating on lack of storytelling opportunities with primary school children Kumar, (2004) said, it is a great pity that our primary schools do not have a separate “period” for storytelling, that is hardly a tall order for a society that has inherited thousands of stories from its past.

It can be used as an approach that acknowledges cultural diversity and empowers students to reflect on and share their experiences. It can further provide an inclusive pedagogy which can challenge preconceptions and biases. It turned out to be a basis for understanding cultural traditions, folklore, and can become a local yet global language for the classroom culture. These can go a long way towards developing positive mental health and well-being of children wherein storytelling infuses confidence, enhances self-esteem, and self-worth, along with developing a narrative voice of their own. Children

not only got a chance to express their desires and wishes but also talked freely about their anxieties, fears and reservations through storytelling as a medium. Storytelling helped them overcome their fears by talking and sharing about the same. Certainly, many goals or aims of education can be easily realised through effective use of storytelling as a cultural resource in the classroom.

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# Serena's Story: A Bourdieusian Analysis of a Student's Experience in Higher Education

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## Abstract

*The paper draws from a case study of a University of Delhi student, originating from Assam, and analyses her discourse using Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field. The analysis revealed that unfamiliarity of fields leads to transformation of habitus. The data suggests that the challenge of the unfamiliar causes one to constantly fashion and re-fashion oneself, creating myriad ways to adapt and bringing about multiple ways of responding to emergent situations. A constant attempt to fit in within unfamiliar contexts does not however mean complete transformation of self. The data shows that affinity with ones regional self and ethnic background is not only maintained but also valued while dealing with the complexities of the unfamiliar. The paper further explores the difficulties, anxieties and psychic costs that one negotiates while dealing with the unfamiliar contexts of higher education in Delhi. Evidence shows that self-fashioning is consciously undertaken to not only fit in unfamiliar fields but also maximize academic gains that are offered within the University of Delhi. The paper shows that the student negotiates between multiple identities within different fields only to arrive at what is most appropriate, through re-evaluating decisions and contexts.*

## Introduction

This article draws upon a case study of a Bodo student at the University of a Delhi, which is a central university located in Delhi. It seeks to understand the complexities of identities in flux through Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field. Bourdieu (1990a) points out that when an individual encounters an unfamiliar field, habitus is transformed. He also writes of how the movement of habitus across new, unfamiliar fields results in 'a habitus divided against itself' (Bourdieu 1999a). The data provides an understanding in which entry in to the unfamiliar results in a range of challenges, innovative adaptation and myriad responses to encounter these. The Bodo student displays dispositions of self scrutiny and self enhancement-

almost 'a constants fashioning and refashioning of self' but one that still maintains key valued aspects of a regional self. However, there are tensions and conflicts, and the article explores these, as well as the academic gains for the tribal student in an urban university for higher education.

The Bodos are earliest indigenous inhabitants of Brahmaputra valley, one of the dominant tribal groups in Assam. They are descendents of the Mongoloid race and have their distinct religion, culture and language. Post-independence, the Bodos have clashed with Adivasi tea tribes, the Muslim settlers and even the Bengali Hindus. The Bodos are a minority group constituting 30 per cent of the population against non-Bodos who constitute 70 per cent population in the area.

The tribal student belongs to a section known as Bodo Kacharies, who have not benefitted much from socio-economic and educational advancement. She is a second generation learner. She belongs to the district of Kokrajahr which has seen several ethnic killings in the past. In the struggle for identity and the creation of Bodoland, ethnic fission leading to curfew and riots is a part of everyday lives of inhabitants in Kokrajahr.

## Methodology

The paper tells a story of a student from the Bodo community trying to adapt to a higher education institution in Delhi, along with trying to maintain ties with one's peers and family back home. Pressurized by the demands of several contrasting fields, the paper explores the subjective meanings that the actor constructs for negotiating with emergent situations. Therefore, in depth interviews were conducted with one student, Serena (name changed). The interviews were conducted four times which lasted for two and a half hours each time. Her life back home, how she spent time, whether she felt a sense of belonging in the present context, what dilemmas did she face, how did she deal with challenges, how did she identify herself, were some of the questions asked. Many times the interview transformed into informal conversations within the field. Frequent prompts were given to elicit responses and the data was recorded and transcribed. After each interview the data was analyzed, this set the design for the subsequent interviews. Thus, each interview built on evidence emerging from previous interviews. The findings of the study were shared with the respondent for validation.

## Data Analysis

### Student Habitus in local field

Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field, the paper explores the tension and unease experienced by the Bodo student in her local field. Bourdieu conceptualizes the notion of cultural

capital. There are three types of capital: economic, cultural and social- and, for Bourdieu (1986: 242), the distribution of capitals among individuals determines the chances of success for practices. Although cultural capital may be acquired it follows from habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 94), which Bourdieu define as a complex interplay between past and present. He points that habitus 'refers to something historical, it is linked to individual history' (1993: 86). Hence understanding an individual's past is crucial to understanding the concept of habitus.

Moreover habituses are permeable and responsive to what is going on around them (Reay, 2004). Given situations are not just there to be acted upon, but are internalized and become another layer to add to those from previous socializations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 134).

Habitus is formed particularly due to socialization within the family and in general due to early childhood experiences, however it is continuously modified by individual's exposure to the outside world.

While habitus refers to subjective dispositions, field refers to the context. Individual's self is created through an interaction between the two.

...Social reality exists, so to speak, twice in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': It does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127).

However, when habitus encounters a field which is new, the resulting mismatch can generate not only change and transformation, but also confusion, insecurity and uncertainty (Reay, 2005)

The report of early childhood experience of the Bodo student reveals a sense of being a 'Fish out of water' among the dominant Assamese and Bengali communities in her home town.

**Serena says:**

*Ethnic conflict is a common feature in Assam. Once when I was around seven years old, riots began between Bodo people and Adivasis in Assam. Although riots usually take place in remote areas, the fact that our people are being killed was scary. Any moment tension can magnify and lives can be threatened. One can never be sure of what is going to happen next.*

Reports on early experiences of the Bodo student reveals a sense of discomfort in one's immediate habitus. This shows that in one's original habitus, violence and ethnic tension puts an individual out of pre-reflexive ease that one usually experiences in familiar fields. Doubts and insecurity about one's future remains deeply internalized even when one is not directly affected by tension and violence. Experiences therefore are not merely physical but are also social and cognitive. Although an individual remains directly unrelated to an incident, it is nevertheless internalized and becomes a part of an individual's self structure.

Schooling can act to provide a general disposition, a turn toward what Bourdieu terms 'a cultural habitus' (1967: 344). This process of educational socialization proved particularly effective for Serena. Despite studying in a school lacking dominant cultural capital, she has performed well throughout school and higher education

**Serena says:**

*All My education has been in institutions functioning under the state boards. Teaching here takes place in vernacular language unlike the school functioning under Central Board of Secondary Education and Missionary schools.*

*Students in school under the state boards lack additional exposure and language fluency present among students in the latter. Even in my schools, Bodos were a minority group, the Assamese and Bengalis being the dominant community. Teachers are mainly Bengalis and Bengali students were favored. Non Bodo students and teachers always bonded well.*

On asking her if she could narrate any specific instance she said:

*We would see other students talking freely to teachers outside classrooms. They often discussed issues not directly related to academics with them. We were hesitant to approach them. I always felt that they did not encourage Bodo students much.*

Serena also spoke of school failure and adult unemployment common in the area that she grew up in. She spoke of lack of connectivity in the area and problems that arose, therefore.

*There is no metro and it is difficult to go from one place to another. One has to wait for hours for the internet. In these circumstances one has to work extremely hard in order to fend for oneself. Even for me to do well in school was not easy. I was one of the good students in the school. I was facilitated by the Bodo organization as well as the state government for doing well in school and junior college. This helped me to get admission into one of the best universities in Assam. You know, very few Bodo-students manage to get there.*

The data shows evidence of resilience and ability to cope with adversity which marks one's academic success. We can see the disjuncture between the feel for the game and the game itself (Bourdieu, 1990b). Irrespective of adverse conditions in her habitat and the experiences of bias felt during schooling, academic success is not only desired but also valued by the Bodo –student. Tensions and difficulties in her environment do not lead to

bowing down to one's circumstances. Rather the data shows a strong desire for learning and doing well in academics. Doing well, inspite of being a Bodo, is something that was rare. Moreover being resilient cannot be simply seen as making the best of a bad situation. Standing out was an accomplishment for the Bodo student and it was her hard work which had helped her to achieve the same. This she felt was difficult for many others like her. Interestingly such qualities become productive resources for the Bodo- students in the urban context she has moved into, - it helps in dealing with the unknown and the unfamiliar.

### **The Process of Negotiating Access in Higher Education**

There was virtually no support or encouragement given by the Bodo-student's family and in fact migration to a city for higher education was resisted. The choice of college for the Bodo student was largely based on the availability of a course she was interested in and a perceived belief in better quality of education and greater opportunities to learn through access to learning materials and resources in central universities. While Serena knew by the time she entered sixth that she wanted to go to Delhi for higher studies, the choice of Delhi University was sudden and unexpected. The encouragement for applying to Delhi University did not come from the family; rather it was the suggestion of a friend who had earlier moved to Delhi for higher education. We can thus see how the distribution of social capital among groups determines the chances of success in practices (Bourdieu, 1986). Social networks are crucial in determining access to a particular place or position. Secondary socialization places an individual within webs of social relations and members of these groups act as important determinants of one's life chances. In case of Serena, her friend from school helped her to apply to the University of Delhi for higher education

### **Serena said:**

*I always wanted to go to Delhi for higher studies. My friend in Assam who moved to Delhi for higher education became smarter and confident once she came back. When I told my parents, they refused outright. My mother was concerned about my safety, she still is. No one in my family had moved out for education. Moreover, Delhi has always been unsafe for women. They refused to allow me.*

The data shows a lack of fit between the local environment and her already evolving habitus. Words like 'smartness' and 'confidence' associated with places other than where one belongs shows a feeling of lack associated with one's original habitus. However, irrespective of notions of safety and security, moving into the unfamiliar is a need intensely felt whereby an individual acts against her original habitus to venture into the unknown.

*Going to Delhi was never an option for me according to my parents. However, there were no such restrictions on my brother. So after completing class twelfth he moved to Chennai for pursuing engineering. I was told to stay back as studying in Delhi is expensive. They can afford, but it would be difficult for my father. For my brother, life has been simpler. He went to a better school and had all the encouragement for going out for further studies. I, being a girl child, probably my parents didn't care much.*

Serena further said 'but when I spoke to my friends in Delhi I always felt I was missing something.'

Hence it is evident that although the willingness to move to Delhi appeared early in her academic life, the non-availability of adequate means prevented fulfillment of aspirations related to higher education in an urban space. Moreover due to availability of limited –resources, preference was given to her brother. According to Serena, lack of awareness and indifference on the part of her parents about what is best in terms of their daughter's career along



with concerns for her safety acted as impediments towards moving to Delhi for higher education. However, conflicting ideologies and insufficient means failed to restrict the Bodo student's quest to venture into the unfamiliar.

Irrespective of the lack of support and encouragement from family members and no prior planning regarding the choice of university in Delhi for higher education, a further interesting finding was that the Bodo student reported that she knew during her schooling what she wanted to be in terms of occupation, even though no one in their immediate family or social circle worked in a similar profession.

*Since class tenth, I knew I wanted to teach. So I joined a school after masters. However I was totally unsatisfied as the salary was too less. I spoke to my friends from Assam, studying in Delhi and she suggested me to apply to the education department in Delhi University. She also told me about the scholarship program. Once I cleared the entrance exam my parents had to agree. At first I didn't believe myself. Finally my dream came true.*

For Serena, habitus within her family and the institutional habitus of the school played a minor role in encouraging migration to a city for higher education; rather it was the support or effort of friends in school and college.

For many students already studying in University of Delhi, it has been a future almost present. In contrast, for the Bodo-student moving to Delhi was a project existing as a dream and enrolment in University of Delhi was a chance event, late during her middle – age when she suddenly came to realize that higher-education in Delhi was a possibility.

### Student Outside her Traditional Habitus

On arriving at University of Delhi, the Bodo student had what seems an 'out of –field' experience. Although Bourdieu (1977: 97) argues that for much

of the time, the principles embodied in the habitus are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness and hence cannot be touched by voluntary deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit, he also recognizes that there are occasion when habitus change and adapt (2005).

For students already familiar with the field of higher education in the city habitus beyond the graph of consciousness worked well. But for the tribal –student it made little sense in the presence of challenges faced due to unfamiliarity within the field. The Bodo-student on the other hand engaged in conscious deliberation and awareness in order to fit into the reality of the field.

### Serena says:

*On arriving at Delhi, I was very happy. When I came to Delhi University, I realized everyone is different. No one is a minority here because everyone is different. Finally I was where I always wanted to be.*

It is evident that the Bodo-student is engaged into continuous acts of discovery and re-discovery by continuously fashioning and re-fashioning one's own self in order to make dreams come true. Also the disjunction between field and habitus meant that nothing could be taken for granted

### Serena says:

*Initially when I came to the university, everything was new to me. The language here was a major problem; people didn't understand what I tried to say. I didn't know if it was appropriate to approach anyone for help, I knew I had to be careful.*

Hence, one can see the constant tension and unease experienced in unfamiliar fields wherein habitus continuous to be 'restructured, transformed in its make up by the pressure of the objectives structures' (Bourdieu, 2005: 47)

The disjuncture between dispositions of the habitus and the demands of the field create tension and discomfort. An anecdote narrated by the Bodo-student clarifies this.

*Once I went to a shop and I heard two men talking to each other. The shopkeeper (one of them) said, "Look at these girls from north-east; they come to Delhi to take away our seats and jobs. They have a lot of money so why don't they study in their own state. The other man was probably more aware. He said, "No No they don't have any money, it is people in Delhi who have all the money. Moreover they don't have good schools and teachers to guide them, then how can you say so."*

On the question of reservation Serena points the disadvantage faced by students from the north – east.

*I know people feel that students like me could never get here without reservations. But tell me one thing, how can we ever get through when we don't study the same things that students here do. We don't have the same books in our libraries. The curriculum there is so different. One has to wait for hours for the internet.*

One unexpected finding was apart from fitting in socially, the Bodo-student faced greater problems of fitting in academically.

*I have started liking this place a little now. Earlier I felt I don't deserve to be here. Initially I was not able to follow the kind of discussion we had in class. In Assam, studies were easier. Here there is more stress on application and not information. You need to work throughout the year and still it is difficult. You are expected to know everything. For someone who is reading Freud for the first time, it gets a little difficult. In Assam I never felt this kind of mental pressure.*

Academic problems thus can be seen as a major concern for the tribal student. Positive learner

identity in her original habitus did not suffice to encounter the self-doubt and insecurity that she experienced in the new field of higher education in the city.

#### **Serena says:**

*I was terribly home-sick. I was probably one of the weakest students in the class. I didn't have a clue of what was going on. Everyone knew what was to be done except me. I felt I should have chosen something simpler, something that I could manage on my own. I used to wait for vacations. Once I went back home, I felt a huge-weight just goes. I feel I am back to my normal life. It feels a bit wired here.*

There are elements of ambivalence and insecurity experienced by the tribal-student due to the lack of overlap between one's habitual dispositions and the corresponding field. Also, there is evidence of refashioning of oneself through making self one's own project and working on it continuously to reduce the gap between what is unknown and what is known. The Bodo student at the urban-university talks in terms of 'compartmentalizing different parts of the self, keeping them separate but allowing them to co-exist' (Aries and Seider, 2005: 435).

#### **She says**

*In my home town everyone is extremely happy to see me. When I went to my school my teachers they just couldn't believe that I had managed to crack the entrance at Delhi University. My parents are proud of me as no girl from my family has ever managed to achieve what I have. But I don't talk too much about Delhi at home. Suddenly I have started using more English words when I speak. I consciously try not to speak too much in English and so I prefer staying quiet. I don't want my friends to feel that I have changed. Sometimes I really want to share what is going on but I don't think they will identify with me.*



Far from losing connections and old ties due to moving into a new field, the Bodo student retains key-values of tribal-self along with gaining new ones. Hence the tribal students is engaged in what is called a constant fashioning and refashioning of the self (Bourdieu, 1990b), but her habitus still appears to retain depositions of tribal self.

In the face of continuously modified habitus due to existence within multiple fields, the tribal –student remains determined to hold on the former aspects of self while gaining new ones.

### **Serena says:**

*Thankfully, we have a Bodo-association in Delhi. When we get together, I feel I am back home. I get to speak my language and participate in cultural events similar to the ones in Assam. I am fond of dancing and I used to initially miss our traditional dances and songs. All the Bodo people living in Delhi come together and for some time you feel that life is a little different from the usual.*

Although there are instances of stress and anxiety due to one's experience of moving in and out of multiple worlds, such movements are not devoid of attempts to maintain normatively and balance through reconnection. Interestingly the thought of leaving is dealt with work on oneself and greater resilience, qualities known and cherished by her during previous academic experiences.

### **Serena says:**

*I wait for holidays. Everyone here is so well-read and competitive. Sometimes I fail to understand what is going on. Sometimes I feel like leaving this place. Had I not insisted on coming here, I would have certainly left by now. So I keep on telling myself that you have come to struggle so now you struggle. It is difficult to survive this place but I don't know if I should quit.*

There is no talk of doing exceptionally well in the

urban-university. She says "I just want to complete this somehow." On the other hand there are complaints about the excessive competitiveness and the strangeness of some academically brilliant peers.

*Some students in class are a bit wired. Even after such a long time, I don't think I have spoken to them. I don't know what to talk to them about. Once I thought of asking her something related to my assignment but then I decided to keep quiet as I didn't know how I might end up sounding. Everyone is so intelligent and you don't want to sound stupid.*

### **Serena also makes a distinction between the private world and the academic world:**

*Here there is too much to do throughout the day. People structure their day and strictly follow routines. No one really needs a break. I am a different person. I like quiet places. When I go back home, it feels like I am on a holiday. At least you don't have to remain on your toes all the time. I can sit back and relax only when I am with family and friends. Once I am out of this place I am at peace as I can be myself.*

Serena shows how self is demarcated into what can be termed as private life and public life. Academic space for Serena means tension and unease as fitting into the objective structures of the unfamiliar field brings pain due to disequilibrium and dislocation. Challenges and strangeness of demands of the unknown field and its lack of fit with the individual's subjectivity results in need for greater reflexivity in order to deal with the unfamiliar. Hence, there is a constant refashioning due to work on oneself as benefits gained due to studying in the urban university is not only acknowledged but also valued.

*Throughout my stay in the university I have learnt a lot. In Assam the curriculum is simpler. I mean there is not much to learn. You understand only*

*when you learn to apply.*

*Over here you can learn a lot. There is no strict hierarchy between teachers and students. I cannot think of teachers and students talking so freely to each other in universities in Assam. It is due to motivation by the teachers, I have managed to learn. I always liked reading but being exposed to texts by Michael Apple and Paulo Freire was only possible due to them. It is for their efforts that I can now understand Sudhir Kakar. I don't know if I have been able to write well in the examination, but I can understand.*

This shows that the academic gains due to admission in University of Delhi cannot be undermined. The Bodo-student talks about myriad opportunities to learn at the university. She said "I want to learn as much as I can." Interestingly in place of developing a critical stance there is a sense of achievement due to academic gains she has received by studying in the university. I got a strong sense of confidence in Serena's words when she spoke of moving to her home-town with the added advantage of studying in Delhi University.

*I am waiting to finish this course so that I can go home. I plan to do my PhD from Guwahati. I want to work there as I want to be with family and friends. Life is really uncertain, I want be with my family now.*

Serena's account shows that she is negotiating within the field not through doxic submission (Bourdieu, 1997: 177) but through critical evaluation that helps her to adjust in a better way to the objective conditions. Negotiations and adjustments within the field takes place in two ways: by putting in as much efforts as one can and also by reevaluating the field (Reay et.al. 2009).

*I must go back home as it is my duty to serve my people. I can certainly provide better facilities to my family if I work here but I think it's my*

*responsibility to contribute to Bodos through my research and education. So I want to research on educational problems of the Bodos. I want to work in my home town and my added knowledge can benefit many others who cannot afford to come to Delhi.*

Serena hence shows a strong sense of commitment towards education of children from the Bodo community. She wants to encourage others like her to apply to universities in the city as opportunities to learn are much greater than those available in her home town.

## Discussion

The data reveals interesting interlinkages between the individual's prior habitus and the turmoil that unfolds due to exposure to new contexts. Interestingly some dispositions acquired due to experiences in one's original habitus become valuable resources for dealing with the strange and unfamiliar world of higher education within the urban space whereas some dispositions become redundant in the face of new challenges. However, instead of submitting fully to the demands of the new field, linkages with the old are maintained through regular interaction and by deliberately connecting with one's culture both within the urban space as well as in one's home space. The individual thus develops the capacity to successfully move in and out of multiple worlds. In this way, the Bodo-student through working on oneself is able to refashion and restructure identities in accordance to the demands of the field. Venturing into the unknown creates tensions and insecurities along with opportunities to learn from discomfort generated due to experience of the unfamiliar. The Bodo-student hence not only restructures her habitus but also reevaluates her field in order to cope with the ensuing dilemmas.

Students from the tribal communities benefit immensely from studying in colleges functioning under the University of Delhi in the current

educational context. Movements to urban spaces cannot be simply seen as unthinking submission to what is called 'development.' Rather such movements arise due to the need for greater opportunities to learn as was seen in the case of the Bodo student, which helped her to flourish as learner both academically and socially. Moreover along with growing confident as a learner the sense of loyalty to family and home background was consciously retained irrespective of pressure generated by the unfamiliar field of the urban university.

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# Children's Mental Health and the Role of Language

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## Abstract

*Language and psychosocial and emotional development are interrelated from infancy. As communication begins in the very first days of life, language and communicative competence provide critical tools for learning, engaging in social relationships, and behaviour and emotion regulation. Problems with language and communication can set a child on a maladaptive trajectory throughout life as language competence is critical for both school readiness and psychosocial and emotional adjustment. Language problems can be subtle and may be overlooked in learning and therapeutic situations. Therefore, to set the stage for later competence in a broad range of areas, identification and assessment of language disorders, and intervention, are important in the early years.*

*For dual language children of immigrants, adequately functioning in two languages at home and school may be associated with their well-being. Supporting the development of both L1 and L2 at school may prove to be beneficial to children's linguistic, psychosocial and academic development. Future policy decisions and educational practice should reflect the importance of the development of L1 and L2 competences in multiple domains of children's well-being and academic progress.*

## Introduction

Communication and interaction skills are fundamental and foundational. They enable us to understand and to be understood. They are central to our wellbeing and mental health. They play a crucial role in our development, our ability to form relationships, our educational achievement, social interaction, and life chances. Speech, language and communication needs describe difficulties across one of the many aspects of communication including difficulties with using and understanding language (words and sentences), interacting with others, for example, understanding non-verbal rules of communication, and producing speech sounds. Many children and young people with

social, emotional and mental health needs have unidentified communication and interaction difficulties. Communication and interaction needs are likely in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder and social communication disorder. Many looked after children, whether in mainstream or other schools or in residential care, also have communication and interaction needs.

While first language acquisition is a life-long process with continued development throughout life, the majority takes place during early childhood. Language competence is not a stable construct but, rather, a fluctuating, dynamic, multi-

domain capacity. Two domains are considered under the rubric of language: structural language and pragmatic communication. Structural language skills encompass the sounds of language (phonology), vocabulary (semantics), grammar (syntax and morphosyntax), narrative discourse, and auditory verbal information processing. Pragmatic language skills include conversational or other communicative behaviours such as turn-taking, making good use of gestures and maintaining eye contact. As well as these specific aspects of language and communication, children must be able to both express their thoughts (expressive language) and understand those of others (receptive language) in both social and learning situations. When children have difficulty understanding others and expressing themselves, it is not surprising that psychosocial and emotional adjustment problems ensue. Conversely, a relatively large proportion of school-aged children who have psychosocial and emotional disorders often have problems with language and communication.

It can be difficult to separate psychosocial and emotional problems from problems with language and communication. Language impairments can be subtle and go undetected unless a formal assessment is done. For instance, Kaler and Kopp (1990) showed that toddlers' compliance with adult commands was related to how well they understood language. In another study, Evans (1960) found that many preschoolers described as shy, reticent or inhibited had language impairments that interfered with forming and maintaining friendships. Children with language impairments had difficulty entering into peer group conversations and were then excluded, giving them less opportunity to learn and practice the social skills they needed for peer interaction. Failure to identify and treat such problems can have serious consequences.

### **The Influence of Environment on Dual Language Development**

Dual language development is dependent, among

other factors, on the type and amount of exposure and the age at which children begin acquiring their second language. Sequential bilinguals acquire their first language (L1) during the period of rapid language acquisition before age 3 and a second language (L2) later. Simultaneous bilinguals acquire both languages as first languages (two L1s). The term "dual language" children has become favoured over "bilingual" more recently, as it does not presuppose full proficiency in both languages and it allows for the reality of individual differences in bilingual development, with wide variability of L1 and L2 competences. Sequential bilinguals have their language competences distributed across languages, with varying degrees of skills in each language, particularly in those domains highly dependent upon language exposure, such as semantics. In this way, it would be natural to find, in Spanish/English dual language children, that vocabulary related to the school context is stronger in English, while that related to the home context is stronger in Spanish. This presents unique complexities in the mental processing of their language systems, and how these relate to their adaptational functioning and their ability to tap into protective resources.

While it is rare for anyone to be equally proficient across all linguistic contexts and domains, high competence in both languages is possible. Also common is for bilinguals to be dominant in one language, but the particular configuration of language dominance varies widely. The dominant language of an individual often fluctuates over time and across contexts, so that language dominance is not stable. Due to the assimilative forces that propel children of immigrants to learn English quickly, language shift and/or loss starts occurring as soon as they begin school. Second generation immigrants are more likely to lose their first language than to remain bilingual. This result of societal and school pressures, combined with a devalued view of the minority language, is truly unfortunate, as there is wide consensus among dual language acquisition



researchers that it is not necessary for children to have to abandon their home language in order to develop strong competences in the second, majority language and that proficient bilingualism, a normative developmental process, often results in academic, cognitive and social benefits.

The development of both the L1 and L2 is to a good extent dependent upon the level of language support and language exposure. “Subtractive” bilingualism tends to occur when L2 acquisition comes at the cost of the loss of the L1, when children are submersed in a majority language with limited support and exposure to their home language (subtractive bilingual settings). “Additive” bilingualism, in contrast, is common in settings where substantial support for the L1 is offered as the L2 is acquired, which leads to the well-documented benefits of proficiency in two languages. Language shift has been evidenced as early as preschool or kindergarten, and through the elementary grades. Wong-Fillmore found that early exposure to English leads to first language loss—the younger children are when they learn English, the greater the effect: children attending L2 preschools were subsequently more likely to be unable to speak the home language than were children who attended L1 preschools.

For all children, there is an established relationship between the linguistic environment at home and children’s later language competence. Children in stimulating environments show more rapid language development and maternal language abilities contribute to large variation in children’s vocabulary growth. Children from lower SES have lower language skills and smaller vocabularies than children from higher SES. For dual language children the linguistic environment at home is closely associated with children’s language preference, dominance, competence and usage. It is therefore clear that the environments at home and school are influential in language development and, more specifically, the maintenance and loss

of first and second languages. Societal and school pressures to lose L1 raise serious ethical concerns. According to Genesee F. (2006), ethical concerns arise because pressing children into losing their first language and the chance of proficiency in their two languages means, in an increasingly globalised economy and diverse society, “to deprive them of access to important job- and life-related skills”.

The development of children’s home language may associate with strengthening of family cohesion and intimacy, parental authority and transmission of cultural norms, all of which can lead to healthy adjustment and a strong identification and internalisation of the social values of the family. Developing L2 skills is crucial for academic success and long-term social and economic well-being, as children’s ability to function within the school context influences school retention, graduation rates and continuation into higher education.

All children typically move between language environments throughout the day, as the characteristics of language spoken differs from the classroom to other environments, with a remarkable contrast in the quality of language competences required. Language at home and the playground tends to be contextualised, i.e., it contains multiple references to shared physical, family, social, affective and communicative contexts, relying on shared knowledge (long term memory). It is ‘individualised’ for the listener, who can ask for clarification. Contextualised language thus minimises the linguistic and cognitive processing demands. In contrast, language in the classroom tends to be decontextualised, that is, it is abstract, relies heavily on linguistic and cognitive processing, and is detached from a common outside reference. The message is “self-contained”, to be decoded by any unknown listener without reference or assistance.

Cummins formally distinguished the two types of language competences as *Basic Interpersonal*



*Communicative Skills* (BICS; the more context-rich, less cognitively complex areas of language use, common in the home and the playground) and *Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency* (CALP; the more content specific, cognitively demanding areas of language, typical in the classroom). The specific relevance of this to the dual language child is that acquiring CALP in a second language, a pre-requisite for academic achievement, generally takes an extended time (5–7 years). BICS in a second language take much less time to develop (2–3 years) and this superficial communicative ability may mislead adults and teachers into thinking that the child is ready for English-only classroom placement, when in fact the child only has interpersonal fluency—but not enough academic proficiency in English.

Dual language children can be characterised, at a given developmental point, based on linguistic profiles of age-appropriate competence in both languages (balanced); of low competence in one language and age-appropriate competence in the other (L1 or L2 dominant); or of low competence in both (low L1/L2). The low L1/L2 category is considered here a “low language competence” (low LC) group, while it is hypothesised that children dominant in one language—with “low LC” in the other—may also be at risk. While these low LC groups represent, in many cases, a stepping stone towards established balanced bilingualism or functional language dominance, in others they may arguably be an early risk indicator for adaptation and mental health problems. The low L1/L2 group may also include children with true language impairments and delays, certainly possible in bilingual (as they are in monolingual) children.

### **Language Competence and Psychosocial Adaptation**

It has been well documented that language competence is a critical contributor to the emotional and behavioural development of monolingual children. However, less is known about how

this association is represented for children who speak multiple languages. The empirical research focusing on the association between dual language linguistic competence and mental health and emotional/behavioural functioning is limited. Language competence is related to mental health in children. On the one hand, low language competence accompanies poor adaptation and psychopathology. On the other, good language skills are the substrate of many protective factors, such as IQ, and communicative, social and school competences. Low language competence has been conventionally and operationally defined in research in monolinguals as language delays and disorders.

Empirical studies in monolinguals published in the last decade have shown the high true co morbidity of childhood language disorders and psychiatric disorders. Longitudinal studies show that the presence of a language disorder predicts greater severity or prevalence of ADHD and externalising disorders, learning disorders and internalising disorders (anxiety and depression). A systematic review indicates that language deficits forecast both externalising and internalising problems, but that the risk for externalising problems is significantly higher. Moreover, receptive deficits are considered to be the most potent risk factors, and specifically associated with diminished social competence and aggressive and disruptive behaviour outcomes. To be sure, non-pathological psychosocial outcomes are of importance in understanding the impact of language in children. Language competence predicts social competence, and literacy skills and school achievement.

Child language competence has internal and interpersonal functions relevant for adaptation. In the internal sphere, language competence is a major tool for emotional, behavioural and cognitive self-regulation. For instance, private speech, the sub-vocalised transition from external speech to internal speech, proposed by Vygotsky as

helpful to promote task-related behaviour, seems to play an ample role in cognitive, behavioural and emotional self-regulation. Semantic competence in labeling of emotions plays an important role in the regulation of emotional and affective states, as well as in practical tasks and schoolwork. Basic language processes underlie literacy and math, and subsequent school achievement. Narrative competences participate in self-image regulation and in the organisation of a personal history as continuous and meaningful.

A solid inner narrative can be used as a template to forecast and lend cohesion to one's future states and reactions. Specific aspects of language, such as the development of a theory of the mind (as indicated by the emergence of narratives containing evaluative references to others), help the child to predict others' reactions and to anticipate consequences. Similarly, certain language domain competences (for instance, grammatical development of verb tenses, lexical acquisition of categories or superordinates, narrative development of temporal anchoring and sequence chaining, and conversational skills that initiate and maintain topics) help move beyond the here and now, aiding with gratification and impulse delay.

In the interpersonal sphere, language competence is a major tool for social communication, crucial for the social navigation of outside world, school, friendships and family life. Pragmatic language skills allow for better gauging and fine-tuning of the exchange with the environment. Verbal humour and verbal aggression are a constant of child language used to negotiate hierarchies and other roles with peers. The ability to narrate is a basic substrate of many other social skills, such as the ability to make new friends. Communicative competence is necessary for self-agency within the family system, to negotiate with the parent and within the sibling sub-systems. It is also essential to elicit emotional responses, praise and useful feedback, to defend one's viewpoint, and to help in processing stressful and pathogenic events. In

summary, theoretical and empirical consideration point to ways specific aspects of language may underlie enhanced attentional, emotional, cognitive, affective and behavioural functioning.

Some intrapsychic and interpersonal implications of language for adaptation are specific to dual language children. Proficiency in two languages can be a promoter of cognitive and other development. Balanced bilingualism—defined as age-appropriate competences of two languages—and successful L2 acquisition are associated with, and may be determinants of, growth in a host of verbal and non-verbal cognitive skills, such as metalinguistic awareness, concept formation, creativity, and cognitive flexibility (intrapsychic aspects). Balanced bilingualism is also associated with sociocultural (interpersonal) and linguistic advantages. The cognitive and other advantages may in turn result in increased adaptation and low risk for psychopathology.

L1 competence plays an important role in internal labeling of emotions, regulation of inner states, and family functioning. Each language has a differential emotional valence, and the first language ("mother's tongue") encodes and labels the first emotions and regulates early mental states. In this way, poor L1 may lead to emotional dysregulation (internal sphere). At home, intact interpersonal communication modulates behaviour and emotions; hence, poor L1 may result in difficulties in family communication and loss of its protective functions which in turn may add to maladaptation. As Wong Fillmore (2000:39) states "When parents are unable to talk to their children, they cannot easily convey to them their values, beliefs, understandings, or wisdom about how to cope with their experiences".

Language competence is also a predictor of social competence and school achievement. Interpersonally, poor language skills often predict poor social skills in monolinguals as well as in bilinguals. Social competence and communicative

competence are correlated. Language delayed children are often poorly socialised, shy, aloof or less outgoing. Their peer interactions are shorter and they infrequently initiate them. Their peers do not accept them well. Longitudinal studies confirm these same links. Communicative competence and social competence are also correlated in L2-learning children; children with poor L2 mastery are not spoken to and often ignored by their peers. In turn, social incompetence may lead to behavioural, mood and anxiety problems. Moreover, L2 competence supports the child's intrapsychic emotional/behavioural regulation and access to interpersonal resources (e.g., praise by teachers; understanding rules, schoolwork and expectations). Communication rendered ineffectual by low second language skills may lead to the unmasking or emergence of psychopathology whereas good language skills predict growth in social adaptation and low risk of psychopathology. In addition, poor L2 skills interfere with academic performance and predict poor educational outcomes, which in turn feed into a cycle of maladjustment and poor behavioural/emotional outcome.

### **Cultural Competence in Bicultural Individuals**

Bicultural competence is considered the optimal outcome of the acculturation/ dual culture acquisition process and is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional heterogeneous construct. The following component dimensions of bicultural competence are considered important: language competence, knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, positive attitudes toward both majority and minority groups, bicultural efficacy, role repertoire, and a sense of being grounded, i.e. having support networks in both cultures. Thus, language competence is considered a major building block of bicultural competence: when L2 acquisition is accompanied by support of L1 maintenance, as shown by the research on bilingual programs, bicultural competence is promoted. Other research suggests that language competence explains most of the variance in acculturation, and views its

deficits as strong determinant of acculturative stress and as a risk factor. Being able to communicate in the language of both worlds maximises the child's capacity to draw upon available protective resources while at the same time it enables an adaptive response to the language demand. Conversely, non-linguistic aspects of bicultural competence in the child, family and extended social environment have an important protective role in children of immigrants, supporting language and cultural acquisition and minimising distress.

### **Diagnosing Language Disorders in Dual Language Children**

Of considerable concern, with the large and growing dual language population, is how to properly recognise normal and abnormal dual language development. Both the over- as well as the under- diagnosis of language delays of English language learners is a persistent problem. There is a pressing need for standard guidelines in understanding normal and abnormal dual language development when using the current tests and norms recommended for assessing oral language competence. An ongoing problem with the diagnosis of language delays in dual language children is that children's English competences are often the only language assessed. This renders it impossible to differentiate children who have not yet had the opportunity or the time to learn English from those that are not making significant gains despite adequate exposure due to impairments in their language acquisition ability.

Children who are suddenly immersed in a second language environment with no knowledge of the language, particularly young children, will normally go through a "nonverbal period" limited to the second language, which should not be confused with selective mutism. While sudden immersion and its nonverbal period can be stressful depending on environmental support and the temperamental characteristics of the child, selective mutism typically lasts longer, appears

in both languages and unfamiliar situations, and tends to be disproportionate in relation to the child's language exposure and competence. The prevalence of selective mutism appears to be, however, higher among immigrant dual language children, and it is thus important that the clinician be familiar with features that differentiate selective mutism from the normal nonverbal period.

A language disorder should be suspected in a dual language child, when she is reported to be significantly behind in the understanding of both languages, when there has been significant exposure to both languages, and when there are language-based learning problems. While it has been clearly documented that bilingualism does not cause language delay or language disorder, language disorders are certainly possible in bilingual children and such possibility should not be easily dismissed and apparent delays should not instead be misattributed to the child's bilingual condition. Auditory-verbal working memory deficits associated with ADHD or a language disorder may slow down the acquisition of a second language.

Dual language assessment is a complex task and some important conceptual and empirical progress has occurred in the last years to distinguish between language delays and normal dual language developmental variability. The field of language pathology has made headway in the area of determining dual language competence. While research on the normal dual language development has used normed standardised measures of language competence developed for monolinguals, there are no widely-accepted standardised assessments of dual language competence normed exclusively for bilingual children. Instead, parallel measures of language competence available in multiple languages have been used. Dual language children with a regular and rich exposure to both languages exhibit similar developmental patterns and milestones as monolinguals in terms of the

order of acquisition of linguistic structures, the interpretation of standardised scores of language assessments normed with monolingual populations can be used cautiously as a reference point in the assessment of dual language children and as an indicator of reasonable approximation of age appropriate language competence.

Dual language children in the transitional process of language acquisition typically fall short of the monolingual norm due to the distributive nature of dual language acquisition. Grammatical and other language errors made by a child learning a second language such as standard British English should not be confused with the grammatical or lexical abnormalities of language disorders. Specialised early speech/language assessment in two languages is often necessary to differentiate normal dual language acquisition from language disorder.

### **Clinical, Policy and Educational Implications**

Dual language children often enter school with a wide variability of competences in their L1 and L2, and a large proportion of these children have low competences in one or both languages. However, many are able to meet developmental expectations during the first two years of school. Children of immigrants often grow up in linguistic isolation, enter school at a disadvantage, and experience increasing academic achievement gaps and mental health disparities over time. From a developmental perspective, supporting both L1 and L2, especially during the transition from home to school is beneficial. It is imperative that clinicians and specialists understand the importance of recognising the wide range of language competencies young children of immigrants have in their L1 and L2. By better understanding typical and atypical dual language development we can develop intervention strategies to target language delays as soon as possible while also supporting the development of both languages.

Maintaining the first language is important for guaranteeing access to family and community supports and protective factors. There has been a poorly substantiated but unfortunately common practice of recommending to parents that they discontinue exposure to one of the languages (typically the home language) when a child is facing cognitive, language or learning delays, without consideration of the social and family consequences of this recommendation. Research (Genesee F, Paradis J, Crago MB.: 2004) suggests that children with language impairment can be healthily exposed to and learn two languages, even with benign manifestations of language impairment in both languages. It may be true, nonetheless, that, for individual children with language deficits or disorders, dual language learning, with the additional cognitive and linguistic demands it entails, may become overwhelming.

A clinical recommendation to discontinue exposure to one of the languages in children who are struggling with language learning or learning in general, or who express distress or overload on exposure to a language, is a serious decision that should not be made lightly due to its lasting consequences. Such decisions should ideally involve a speech/language pathologist with expertise in assessing dual language children, consultation with the parents and others who know the child well, and an informed decision process by the parents with consideration to the family's plans for the future. For instance, it may be crucial to maintain the home language for a child whose immigrant family maintains firm ties with the home country or older members of the family, or as a way to prevent family distancing due to poor communication. It is important to maintain the richness of the linguistic environments of the child. Instructing children to switch to English, when this is a language that they do not master, is ill advised and possibly counterproductive in most situations. It is important that educational approaches and policies recognise the increasing diversity in

today's schools and establish a connection between home and school by incorporating aspects of the home and community into the curriculum. For dual language children of immigrants, adequately functioning in two languages at home and school may be associated with their wellbeing. Supporting the development of both L1 and L2 at school may prove to be beneficial to children's linguistic, psychosocial and academic development. Future policy decisions and educational practice should reflect the importance of the development of L1 and L2 competences in multiple domains of children's well-being and academic progress.

Starting from infancy, routine assessment of language and communication skills and provision of interventions are essential preventive undertakings. This is important because interventions during infancy or the preschool years can have a significant impact on child outcomes. Once identified, creating a comprehensive profile of communication, language, cognitive and psychosocial and emotional abilities is crucial to planning such preventive interventions. There has been a move away from one-to-one clinic-based therapy to a focus on functional language in naturalistic environments. Multidisciplinary integration is required because of the implications that undiagnosed language impairments have for health, mental health, child care, education and the youth justice system. Information on the nature of language impairments, and their impact on academic and psychosocial and emotional functioning, should be available to parents and be part of the curriculum for professionals working with children. This includes pediatricians, family practitioners, speech/language pathologists, educators, early childhood educators and mental-health practitioners.

Members of the education workforce should be trained and supported so that they can: promote children's language development; identify and support children with speech, language and



communication needs; know when to refer children to speech and language therapy services for a full assessment. This training would include training in how to modify their own communication style and teaching strategies and in how to make materials accessible and communication-friendly. It could be part of initial teacher training or part of continuing professional development.

## Conclusion

The study of dual language acquisition and how its developmental trajectories impact the overall wellbeing and mental health of the immigrant child is in its very early stages, requiring further major empirical and theoretical work. Nonetheless, several important implications can be derived from extant developmental and clinical research. Decisions about discontinuing learning or exposure to one of the languages should not be made lightly and should consider the personal and family circumstances of the child. Delays in language acquisition can be formally evaluated, without prematurely dismissing them as “normal” in bilingual children. Assessments are available that allow for evaluation of bilingual children. A complete language assessment will often require testing in both languages. The relatively brief normal nonverbal period in second language acquisition can and should be differentiated from selective mutism. Educational, clinical and family efforts to maintain and support the development of competence in the two languages of the dual language child, may prove rewarding in terms of long term wellbeing and mental health, educational and cognitive benefits.

For children’s wellbeing and mental health to be supported in a school environment, it is essential that any communication and interaction needs that they have are identified and supported. Many children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) also have communication and interaction difficulties. These difficulties are often undetected. Left unidentified and/or unsupported

communication needs can have a range of negative consequences on children’s wellbeing and mental health. Children with untreated communication needs often develop subsequent mental health problems. Vocabulary difficulties in childhood lead to poor literacy, mental health, and employment outcomes at a later age. Children with language difficulties have an impoverished quality of life in terms of moods and emotions and are more at risk in terms of social acceptance. Children’s ability to access and benefit from treatments and programs that are primarily verbally delivered is also affected.

Inclusive communication schools are ones where barriers to communication have been removed. This involves making classrooms communication-friendly and lesson material accessible to those with communication needs. This is particularly important where material is being verbally delivered. It is also important for any treatment programs that children are receiving for their social, emotional and mental health needs. For the wellbeing and mental health of children with communication and interaction needs to be supported in a school environment, it is essential that schools are inclusive communication environments and the education workforce is trained to promote language development, identify and support children who have speech, language and communication needs, and know when to refer children to speech and language therapy services for a full assessment. Children must have access to speech and language therapy support where needed.

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# Hidden Curriculum: Challenging the Quality of Educational Experiences

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## Abstract

*The present study revisits the world of school science. It looks at the factors leading to stress. The current paper raises concerns and issues about the 'quality' of educational experiences guaranteed for each child, in the Right to Education Act (2009). It attempts to uncover how hidden curriculum operates in insidious, but very powerful ways in the everyday discourse of school life through teachers' comments, feedback and remarks, which act to pose challenges and hamper the quality of educational experiences of children belonging to the less privileged strata of society. The authors have collected data from reflective journals of ten B.El.Ed fourth year students followed by three rounds of focus group discussions with the same set of students. Data has prominently revealed that teachers (not necessarily intentionally) often pass remarks on a child's family background, physical appearance, availing of state incentives and participation of a child in routinized activities of the school. Such remarks often jeopardize or question the spirit with which quality of an educational experience as intended for children of diverse backgrounds is planned at a policy level. However, the reasons of such remarks are outside the purview of this paper.*

## Introduction

Education was initially under state level legislations but each state would conceptualize this right based approach differently without uniform standards across India. By constitutional amendment of 1976, education was transferred to the concurrent list (both the parliament and state legislatures have the power to legislate over entries of the concurrent list). This was done to reinforce the integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards, to generate human power for development, to promote excellence at all levels of education, to build a strong, uniform, cohesive policy on education (Aradhya & Kashyap, 2006). It is important for the state to make schools available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable, which is done through Right to Education Act (2009). Availability means education is available

to all in form of universal, free and compulsory state; accessibility refers to equal accessible to school services to all children regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status; acceptability refers to education free from discrimination, relevant and culturally appropriate for all students; and adaptability refers to flexibility of educational programme and ability to adjust according to needs of and changes in the society.

RTE act (2009) aims at giving quality education in a school (p. 4). RTE Act has given a prominent role to teachers in providing quality and need based education to children. Hence, it is the duty and responsibility of a teacher to understand her role properly. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2011) asserts that the dedication and commitment of teachers have the potential to

transform schools and lives of children and it plays a significant role in achieving the objectives of the Right to Education Act. Economic Survey (2015-16) tabled in Parliament by finance minister Arun Jaitley states that "There is a need to improve the quality of education provided in schools to arrest and reverse the decline in enrolment in government schools and improve the educational outcomes in both public and private schools". Several studies on 'quality' of education highlights that there is a lack of consonance on the notion of quality i.e. how it should be understood and measured (Mehendale, 2014). Academicians have interpreted the quality of educational experiences in different ways. For instance, one of the ways Naik (1975) interprets quality is in terms of input and output. Input entails factors such as professional training of teachers, class size, quality of school building, curricula use and textbooks prescribed and output generally entails examination results (p 57). Kumar & Sarangpani (2004) interpret quality in two ways: One refers to the "essential attribute with which something may be identified and the second meaning refers to the rank or superiority of one thing over another". This paper envisions quality in two ways:- One in terms of 'Input' i.e. input given by the teachers in terms of remarks to the students in everyday discourse of the school. Other way of looking at quality is in terms of pedagogy and learning environment in relation to RTE Act (2009). Notion of quality as outlined in Section 29 (2 -f, g) of the act highlights that curriculum should be in mother-tongue as far as practicable, and it should help the child to be free from fear, anxiety and trauma and also help the child to express his views freely (Mehendale, 2014).

'Schools' are non-neutral institutions where mechanisms of exclusion and segregation operate. Such a view of the school uncovers and explores commonsense rules and knowledge that are often portrayed as pre-given, neutral and unchanging (Apple, 2004). Michael Apple refers to these mechanisms as 'hidden curriculum'. These are the norms and values that are implicitly but effectively

taught in schools and that are not usually talked about in a teacher's statement of end or goals (pp. 84). Schools are the sites that reinforce or put emphasis on select, certain meanings and practices, and neglect, exclude or reinterpret others, through many mechanisms such as teacher-student interaction, rules and regulations of the school, staff composition, student-student interaction, ability grouping, implicit meaning of the content of the text book, assessment mechanism etc. (Bishaw, 2007).

This paper attempts to analyze teachers' remarks in everyday classroom interactions and how they work in a hidden way affecting the quality of educational experiences of the children. Authors have collected the data from the reflective journals of ten B.El.Ed 4th year students of the same batch from one of the colleges of University of Delhi and three focus-group discussions with the same set of students. A random selection and study of thirty journal entries of each student teacher was done at the outset of the research which was followed by revisiting of certain journal entries as highlighted by the student teachers in focus group discussions. The objective was to identify and analyze certain episodes, incidents and narratives on teacher-student interactions as captured by the student teachers in their reflective journals. Reflective Journals of the student teachers were coded numerically from 1 to 10 w.r.t alphabetically order of the names of the student teacher.

This study is based on 'Interpretivists' research paradigm which emphasize on socially constructed reality. The question of interpreting data in context highlights the concern interpretivists have about the *situatedness* of knowledge. The goal of interpretive research is an understanding of a particular situation or context much more than the discovery of universal laws or rules. (Willis, 2007). To analyze data, the researchers have looked for meaning from the data available from reflective journals and focus-group discussions. Data helps in emerging important themes but findings are placed

in social context and the particular importance of it is that it is not generalizable to other contexts. The reason is something that happens in one classroom at a particular school and time needs not be necessary to happen in other school and classroom too. Through our data, it emerges that hidden curriculum manifest through teachers comments, feedbacks and interactions in daily discourse of school. This curriculum operates using different parameters emerging from the socio-economic background of learners. These comments are on the possible achievement levels and aspirations of the learners, physical appearance, availing different schemes or state incentives and the criteria of selection of children in different co-curricular activities of the school. The study uncovers that such manifestation of curriculum pose a threat to right based approach in education. This approach focusses on certain general principles such as non-discrimination and equality, looking after the best interest of the children, child participation in the school activities and survival and development of children (Aradhya & Kashyap, 2006). A rights-based model should develop capacity-building strategies for not only rights holders' to claim their rights but also for duty bearers to fulfil their obligations (ibid, p. 8). Conceptualizing a right based approach to education also entails the capacity building of both right holders to be aware of their rights and creating an enabling environment for the access of such right and duty bearers (including teachers) that entails human rights education and requisite professional training.

The teacher's interaction with the children is not only of the teacher and the taught but is coloured by a myriad of various informal or non-prescribed roles. Sarangpani (2003) stresses that this engagement can be based on adult-child relation where teacher being an adult is more experienced and mature and in a better position to exercise power over the child. The legitimization of power is further strengthened/by virtue of acting out as parents by the teachers and with the good intention

of correcting/moralizing the ways of children. One of the ways through which hidden curriculum operates in a classroom by creating negative classroom culture is through 'teacher talk'. Unintentionally or intentionally, teachers create an atmosphere in a classroom by fostering hidden curriculum through such talk that is detrimental or demeaning for children. Following section of the paper discusses few features of this 'teacher talk' as emerging from the data.

### Aspiration level:

Comments centered around possible achievement levels of the children, were very prominent across all the reflective journals. There was no respect shown towards the occupation of the family members of the children and many times, achievement level was seen as ascriptive in nature. The onus to achieve to learn and do well on the academic front is completely put on the shoulders of child and their family. Remarks were also targeted at the personal choice exercised by their parents of the number of children they wish to bear. Dalal (2015) quoting National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005 argues that learner identity is very important for promoting social justice and improved opportunities for the children but class identities and social milieu of a child often becomes a source of humiliation at the hands of official adults of the school (including teachers). In her research study, it was observed that humiliating remarks centred on the occupation of children's family (calling the children as *andewala*, *kelewala*, *lashanwali* etc.), location (*juggiwala*, *mandolawala*), father's first name (*Pappu*, *Chaman*), physical attributes (*mota*, *kala*, *lamba*, *ganda*, *bhadda*). NCF 2005 stresses to bring a home life of children inside the formal space of classroom but however, disapproving snide and nasty comments on children's background makes school an arena for legitimatizing class inequalities and provide ammunition for the teacher to pass hurtful remarks on the economic and cultural status of children. Some of the comments were:



“Students, you will not be able to do anything in your life. You will be doing the same job as your parents are doing like working in factories, vegetable vendors, domestic maid etc.

- 6th Class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 5 dated 18th January, 2017)..

तुम अपना नाम लिखना ही सिख लो, पढ़ लिख के क्या करना है...

- 5th Class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 3 dated 18th October, 2016)..

दसवी पास कर के, ब्यूटी पार्लर का कोर्स कर लेना या ब्यूटी पार्लर खोल लेना।-

7th Class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 6 dated 24th January, 2017)

तुम इससे ज्यादा कर नहीं सकते, तुम्हारा दिम्माग मोटा है...

- 5th Class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher.2 dated 11th November, 2016).

तुम्हारे पेरेंट्स ने जन्म ही क्यों दिया जब कॉपी ही नहीं दे सकते...?

- 6th Class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 10 dated 20th January, 2017).

### Physical appearance:

The physical body of a child seems to have a neutral identity but it is always associated with certain social categories (Dalal, 2015). The hidden curriculum of a school centred on teacher's remarks often created a parallel between dirty bodies of children and filthy spaces from where they came. The ethos of a school comprising different kinds of factors play a key role in determining a quality of children's educational experience (Kumar & Sarangpani, 2004). Teacher is a significant factor

in determining, achieving and retaining quality of education. Even, National Policy on Education (1968) reckons that by saying “Of all the factors which determine quality of education and its contribution to national development, the teacher is undoubtedly the most important (p. 2)”.

Physical appearance including uniforms, hair styles etc. is a non-pedagogical issue to be engaged with as it seems to come under the realm of ‘maintaining discipline’. For instance, girls should part hair and make two plaits and put a ribbon of a specified colour on them, boys are not allowed to have long hair or spikes etc. The logical explanation given for the same is to maintain uniformity, to have personal hygiene, to remove distraction (difficulty in maintaining hair otherwise) etc. There is a certain expectation from the children to dress up in

The context of the conversation: Teacher pointing out to the student's head and stated:

इसका सारा सर वाइट हुआ पड़ा है, सोचो कितनी जुये होगी इसके सर मे, सर साफ नहीं करते हो तुम लोग, कितनी बार बोला है मेडिकर से सर धोया करो, खुद के सर मे जुये है टीचर्स के सर मे भी कर दोगी उनके पास खड़े हो के....

- 4th class teacher, Government school (taken from Reflective journal of Student teacher 1 dated 29th September, 2016).

इस तरह की चोटी मत बना के आया करो, ये तुम्हारा गाँव नहीं है।

- 4th class teacher, Government school (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 8 dated 13th October, 2016).

यूनिफार्म के पैसे देते है हम, फिर भी खरीद के पहनते क्यों नहीं हो....

- 6th class teacher, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 10 dated 17th January, 2017)

a particular way that is more appropriate for the



school and is not coherent with the way children dress up at home or in their community. School creates a divide between home life and school life, further alienating the children from school.

### Incentives given by the State

Incentives given by the State are not perceived as a right or entitlement to the child. Instead, they are seen as pity models given to uplift the children of disadvantaged section of the society. Many teachers rather than viewing it as a welcome initiative to increase enrollment and retention of students in schools, use it to demoralize and demean them for availing such schemes.

The context of the conversation: An English classroom was in progress. Sports teacher came in the class and announced:

Those who are SC and ST come with me. We have to distribute the scholarship.

- 8th Class, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of Student teacher 7 dated 17th January, 2017).

(Teacher telling to B.El.Ed student while pointing to children) ये बच्चे यहाँ सिर्फ खाने पीने आते हैं, पढ़ना लिखना थोड़े ही होता है इन्हें...

- 3rd Class, Government School (taken from Reflective Journal of student teacher 4 dated 10th November, 2016)

### Participation:

The selection and promotion of children who are more articulate and help teachers in their personal work gives an impression of who an 'ideal' student can be and others should try to aspire for it. The whole selection process does not consider giving equal opportunity to every child based on their interests and inclinations and rather focuses on creating a convenient pool of select few students

who can be repeated and sent to inter and intra school competitions.

जो अच्छा काम करते हैं वृ द्वाइंग का या टीचर का, उन्हें स्कूल की असेंबली या कम्पटीशन के लिए चुना जाता है

- Reflection of a student teacher 4 emerged from focus group discussion.

जो क्लास में ज्यादा बोलता है उसको टीचर असेम्बली में बोलने का मौका देती है

- Reflection of a student teacher 8 emerged from focus group discussion.

### Concluding Remarks

To make schools more accessible, approachable and representative of children coming from diverse backgrounds, a teacher plays very crucial and critical role. However, from the above-mentioned discussion it is emerging a very powerful and influential set of the hidden curriculum where teachers' remarks are coming across to be demoralizing, insulting and exclusionary for children coming from the diverse backgrounds. It raises two pertinent questions: how it is compromising the quality of education as envisioned by RTE Act, 2009. Second, what possible impact can it have on children's attendance, retention and performance in a school. Authors have attempted to address the first question in this paper, leaving the second question to be explored through further research and exploration. Many recent research studies have established that teachers' remarks can affect children academic performance, emotional well being and their dropout rates (Akhtar, 2014). It then becomes the prerogative of teacher training programme to sensitize the teachers to move beyond technocratic rationality (Giroux, 1984). This means teachers are not only seen as transmitters of knowledge but as critical beings, who are able to interpret, question and deliberate their own perceptions, presumptions and stereotypes regarding the strengths, abilities

and achievements of their learners. Giroux (2004) further stresses on making teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' who can engage in pedagogy that is emancipatory in nature and can humanize themselves to overcome injustices and struggle for a qualitatively better world for all people.

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# Voices of Students with Autism in Higher Education

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## Abstract

*This research paper focuses on the experiences of students with autism in higher education. There is not much published work on the experiences of students with autism in higher education because diagnoses and awareness about autism is still limited and people tend to make similarities with autism, learning disabilities and mental retardation. This paper aims to explore in depth and from their own perspectives, the experiences of a small number of students with autism and give them the opportunity to share their life experiences. The research paper aims to try to develop a comprehensive account of the lives of university students with autism and the ways of coping adopted by them. The environment is found to be particularly challenging by students who decide to study away from home for the first time. The participants in the study had been diagnosed with autism with mild symptoms and had received special education at initial age.*

A sense of personal independence for students with autism is first experienced when they step into higher education. This becomes more difficult in a country like India where awareness about autism is limited and people tend to find similarities between autism, mental challenges and learning disabilities. In higher studies, because of lack of awareness, people misunderstand the characteristics of autism with other disabilities. This can create more difficulties. Students with autism are likely to face many challenges that include living in a new environment, the workload of curriculum, deadlines, making new friends and adjusting to social circles.

Studying for a higher degree is a decision taken independently by any person. The students who participated in this study had willingly chosen to attend university and were had a strong determination to accomplish their goal. They discussed their aims about higher education and

professional ambitions. In this paper, educational experiences of students with autism currently in university have been explored, in order to give voice to their experiences. The attempt is to explore the experiences of students with autism currently studying in universities of India. This will allow them the opportunity to express their thoughts and beliefs regarding any difficulties, if any, that they have experienced in education; what coping mechanisms have they employed and the kind of support that is available to them. Further, the interviews with these students will explore the effects that autism might have had on their self-esteem and social lives.

When autism has been diagnosed early in the lives of students, they are able to receive suitable special education at school. This helps them to easily adjust to the higher education system. However, the study employs a small sample of participants and thus, the inferences do not lend themselves to

generalizations.

This study explores six students with autism studying in India from University of Delhi, Punjab technical university and one participant is from Oakland University's Center for Autism. They shared their experiences as college students and share education experiences. They were asked to describe experiences about how they cope in the environment and faces challenges, the experience of being a college student with Autism. The data for this study was collected from Interviews by phone conversations, email, online video conferences and face-to-face meetings.

All the students who participated in this study were asked to describe their feeling about autism and what they expect from their social circle. Most of the participants reported that they did not experience any major difficulties. They only wanted to change the negative attitude of people about autism. In fact, most of them believed that although autism has caused quite a few problems in their lives, at the same time, it had given them a lot of positive things as well. Being autistic gave them the freedom to be themselves and not to try to hide their mistakes, for example in reading or writing, from others. The awareness that they have autism gave them the confidence and determination to work extra hard at the things that they wanted to accomplish. All the participants reported that they had faced ups and downs, that they have to try harder and work more than others who do not have autism, but in the end, most of them could find something encouraging coming out of all this effort and felt proud of themselves.

The participants reported that they would not like to change this aspect of having autism. "In a way, it's not good to have autism but it gives a reason... if you feel you can't manage something, whereas if you were perfect, what reason would you have for not being able to do something?"

One participant shared her experiences about

autism. She does not mind being autistic. Instead, it is people's assumptions about being autistic that bother her. "I don't think being autistic is half as bad, it has some wonderful advantages, I can think things nobody else can even imagine thinking. I can do things that other people can't imagine doing. But people take for granted what is supposed to be easy and normal and straightforward, but I can't do it, and that to me is the side effect." She would like to get rid some of the negative effects that autism has on her and if she could change something in her life it would not be her autism but to be diagnosed when "she is 5 years old when she enrolled in a integrated school where she attended classes with children with other disabilities and she learnt there how to help and adjust with other different people."

Most of the participants were quite open to discussing about their difficulties and did not hesitate to talk about them or to tell other people that they were autistic. None of the participants denied the fact that autism has affected their lives, not only in terms of education but at a personal level too. Disappointment and frustration were some of the feelings that the participants reported, especially when they were younger, because of other people's expectations from them and from the way they treated them.

Participants agreed that autism has affected their lives but they both come to the point where they realise that this disability has made them stronger and more determined as they wanted to prove that they could accomplish their targets and their aims. Determination is a common theme among people with autism. Although people let them down and sometimes consider them unintelligent, people with autism do not give up! They persevere and succeed even though the odds might be against them. Students with autism are determined to prove to people that they are not quitters and can achieve and accomplish their dreams.

Participants who shares their experiences believe that life has been affected positively and negatively

by being autistic and because the spectrum disorder is not recognized. “Negatively because they came out of school with average marks and grades. But positively because it’s made them a stronger person and just to get with things and find ways of dealing with it.”

From the experience of the interviewees it appeared that one of the problems that people with autism face before being assessed is that they do not know how to cope with their difficulties and they feel incompetent. Simple things can be a struggle for them. One of the participants, for whom it appeared that her life is significantly affected due to autism, had a difficult childhood. Her problems have continued well into adulthood. She said, “My life has been affected by my autism a lot. Everywhere possible. Relationships, friendships, trusting people. For certain situations, I had to have a therapist when I was small because I was causing so many problems at home but they thought it was me and then they decided it wasn’t me, that I was clever and all sort of stupid things. Not getting proper treatment because people missed these certain things that you do and then they decide that you fall into this category and to treat you as being in this category and that carries on all the way through your life. I left school, I had terrible nightmares with jobs, dropped out of college. I had one job after another. I find it very difficult in a work situation because I don’t understand the politics, basically all that sort of stuff and it gets very confusing and I tend to get very isolated. I’ve had accidents all the time. I avoid going to very public places where a lot of people are there because you can’t understand what is going on. You get confused. You make mistakes; they say you’re stupid, everybody laughs at you and they talk about you behind your back and think you’re weird and all sort of stuff. You avoid going to new places because you’re going to get lost, you don’t know where to go, you don’t know how to get there. You miss appointments because you muddle up your time.”

It is not easy for people with disabilities to acknowledge the problems that they experience. On the other hand, it is vital for people with autism to inform their colleagues and friends about autism in order to avoid misunderstandings and awkward situations. Unfortunately, not all people with autism are willing to disclose their disorder.

In this study, a majority of the participants were willing to disclose their autism. The participants of this study accepted autism as an explanation to their problems. Some of the mature students noticed a big difference since the days they were at school and they were impressed with the help and support that nowadays-younger students, once they are diagnosed, receive at school and university. They have moments when they feel frustrated and they know that they have to work twice as hard as their peers but on the other hand autism makes them creative and makes their brain work differently and visualize things in a way that people without autism cannot do. They see and accept autism for the positive things it offers them. They perceive it more as a gift rather than a disability. The majority of the participants were also willing to disclose their autism to friends and colleagues. They believe that by letting people know, others are able to understand and accept them more. They also actively try to raise awareness about autism.

Discussions with participant help to understand about how school education was helpful for students with autism in coping with the university processes. Self-awareness, proactivity, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies help lead student with autism to success. However schooling considered to be in fostering success attributes in children with autism. Child explores more about individual strengths, weaknesses, and special talents or interests. Schooling with required support help child to choose potential jobs and careers that best match his or her abilities



and relevant choices. Students with autism need support in a number of areas including: education, employment, social relationships, psychological health, independent living, family relationships, and recreational activities. All participants accepted that initial special education helps them to know how to access and utilize, support services in each of these areas. Particular attention directed at helping children with autism in school whether it was special or inclusive school they understand the benefits of using support systems and learn to use technological help.

University life is a start of a new life and a brighter future. Students stop being dependent on their families and they have to face everyday life on their own. Universities expect their students to be independent and work on their own in order to complete their assignments and pass their exams. For students with autism, achieving independence is not easy as they have to cope with their course demands and at the same time they have to find ways to manage the difficulties that they face due to autism.

Going to university for students with autism can be a struggle in the beginning or in some cases, throughout the duration of the course. The workload is much more compared to their schoolwork. Everybody expects them to submit everything on time and manage the given deadlines. Sometime they do not want even have extra time in exams because they do not want to be treated differently. Another problem a lot of the participants in this study faced during university is their inability to express their thoughts. One participant shared her experience-

“I have all the information, I’ve done all the research and then it’s how to put it on the paper?” The inability to express thoughts on paper is difficult. Sometime they write but writing does not match what they speak. Exams also seem to be another major problem for the majority of the students;

examinations are influenced by the students’ lack of ability to express their thoughts on paper and by their difficulties.

Note taking is another difficulty, which all the participants in this study face. It is a very complex skill for autistic people. It is affected by a significant number of factors including listening comprehension, processing information, and organising and recording notes in a legible and fluent fashion they have a great difficulty reading their notes because they cannot understand what they have written during the lecture. They find it difficult to concentrate in order to write something during their lectures and listen to the teacher at the same time. Because of the structure of the university courses, a lot of lectures may be given at a pace that is difficult for students with autism to follow. So students have to be quick and write down their notes if they want to keep up with the information given. Rapid reading and writing can tire the eyes and the brain. Autistic students often can do that for only a short period of time. As a consequence they end up with messy notes, or because of the speed at which they are writing, they are unable to read their own handwriting later and they end up very stressed and frustrated. A recorder that might seem a solution is not always easy to be used as the person who handles the recorder has to be very close to the teacher in order to have a clear recording of the lecture. Besides, sometimes the number of students in lecture theatres is quite big and the background noise affects the quality of recording and makes transcription difficult.

Another difficulty that students with autism face in the university is finding books in the library. Sometimes, finding their way around the campus is also difficult. At the university, participants shared their experiences having problems with orientation and finding their way around campus.

All the students who participated in this study pointed out that computers are the most useful

devices that help them to cope with their difficulties arising out of autism. Computers can help them with their spelling and correct most of the mistakes that they make while they are writing their essays and assignments. It has to be mentioned that sometimes word processors do not correct all the mistakes people make while they are writing, as they cannot spot words that are spelt correctly but are used in the wrong sense.

Almost all the participants, agreed that they now could cope with the problems caused by being autistic much better than they did in the past. There is more help available to them and more awareness about autism and that has made them more confident and more relaxed to ask for help from other people and not to try and hide their problems. All the students overall were content with the support that they were receiving from their universities but they felt, that lack of awareness about autism and its symptoms in the past prevented them from doing better in life. Now they are quite pleased with the support that they receive.

For Students with autism, trying to navigate our 'normal' world is very draining and often overwhelming. The amount of physical, mental and emotional energy it takes to navigate our complex social world for them is tremendous. It is no wonder why they frequently shows tantrums of exhaustion and frustration. As the years roll on mental stress sets in from the ongoing mental and emotional strain.

The participants of this study took advantage of opportunities given by universities to interact socially with peers, professors, and others by participating in social interactions such as group work, clubs and organizations, and class discussions. These opportunities gave the students a chance to explore more and make interactions and make adjustments as needed. Universities and higher education institutes can help students with autism creating new ways to become more

independent to foster growth they can help the students with autism to learn about transition to the college atmosphere while creating networks with faculty, staff, and peers to maintain throughout the students college experience meaningful. Colleges, institutes and universities can provide development opportunities, vocational guidance and organize placement and internship opportunities for these children. They need a support system to be independent and to contribute to the society.

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# Punishment and School: Understanding Action and Reaction

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## Abstract

*The present research paper attempts to understand the reactions of students in a classroom and their perceptions of discipline and punishment. The study has used non-participant classroom observations and interviews of children, in classroom settings. The study analyzes the interviews of thirteen students studying in class VIII. The school enrolls students from nearby slum. The research findings indicate the role of school vision and role of teacher as major factors that influence students' responses towards punishment. Also, students' voices revealed that the teachers are seen as dedicated and caring, and the use of punishment is thus viewed as beneficial to the students themselves.*

## Introduction

“Chhari lage cham-cham vidhya aaye gham-gham...” a popular Marathi song indicating that with caning, knowledge comes spontaneously. Integration of punishment in the form of caning, slapping, beating is often accepted as an unquestionable reality. A study ‘Child Abuse in India – 2007’, by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, found that “69% of children reported having been physically abused. Of these 54.68% were boys.” and “Every two out of three school children reported facing corporal punishment” (NCPCR, 2008, p.4). The significant question here is: Why is there a need for punishment? In order to discipline the student, the teacher or the school enforces punishment. Discipline in itself has many dimensions. Foucault (1979), Bernstein (1990); Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) have put forth varied dimensions of Discipline in relation to society and power structures. Considering the notion of discipline in the context of school, it must be understood that it does not depend on the student and teacher along, but also upon the culture, society and the philosophy that the school follows. A school runs

on a prescribed curriculum but also has a unique ‘social curriculum’. “A school’s social curriculum is chosen and administered based on a set of assumptions about what discipline is supposed to accomplish and how it can be accomplished.” (Irby & Clouge, 2015, p.153). In India, common approaches which are followed by the school for disciplining their students is based on the Skinnerian approach of rewards and punishment. Desired behaviour is rewarded and punishment is given for the undesired one.

Contemporary literature in education focuses on the notion of ‘corporal punishment’. Corporal punishment refers to “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child pain, but not injury, for purposes of correction or control of the child’s behaviour” (Straus & Donnelly, 1993, p. 420). A variety of negative health and behavioural outcomes suggests that acts involving physical punishment are stressful for children. Turner & Finkelhor (1996) stated in their research that “many researchers have focused on aggression in children as an effect of physical punishment, but there are instances where several negative effects

behavioural and health related issues are also reported”

Many researches that have studied the impact of punishment and depression in children (Holmes & Robins, 1988; Maurer, 1974; Straus, 1994; Bryan & Freed, 1982). It was found that those college students who were physically punished during childhood developed a number of long-term effects which included making fewer friends, depression, anxiety and negative social interactions (Bryan & Freed, 1982). “Corporal punishment leads to adverse physical, psychological and educational outcomes – including increased aggressive and destructive behaviour, increased disruptive behaviour in the classroom, vandalism, poor school achievement, poor attention span, increased drop-out rate, school avoidance and school phobia, low self-esteem, anxiety, somatic complaints, depression, suicide and retaliation against teachers – that emotionally scar the children for life.” (NCPCR, 2008, p.6).

In the Indian context, Cheruvalath & Tripathi (2015) examined the issue of corporal punishment in India in relation to the perceptions of the teachers. They emphasized that use of corporal punishment is not a good method of attaining the discipline and teachers should understand the student’s mental state while evaluating situations.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child defines corporal punishment as follows: The Committee defines “corporal” or “physical” punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used with the intent to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involve hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, with the hand or with an implement – a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s

mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices). In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading.

“Currently, there is no statutory definition of corporal punishment of children in Indian law. Definition of corporal punishment can at best only be indicative. In keeping with the provisions of the RTE Act, 2009, corporal punishment could be classified as physical punishment, mental harassment and discrimination.” (NCPCR, 2008, p.7)

According to National Commission for Protection of Child Right (NCPCR) had mentioned other difficult situations in schools “some behaviours of children are perceived by schools and teachers as problematic and the prevalent practice is to respond to them with punishment of varying degrees. Some such situations that arise in schools that invite punishment are: i. Not keeping to time and cleanliness regulations – e.g., late to school, not coming in uniform etc.; ii. Academic related issues – e.g., incomplete home assignment, below expected academic performance, not taking a book to school, etc.; iii. Not meeting classroom expectations of school authorities – e.g., inattentive, talking in class, making noise in class, etc.; iv. Troublesome behaviour – e.g., disturbing other children in class, lying, stealing etc.; v. Offensive behaviour, causing hurt or injury to others – e.g., bullying, aggression towards peers, stealing (violating rights of others), vandalising, etc.” (p.13). The typical punishments given to students who have misbehaved or broken some of the rules, are placing the student in the back of the classroom or asking him or her to sit down on the ground.. But for serious offences which include fighting, defiance, bunking class, the punishment involves removal from the class or suspension or calling the parents to meet the teachers. . The rationale behind disciplining students itself is often covert. “There are layers of beliefs and practices that cloak corporal punishment under the guise of love, care and protection, when it is actually

an abuse of authority that harms the child. This follows from the belief that those in whose care children are entrusted in school or other institutions are ‘in loco parentis’ and will therefore always act in the interests of the child. This notion needs to be reviewed in the light of the widespread violence that exists in all institutions occupied by children.” (NCPCR, 2008, p. 5). It is in this context that this paper has attempted to study the perceptions of students facing punishment.

### Research Methodology

The research objectives which guided this research were:

- To study the techniques used by teachers in disciplining students in a classroom.
- To examine the punishments used by teachers.
- To study the opinions of students who face punishment.

To meet the above mentioned research objectives, non-participant classroom observations were conducted in class VIII of a private school. The school consists of boys and girls section. The classroom observation revealed that the incidences of punishment were negligible in girls section as compared to the boys section. Therefore the interviews of 13 boys who had faced punishment in the classroom, were conducted. This school is near a slum area. The slum also existed in the present situation from more than six decades. School enrolment shows that more than 95% of the students are from the slum area.

### Major Research Findings

Common disciplinary actions used by teachers in the classroom were observed as standing at the back of the classroom, sitting on the floor and completing the homework, scolding the students to maintain silence.

When the researcher observed the classroom, the most striking feature was that there was no discrimination in giving punishment in either boys’ or girls’ section. But the girl students were mostly seen to complete their homework on time (they completed Home Work in their free time such as library, lunch time etc.) and were engaged in studies more than boys.

### Special Mention of the Incident in relation to the Act of Stealing (Girls Section)

Once on a Thursday, when Special Morning Bhajan was over, a student of class VIII lost her shoes. She was worried about those shoes as they were new. She found in place of her own shoes a very tattered pair which was worn out. She was crying in front of the teacher. The teacher helped her to find her shoes. The girl who stole the shoes was a class VII student. When the teacher saw the condition of the shoes and inquired about them, the girl admitted her mistake. The girl also told that her shoes were actually stolen and she didn’t knew what to do so she stole the new shoes. The teacher didn’t shout or embarrass the Class VII girl nor asked her why she had stolen. She was deeply hurt to see the conditions of the shoes. Teacher searched for shoes again but was unable to get back the shoes to class VII student. The teacher promised to buy a pair of shoes for class VII student. The teacher asked the class VII and class VIII students not to talk about this issue further in the school and while outside the classroom. When the researcher inquired about the whole situation that teacher told was “*aap dekh hi rahi thi ki shoe ki halat kitni kharab hai... or class VII student..wo bahut garib hai...ladki hone ke karan ho sakta hai usko is saal shoes hi na mile...humare bacche hain...galti ho gayi...par uski condition bhi to theek nahi hai...hame bacchon ko darana nahi hai...samjahana hai ki aage chalke wo sahi rasta chune...bas yehi koshish hai...Garibi bahut pareshan karti hai* (You yourself can see that the condition of the shoes was very bad.and that VII class student is very poor...being a girl it is possible that her parents may not buy her new shoes...they



are our children... mistake has been done...but the condition was also not good... we are not here to scare the children...we have to explain to them to choose the right path...this is what we can try... poverty is really troublesome)". Next day onwards researcher purposefully observed the VII class student. The girl didn't skip classes. The students didn't talk about what had happened the previous day. The observations were undertaken for a period of one week to inquire about the reaction of the school student towards that girl.

### Boys Section

Once a teacher in the Hindi classroom told the students that if all of them completed their homework, then the teacher will tell stories in the next class. This was a very effective method as all the students completed their homework at the prescribed time. When the teacher had completed checking their work, she told moral stories in the classroom till the period finished.

Once students returned from the games period, and were engaged in talking to each other. When the teacher entered the classroom, they continued talking. The teacher was annoyed by the excessive noise in the classroom, so she made all the students to stand for the whole period. She continued teaching and did not sit herself during the entire time.

During classroom observations, the teacher never slapped or pinched on the cheek of the students. Most of the time teacher scolded the students for their misbehaviour in the class.

### Episode of Scolding the students

Once a student insulted a senior teacher (class teacher) in the class in front of another teacher (subject teacher). The class teacher came to know about this incidence. Next day in the class, the senior teacher (class teacher), explained the students " *agar aapko koi teacher pasand nahi hai*

*to bhi aapko kisi bhi teacher ke bare mein bura ya kharab nahi bolna chahiye...aap sab ek aache school mein padtein hain....aap logon ko badonki izzat karni chahiye...bhale hi aap un ki baton se sehmata nahi hain...aap koshis karenge to sab kar saktein hain...*(if you don't like any teacher, then also you should not talk ill about them...you study in a good school...you all should respect the elders.. even though you don't agree with them..if you try anything is possible).The teacher didn't point that student and didn't even mention his name, so that he does not feel terrified or insecure in class. The teacher explained to the students when they broke any rule of the school.

### Episode of Rule breaking and Type of Punishment

Once two children went outside the school premises during lunch break and didn't return for a long time. The subject teacher came to know. So in that class she didn't teach them the regular lesson, but explained to the students that it's the responsibility of the school to take care of them in the school. If they do such type of the 'rule breaking act' and something happens to the students 'outside the school' then who should be blamed and held responsible. The teacher explained to the students in a loving and caring manner that the students also agreed with her. It was observed that mostly when the teacher scolds the students for their naughtiness, not a single student appears unhappy or terrified. Instead, the students tend to smile. And when the class gets over, not a single student criticizes the teacher.

**Students' Perception about Scolding and Beating**  
All the students believe that the teacher always scolds with love in their heart. They believe as they come from disadvantaged background where their parents do not 'take a heed' about their behaviour, teachers always want their 'good'. Some students are of the view that the teacher 'loves' us, so those who love, have a right to scold also. A student says " *jab hame danat ya mar padti hai to hame*

*apanapan mahasoos hota hai..esa lagta hai koi aapna hame daant raha hai..or bade hamare bhale ke liye sochate hain...*"(whenever I am scolded or beaten then I feel close to teacher...it's like some close person is scolding me..and elders always think of our good only).

### Overall Analysis

The study revealed that belonging to slums and low socioeconomic status, the students never felt disheartened and had a positive attitude, even in relation to punishment and scolding. This is not in accordance with many psychological researches of the past. "Psychological research has indicated that youths are likely to disengage from school and academic pursuits if they perceive negative information about themselves or their racial group within the school environment" (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011, p.636). The students who received punishment or scolding continued to attend the school regularly. They didn't have any ill feeling for the teachers and continued their studies. The school adopts the philosophy of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who believed in teaching every student with love, care and respect. According to Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Divine Discourse, March 8, 1981):

*"The educational system must be based on the four principles of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. But, this has not happened. Therefore, we find it burdened with problems. It is full of conflict and confusion. Humility, detachment, discrimination, eagerness to serve others, reverence, renunciation - such virtues are absent among the educated. No one is prepared to give up; everyone is anxious to grab. A garland can be made only when we have flowers, thread and needle. A system of education needs intelligence (flowers), devotion (thread) and the spirit of renunciation and service (needle) to become beneficial. Raising the standard of living must also mean raising ethical, moral and spiritual standards. Then only can education lead to progress in human values and harmony in social life."*

The teachers abide to the philosophy of the school and act accordingly. They understand the cultural differences among the students and are empathetic to the children. While taking care of these children, teachers also understand the psyche of the children. In the involving the stealing of shoes of another student, the teacher instructed the other students not to talk on this issue. This was a great step as it will not compel the student (VII class student) to be embarrassed and take any drastic step

### Conclusions

The punishment for the betterment of the student is needed but how can these disciplinary actions be communicated/ transacted depends on the school and teachers. The present study throws light on the different modes of transacting punishment to the students. The school and the teacher recognize the backgrounds of students and the stress accompanying adolescent years. It shows a totally different approach to deal with the problems arising in classroom situations.

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# Mental Health Work in Indian schools

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## Abstract

*The paper looks critically at the work in the area of mental health in the Indian school systems. It attempts to link the problems in this area to the problematic understanding of the need and scope of mental health work in educational settings and mental health policies in the country. The problematic understanding of mental health at the level of policy has given rise to a conservative, reductionist and stigmatized approach to mental health work in Indian schools. It throws light on the various structural and psycho-social challenges faced by the mental health professionals in their work in schools and the spaces that they negotiate to advocate and practice mental health work in schools. Finally, it attempts to show a future direction for progressive change from policy to practice in the current state and fate of mental health in Indian schools for its importance in nation building.*

The crisis of mental health is one of the major challenges that our society has to deal with in contemporary times. According to mental health survey conducted by NIMHANS in 2015-16, 10.6 % of adult Indian population is suffering from mental health disorders. 150 million adult Indian population is in need of active interventions. If we look at the mental health statistics of our children, 9.8 million children between the ages of 13 to 17 years need active mental health intervention. The study further reports that 7.3% of the children between the ages of 13 to 17 years are suffering from mental health disorders. Children spend a considerable amount of their developing years in schools. It is in this context that it becomes important to critically look at the work in the area of mental health Indian schools.

Psychological work in schools has not received serious attention in academic and research scholarship, perhaps because it is comparatively a recent phenomenon. This lacuna of active research based practice of mental health in schools has resulted into incomplete conceptualization of work

in the area of mental health at policy levels and policy informed practices at schools.

The understanding of development, health and well being is not complete until we take into consideration emotional and mental well being. Various policies on education have advocated and reinforced the importance of holistic development of children for nation building but have missed out on the importance of emotional wellbeing of 'ordinary' children –children who do not fall under the category of disadvantaged children. At the same time we are aware of the research findings that show that children with low emotional quotient do not do well academically in the longer run. (Bhadouria,2012). Surprisingly, this knowledge has not been utilized well in drafting policies and programmes for school children.

CBSE in 2002 had recommended all senior secondary schools to appoint one full time counselor (Circular No. 8 dated 10th July, 2002). A report published on 23rd January 2014 in 'The Hindu' reported that only 3 percent of around 3200 private

schools in Delhi NCR have counselors to help children to cope with psychological distress. This crisis in numbers of schools seeking the services of professionally qualified psychologists depicts to a large extent the current state of psychological counseling services in Indian schools.

CBSE's recommendation, mentioned above, for every school to appoint one psychological counselor culminates from this incomplete understanding of the need of mental health work in schools and hence is problematic. It recommends one counselor to few or many thousands of students and therefore severely limits the capacity of the school counselor to attend to the psychological distress of children in schools.

To comprehend fully the implication of this problematic understanding of the need of mental health work in Indian schools let's look back at the mental health statistics of Indian childhood mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The most commonly prevalent mental health problems in children and adolescents are depression, Agrophobia, Intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Phobic anxiety disorder, psychotic disorder, substance abuse and suicidal ideation (Mental health survey of India 2015-16).

In the light of this mental health statistics of Indian children, it becomes important to envisage ways of addressing the mental health concerns of every child and reconceptualise childhood in schools. The first step towards this goal would be to accept that there is a mental health crisis in Indian childhood and schools cannot remain untouched and alienated from this reality. This would also mean a more comprehensive understanding of mental health and the need for mental health intervention in schools at the policy level which would further inform the practices at the school level. This would lead to broadening of the scope of mental health work in schools with aims of providing intervention to psycho-social needs of the entire school community without any discrimination.

At present the limited understanding of the mental health work at the policy level has reduced the scope of school counselor's or mental health worker's work to identification and providing support to children with special needs and underachievers for their more effective participation and performance in the mainstream education system. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the school counselor or the mental health worker under such an approach links it further to the academic scores of these students in public and school examinations. This represents another form of crisis in the area of mental health work in the Indian school systems.

The way counseling is advocated and briefed at policy level stigmatizes the needs of a child to seek psychological intervention to cope better with psycho-social problems of his or her everyday life which are of emphatic significance to the child and might be hindering his or her emotional well being. It therefore silently supports the labeled perspective on psychological intervention and results in marginalization of children who seeks psychological intervention and negatively affects their acceptance, participation and performance in public and social life in the school and outside. Consequently children avoid discussing their problems with the school counselor for this very fear of being labeled as abnormal by their peers and teachers. With this belief of the Indian school system, an academically bright student should ideally not seek any kind of psychological intervention to deal with life issues, as it is considered to be a kind of remedial service provided to children who are weak, problematic and with special needs.

Children usually try to seek counseling and guidance in secretive ways in schools. This secrecy breeds another problem of moral dilemma and victimhood. If a school counselor or mental health worker provides intervention to a child in secretive ways then it is problematic from the perspective of his or her evaluation as the time that gets invested in this child cannot be accounted in the detailed report of his or her work. Schools set a specific



timetable for the school counselor in which time is not budgeted for such secret projects. If the school counselor reveals the identity of the child who is seeking help in secret ways to provide a complete account of his or her work then the psychological problems of this child would be further exacerbated as the child would then fall victim to bullying and emotional abuse in the school by his or her peers and others.

This fact –that time is not budgeted in the school time table for conducting mental health intervention programmes for children and other members of school community –is a consequence of the limited and hence problematic understanding of mental health and mental health work in our policies of education. If time is not budgeted in children's time table at school for psychological work then it poses severe structural constraints on the capacity and efficiency of the school counselor or the mental health worker to provide psychological intervention to children and others. Children try to utilize the time budgeted for lunch, sports and other co-curricular activities to seek psychological counseling and guidance.

Psychological work with children in the pre-primary classes is even more neglected as most of the pre-schools do not have a full time psychologist or mental health worker. As the presence of a psychological counselor or a mental health worker is seen as quotient of abnormality in the Indian society. The contemporary progressive early childhood education has unfortunately not been able to understand the crisis and importance of mental health in early years of life. According to a study done in Germany by Klitzing, Dohnert, Kroll and Grube in 2015, about 17% of all children suffer from a mental disorder in early childhood. These mental health problems range from depression in early childhood, problems in emotional regulation, behavioural disorders to reactive attachment disorder.

At the same time CBSE has not given any guidelines

on mental health intervention programmes for pre-schools. In comparison, in the latest amendment of 21st century Cures Bill passed in United States, provision has been made for grants to develop, maintain or enhance infant and early childhood mental health and promotion, intervention and treatment programmes which include early childhood care and education programmes. In India it seems to be the most neglected age-group for providing mental health care and intervention for psychological well-being.

This lacuna does not only exist in educational policies but also in mental health policies in our country. National mental health policy that came up in 2014 does not emphasize school as an important site of mental health work and hence does not provide any guidelines for providing psychological intervention to children in schools. The mental health care bill passed by Rajya Sabha in August 2016 does not even mention about the mental health care of non-institutionalized people. It does not claim the right to mental health care of people trying to live ordinary lives while dealing with enormous psycho-social challenges for which they need intervention. As a result of this massive ignorance, the right to mental health care for the holistic development of every Indian child has not been able to establish itself as a fundamental right of children unlike the right to education.

While education system appears to be clouded with ignorance on mental health issues, there is a ray of hope that can be seen through the struggles of mental health practitioners in education. School counselors struggle to create space for psychological counseling and guidance work to bring transformation in children's life and to initiate the process of change. It is often done in covert ways like using substitution periods to conduct group sessions to talk about anxiety, stress, depression, emotional regulation, bullying, adolescent relationships, sex, addiction and other relevant issues that are important in the everyday lives of school going children. School counselors

or mental health professionals in their attempts to provide psychological intervention to children try to use elements of art therapy, play therapy and psychodrama through various co-curricular activities that are encouraged in schools. These activities become important mediators as the element of therapy is hidden in these forms of art and children do not get labeled. To facilitate this the counselor or the mental health professional needs to create strong alliance with professionals who are building this arm of the non-scholastic segment in schools by generating awareness in them about mental health issues and how they can contribute tremendously in alleviating psychological distress in children in the school. Counselors or mental health professionals put articles to spread awareness on mental health issues on school notice boards and try to reach out to the families of distressed children that need intervention as often home is an important site of emotional violence and abuse in children's life.

It is commonly observed that until psychological distress in children reach their extreme state and become alarming and threatening to the status and overall overtly visible health of the school, these problems remain un-noticed and unattended by the school administration. When the issues become alarming, the school system shrugs off its responsibility of ensuring the mental health and psycho-social well being of its students and puts the entire responsibility of the child's illness and cure on the family of the child. It is often easy as the education system and educational policies have not underlined it as an equal responsibility of the formal school systems extending it to other community structures.

There is an emergent need to inquire into the mental health crisis in Indian schools and respond to it by deeply contemplating on the challenges of mental wellbeing in the school's ecosystem which is in a symbiotic relationship with the mental well being of the larger population of India outside the school boundaries. A revolutionary vision is required to

make schools share with the larger community the responsibility of mental wellbeing of its people. Committees and regulatory bodies of experts from the filed should be constructed to supervise and mentor this function of the schools.

A major shift is required both at the level of policy and practice in the Indian education system in their perspectives on health and wellbeing which will not be complete without ensuring mental wellbeing of children and adults constituting the school community. Ensuring mental well being of teachers and other support staff is also very important as they co-construct the school's ecosystem with children. Often we have witnessed episodes of abuse on children by other children and by their adult caretakers in the school. To quote some incidences from recent past on this issue- on 4th November 2016, 7 teachers were arrested in Buldhana in Maharashtra for raping minor girls of Ninadhi Ashram school and on 10th May 2016 in the boys hostel of DPS Noida, two class 11th boys were ragged and beaten up with iron rods by class 12th boys resulting in grave injuries and hospitalization of boys.

It is high time that mental health programmes like psychotherapy, psychiatry, psychological counseling and guidance should be made an integral part of the Indian school life without the associated stigmatization. It should be treated like any other academic subject that prepares children to become productive citizens. Pedagogies of emotion and emotional wellbeing are required to be advocated and practiced inside the Indian classroom. Emotional literacy should be given same status in Indian schooling which literacy of 3Rs has been given. Schools should budget time for every child in the school to meet school counselors or mental health professionals on a routine basis to discuss the issues that bother them. Regular meetings of these mental health professionals should be arranged with the parents and teachers of children. Schools should budget time for all other members of the school community to meet the school's mental

health professionals on a routine basis to discuss their personal and professional botherations. Routine workshops should be organized in schools to sensitize people on mental health issues and equip them with the necessary knowledge and strategies to take care of their emotional wellbeing. This would eventually increase the productivity of school teachers, staff and children and hence would be a service in their benefit only.

Schools should extend this service to the larger community by organizing mental health camps where students, teachers and other school staff participate in spreading awareness on mental health issues and how and where to seek interventions. It is one of the most important national duty in contemporary India, NIMHANS survey on mental health 2015-16 reports that one out of every 20 people in India are suffering from depression, people in their productive years of life i.e. from 30 to 49 years are the most affected indicating that mental disorders contribute to greater morbidity in the productive population.

Obviously a single counselor per school as prescribed by CBSE would not be able to fulfill this dream. A large team of many qualified mental health professionals would be needed to respond to the mental health crisis of Indian schools and develop it as an institution of promoting and advocating mental wellbeing in our society. This would also mean preparing a huge army of professionally qualified mental health professionals in the country which is in continued paucity at present.

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सहायक प्रवक्ता, शिक्षा विभाग, महात्मा गान्धी अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय हिन्दी विश्वविद्यालय, वर्धा

## Abstract

शिक्षा और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के अध्येता के रूप में इस नीति का विश्लेषण मानसिक स्वास्थ्य से संबंधित कई महत्वपूर्ण पक्षों को उजागर करती है। इस लेख रा.स्वा.नी.-2017 का निर्वचन करते हुए उन महत्वपूर्ण संबंधों को पहचाना गया है जो बच्चों और किशोरों के शारीरिक और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा के संदर्भ में महत्वपूर्ण हैं। यह नीति स्वास्थ्य की संकल्पना को वृहद् अर्थ में प्रस्तुत करती है। यह विस्तार रेखांकित करता है कि नीतिगत स्तर पर मानसिक स्वास्थ्य राज्य की प्राथमिकता के क्षेत्र में हैं और राज्य अपने नागरिकों, विशेष रूप से बच्चों, किशोरों और युवाओं को विकास का खुशहाल परिवेश प्रदान करना चाहता है।

लोकनीतियां महत्वपूर्ण नीतिगत दस्तावेज होती हैं। इनके माध्यम से एक ओर राज्य के लक्ष्य, कार्ययोजना और परिप्रेक्ष्य के संबंध में जानकारी मिलती है तो दूसरी ओर लोकवस्तुओं जैसे—शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य आदि के संबंध में प्राथमिकता के क्षेत्रों, उपागमों और वृहतर समाज पर प्रभाव आदि के संदेशों को भी समाहित किए रहती है। हाल में ही राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य नीति-2017 (रा.स्वा.नी.-2017) की उद्घोषणा हुई है। यह स्वतंत्र भारत की तीसरी स्वास्थ्य नीति है। इसके पूर्व वर्ष 1983 और 2002 में दो अन्य स्वास्थ्य नीतियां आ चुकी हैं। रा.स्वा.नी.-2017 की तैयारी करते हुए पूर्व की नीतियों की समुचित समीक्षा और विश्लेषण किया गया। इस विश्लेषण में जनसंख्या स्थिरीकरण, बीमारियों के उपचार, रोकथाम और देखभाल के आंकड़ों का गहन विश्लेषण किया गया है। सेवाक्षेत्र के रूप में स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रदाताओं की भूमिका में निजी क्षेत्र की भूमिका, राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण स्वास्थ्य मिशन की उपलब्धियों और सीमाओं की पहचान की गयी है। इस समीक्षा और विश्लेषण के आलोक में रा.स्वा.नी.-2017 का वर्तमान मसौदा

तैयार किया गया है। पूर्व की नीतियों की भांति इसमें दूरगामी लक्ष्य तय किए गए हैं जैसे—2025 तक सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के 2.5 प्रतिशत हिस्से को स्वास्थ्य पर खर्च करना, जीवन प्रत्याशा को बढ़ाकर कम से कम 67.5 की आयु तक करना, 2019 तक शिशु मृत्यु दर कम करके 16 प्रति हजार करना आदि।

शिक्षा और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के अध्येता के रूप में इस नीति का विश्लेषण मानसिक स्वास्थ्य से संबंधित कई महत्वपूर्ण पक्षों को उजागर करती है। इस लेख रा.स्वा.नी.-2017 का निर्वचन करते हुए उन महत्वपूर्ण संबंधों को पहचाना गया है जो बच्चों और किशोरों के शारीरिक और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा के संदर्भ में महत्वपूर्ण हैं। प्रथमतः यह नीति स्वास्थ्य की संकल्पना को वृहद् अर्थ में प्रस्तुत करती है। इस नीति में 'बीमारी के इलाज', 'बीमारी से बचाव' के साथ मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और स्वस्थ जीवन के प्रोत्साहन को स्वास्थ्य की परिभाषा के अंतर्गत सम्मिलित किया गया है। स्वास्थ्य की परिभाषा का

यह विस्तार रेखांकित करता है कि नीतिगत स्तर पर मानसिक स्वास्थ्य राज्य की प्राथमिकता के क्षेत्र में हैं और राज्य अपने नागरिकों, विशेष रूप से बच्चों, किशोरों और युवाओं को विकास का खुशहाल परिवेश प्रदान करना चाहता है। इसके साथ ही वे कर्मों और संस्थाएं भी स्वस्थ और खुशहाल जीवन के लक्ष्य के लिए भागीदार बन जाते हैं जो प्रत्यक्षतः रोग की पहचान और इलाज से नहीं जुड़े हैं पर ऐसे परिवेश के निर्माण और पोषण के लिए उत्तरदायी हैं। इसी कारण स्वस्थ जीवन शैली को प्रोत्साहित करने को भी स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं की श्रेणी में रखा गया है। यद्यपि रा.स्वा.नी.-2017 मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और स्वस्थ जीवन के लिए कोई परिभाषित मात्रात्मक लक्ष्य नहीं है लेकिन इस नीति में कार्यस्थल पर तनाव और दबाव, प्राकृतिक आपदाओं से निपटने में स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं की भूमिका, यात्रा के दौरान दुर्घटनाओं आदि के संदर्भ में स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं की उपलब्धता पर चर्चा की गयी है। स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में उक्त पक्ष को सम्मिलित करना राज्य के दायित्व क्षेत्र में विस्तार को दर्शाता है। राज्य अपने इस दायित्व को केवल स्वास्थ्य से संबंधित एजेंसियों के माध्यम से संचालित नहीं करना चाहता है। इस उद्देश्य की प्राप्ति के लिए महिला और बाल विकास, शिक्षा और पर्यावरण जैसे अन्य विभागों और एजेंसियों के साथ संयुक्त रूप से कार्य करना चाहता है। आवासीय परिवेश की अनुकूलता को भी स्वास्थ्य की परिभाषा के अंतर्गत रखा गया है। इसी ध्येय से स्वस्थ भारत अभियान, निर्भय नारी अभियान, यात्री सुरक्षा, मादक पदार्थों के सेवन का हतोत्साहित करने और वायु प्रदूषण पर नियंत्रण आदि सक्रिय गतिविधि के क्षेत्र के रूप में स्वीकार किया गया है।

इस नीति के निर्वचन से जान पड़ता है कि सरकार के लिए विशिष्ट लक्षित समूह महिलाएं, बच्चे और किशोर है। इसमें प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य संबंधी सुविधाओं

को मुहैया कराने के लिए प्रजनन और मातृत्व सेवाओं के साथ बच्चों और किशोरों के स्वास्थ्य को प्राथमिकता के अन्तर्गत रखा गया है। महिला स्वास्थ्य के संदर्भ में सर्वाधिक बल मातृत्व स्वास्थ्य को दिया गया है। बच्चों को बाल्यावस्था में पोषण और विकास की अनुकूल दशाएं उपलब्ध कराने और स्वस्थ जीवन शैली को अपनाने पर जोर है। इसी कारण विद्यालयी पाठ्यचर्या में स्वास्थ्य शिक्षा को अनिवार्य अंग के रूप में रखने का सुझाव भी उल्लिखित है। इसी तरह योग को स्वस्थ जीवन शैली का हिस्सा माना गया है इसके प्रोत्साहन पर पर्याप्त बल दिया गया है। किशोरावस्था में विशेष रूप से किशोरियों के लिए विकासात्मक चुनौतियों का संज्ञान, उनका मार्गदर्शन व परामर्श, बदलती जैविक आवश्यकताओं के साथ सामाजिक और सांवेगिक आवश्यकताओं के तालमेल के लिए यह नीति राष्ट्रीय मानसिक स्वास्थ्य नीति.2014 के सुझावों को अपनाती है। मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के लिए विशेषज्ञ कर्मियों की नियुक्ति समुदाय के साथ संबंध को विकसित करना और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को सुनिश्चित करने में उनका सक्रिय सहयोग लेना भी इस नीति का विशिष्ट पक्ष है जो रोग के उपचार की परिभाषा से परे स्वस्थ शारीरिक और मानसिक जीवन के प्रोत्साहन को अपनाने का प्रमाण है। इसी प्रकार जनसंख्या शिक्षा के माध्यम से जनसंख्या स्थिरीकरण की चर्चा में "सम्मान और सशक्तिकरण" जैसे शब्दों का प्रयोग कर परोक्ष रूप से महिला अधिकारों को सुनिश्चित करने का प्रयास किया गया है।

राणस्वाणी.2017 में जिन क्षेत्रों के साथ भागीदारी बल दिया गया है उनमें से विद्यालय सर्वप्रमुख है। विद्यालय की भूमिका को उभारते हुए राणस्वाणी. 2017 में विद्यालय को प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं के प्रदाता के रूप में देखा गया है। इस भूमिका में प्रत्येक सुझाव और नीति के क्रियान्वयन में विद्यालय



से अपेक्षा को स्पष्ट किया गया है। चाहे वह पोषक तत्वों की कमी को पूरा करना होए मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के लिए अच्छे वातावरण और उपयुक्त सहयोग को प्रदान करना होए स्वस्थ परिवेश के लिए जागरूकता का प्रसार हो इन सभी क्षेत्रों में नीति का क्रियान्वयन में विद्यालय की प्रत्यक्ष भूमिका रखी गयी है। बच्चों और किशोरों के संदर्भ में प्रौद्योगिकी के दुष्प्रभावों मादक पदार्थों के सेवनए कुपोषण विकासात्मक समस्याओं और विशिष्ट आवश्यकताओं को पहचानने का जिम्मा भी विद्यालय को सौंपा गया है। विद्यालयी परिवेश अच्छे मानसिक स्वास्थ्य का प्रेरक कैसे होघ इसके लिए स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा की एजेंसियों को सम्मिलित पहल की भी योजना प्रस्तावित है। स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा की पारस्परिकता और पूरकता को इस नीति में स्थान देकर मानव विकास के दो आधारभूत आगतों को संतुलित करने का प्रयास सराहनीय है।

यद्यपि बजट के वितरणए दक्षिण एशिया के अन्य देशों के सापेक्ष शिशु मृत्यु दर का ऊँचा स्तरए निजी क्षेत्रों की भागीदारी में अस्पष्टता और स्वास्थ्य को सार्वभौमिक अधिकार के रूप में मान्यता न प्रदान करना जैसे कुछ पक्ष हैं जिसके आधार पर इस नीति की आलोचना की जा सकती है। लेकिन स्वास्थ्य के अर्थ को केवल चिकित्सा तक सीमित न रखने, स्वास्थ्य वर्धक परिवेश के विकास में पर्यावरणए शिक्षा और महिला एवं बाल विकास के क्षेत्रों से सहयोग लेनेए नगरीय गरीबों और वंचितों की आवश्यकताओं को संज्ञान में लेनेए वैयक्तिक व कार्यस्थल आदि के परिस्थितियों के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर प्रभाव के आकलन और उपचार व स्वस्तिभाव ,वेलनेसद्ध के लिए समुदाय के सदस्यों द्वारा मनो.सामाजिक सहयोग प्रदान करने की पहल इस नीति के कुछ ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं जो हमें स्वस्थ समाज में रहने की सुखद परिस्थितियों के लिए आशान्वित करते हैं।

## Right Teaching and Teaching Rightly

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### Abstract

*Teaching as an activity, a process, is meant to facilitate learning. If all teaching would promote intended learning, the question, how appropriate or right the teaching is, would be irrelevant. But the fact is that questions like- What should we look for in a teacher? Which are the most significant abilities in a teacher? How can we prepare teachers to teach well? Are always alive and problematic. These are some questions that are not often consciously and justifiably answered. Appraisal of teaching necessitates the need for certain valid characteristics (Hirst, 1974, p. 78). What characterizes teaching needs an understanding of what constitutes teaching and what is its nature. These questions form the central theme that is explored in this paper. What all needs to be considered and in which order of priority by whom for teaching to be appropriate, adequate and effective? How much is upto teacher and how does it help to define it all for teachers become relevant matters of concern here*

In an endeavor to understand teaching, we may visualise five different groups of students named A to E for convenience, from similar age range, attending Yoga classes, scheduled for a week each at different places/venues. Members of group A watch a video recording of yogic exercises and try to follow them. In group B, the teacher shows a video and instructs in detail, with step wise positions and breathing patterns, supervises each member and corrects them, as and when needed. The teacher in group C demonstrates live along with detailed instructions, cautions the limit to which positions should be tried and also directs about breathing while changing positions. In this group a wide range of exercises are done with daily variations. The teacher helps the students to recall the earlier exercises, through interaction. Students in group D are taught like group C with minor differences. They are introduced to a wide range of exercises without having to do the new exercises. The teacher allows and encourages questions,

discussions, doubts and engages with students to help perform the exercise when requested. Students are organized in groups to undertake some exercises together. The teacher in group E demonstrates, instructs, corrects, talks of wide range and finer variations in exercises and guides on why and how of the sequence of exercises. Attention of students is guided while they exercise to the pace and matching breathing with exercises. The rationale behind finer nuances in exercises is also explained to them. In addition to responding to queries, comments and experiences of students, the teacher finds the time to discuss the meaning and origin of Yoga.

Students in all the groups are learning Yoga, yet the skill, ability, understanding and orientation to Yoga would settle/embd differently in each of the different groups. This difference can be attributed to the different ways of teaching. "Teaching is a purposive and deliberate activity undertaken to

bring about learning” (Hirst, 1974, p. 80). Since learning would differ in levels of enabling, in the degree to which it would integrate with students’ other understandings, experiences and activities and identify which is the most apt teaching among all five situations and what makes it so.

As we characterize teaching, identify its most distinctive and essential features, we can perhaps address all of relevant issues on appraising teaching and teachers. This will also indicate towards effective teaching and quality of education, develop sound basis on which to select teachers and help to identify processes that will lead to preparing quality teachers. At the macro level, this will help to provide directions and regulations for teachers, and inform policies and rules targeted to improve teaching-learning.

‘Teaching’, as a concept, can have many meanings and may be viewed as an enterprise, a practice, an occupation, a vocation, an activity, and as a task. We will focus on the activity of teaching and discuss others when needed. It is a polymorphous activity, that is, many kinds of activities like drawing, instructing, questioning, demonstrating, writing, etc. are involved in teaching (Hirst, 1974, p. 79). Does that mean that without any of the listed activities, it cannot be called teaching or are some activities more central to teaching? Or is there a common element in all of these that characterizes them as teaching?

Teaching is informed and justified by three ideas. These “core ideas are about learners, learning and teaching, and these are shaped and modified by context, policy and culture....The third domain locates teaching –and children themselves- in time, place and social world, and anchors it to the questions of human identity and social purpose without which teaching makes little sense.” (Alexander, 2008, p. 29). Thus, teaching is for purposeful learning, within a context.

It is simple to see that a teacher teaches a certain subject to a set of students in some educational institution within certain framework of directions, regulations and situations. Implicit in teaching is some understanding of the students, their level, stage, interests, needs, problems, limitations which can be grasped with psychological, sociological, historical, economic, political and cultural understandings. For this, teachers need to have sufficient theoretical knowledge of the subject and that includes understanding its nature, development, principles, structure, method etc. They also have the ideas on teaching and learning (hopefully, consciously) and be able to evolve some pedagogy suitable to particular subject/topic, group of students, and situations.

The aims of teaching would always be operating through each teacher and would be based on some understanding of the world, of human beings and their wellbeing. All these align in teachers’ decisions and actions. The better the understanding of each of the aspects discussed above and their interrelationship, the better a teacher can call on her abilities to strive for the desirable in students. Different teachers may place greater importance on some dimensions and activities. This was evident in the case of Yoga teachers described above. Which of these is most characteristic of teaching? Emphasizing on which aspect is most important or appropriate? Is there a definite idea or standard of appropriate teaching? Or is subjective preference by a teacher to any of the dimensions right? Or are all these aspects equally important?

To reflect on the above, let’s see how each teacher has placed emphasis on certain aspects in her Yoga classes and try to assess. In the first group, the teacher is replaced by a video recording. The responsibility of learning, here, is largely dependent on students’ abilities and motivation besides the contents and their presentation in the video. Can technological measures fulfill what is essential to education or teaching? We have to

find out (or decide) what is essential or central to teaching to judge its appropriateness.

With group B, the video is used as an aid to teaching. Teacher is organized, skillful, pays attention to individuals and helps them to master the skills for the exercises, along with the video. In group C, emphasis is on both content and skill. 'How much' and 'how' are considered important while teaching. The teacher in group D welcomes discussions, interactions and feedback. She encourages freedom to think and question which increasing interest in learning. In addition to the practices listed above, the teacher in the last group E, is distinctive in her emphasis on helping students understand what they are doing. Her teaching weaves perspective and theory into what is being practiced. She attempts to guide students' attention to finer practice and makes them aware of it.

Students in group E are more likely to grasp the most in many ways, more than skill, knowledge or performance. They understand and appreciate what they practice and also know why they are doing, what it can do to them or their lives. This is close to what may be called 'initiation' of students to learning. It is not limited to skill, knowledge or application but is inspirational to initiate students to pursue Yoga in a way that lends meaning and sense of wellbeing to them. 'Initiation' is described as a "requirement that those who are being educated should want to do or master the worthwhile things which are handed on to them... generate desire to do what they thing is worthwhile" (Peters, 1973, p. 103). Learning is about the capacity of 'choice and self-direction' in relation to one's own impulses and to the world around (Oakshot, 1967, p. 156). Here, it is important to observe that the appraisal of teaching is in terms of learning, but not all or any learning; it refers to worthwhile learning. So appropriate/right teaching is about educating, some worthwhile learning.

'Right teaching' seemingly implies one right way of

teaching. Can we assert that all teachings other than E will always be considered inappropriate instances of teaching? Let us consider some circumstances : When student strength is large and the teacher is absent on a day (and substitution not possible), using video recording to follow Yogic exercises seems better option than canceling the class and turning students of group A away with nothing to learn on that day. What if teacher B is present but temporarily not in a shape to demonstrate exercises to help students learn? Here, using video recording to demonstrate seems appropriate measure for teaching. Widening the range of exercises and finer modifications may be relevant for students of group C if they have already done some Yoga exercises earlier. Extension of knowledge and enrichment through sharing experiences, clarifying doubts makes sense for experienced students (group D) who may have thoughtfully practiced.

Through the imagined situations described above, it emerges that even if any teaching of non-E groups cannot make 'initiation' possible, each could be most appropriate option under different circumstances. The point that comes across is that judgment of appropriateness can not be based only on the idea of education, but would be incomplete and inadequate without considering the diverse contexts as well. The rightness of teaching (what, how, etc) is to be judged with both sensitivity to context (diverse reality; what is) and aim of education (ideal, value). Teaching that is alive to situations, learners and one's own potential- the scope and limitations in each, can appropriately explore the potential for learning then and there. It requires a concerned, understanding, discerning alert teacher to gauge all this without any compulsion of instructions. A lot of effectiveness in teaching-learning is anyway at disposal of teachers' sensitivity, concerns, priorities and sensibilities.

That, by and large, rules out the adequacy of rule-bound or externally fixed standard-based appraisal of teaching and learning which are inconsiderate to

diverse human contexts. What kind of criteria can, then, be justifiably framed?

When we view teaching as an observable practice/act (therefore open to monitoring and improvement), that is, pedagogy constituting of building blocks of ‘task, activity, interactions and assessments. However, as they stand they lack the wherewithal for coherence and meaning’ (Alexander (2008) p. 31).

The coherence and meaning come from ‘teaching rightly’ that has basis in right direction, which requires some sense of purpose, concern, vision of what worthwhile is possible, and tap the potential in every situation while considering all- situations, students, one’s own abilities (understanding the scope, limitations and complexities in all ). Such a teacher may act differently in different contexts. Acting as per rules, or even best practices is perhaps limiting and thus teachers don’t have to be so watchful, thoughtful and responsible.

Since teaching includes a whole range of activities in the vast and diverse contexts, what may be needed to find coherence and make teaching educative? Perhaps some reasoning, theories, tried and established measures (like best practices), or skills and techniques could help make teaching simple and effective. Let us see if such approach(es) would adequately meet the needs of apparently simple teaching situations discussed below.

To make students punctual to school, regular in home work, neat in handwriting and the way they dress what kind of efforts or whether to emphasise these matters has no straightforward, tried and tested/practiced correct way. One needs to understand the importance of such habits in becoming educated. Are these matters of discipline and/or enculturation and how necessary are they to education? How to address those habits that we place important for their overall development? These issues lead us to understand freedom and

authority along with other practical concerns to decide appropriately. One needs to think of implications of imposing, punishing, rewarding, letting be or encouraging and also know if changing their habits is possible through encouragement. Which is the best way to habituate the students and at which developmental stage? What are the constraints of time and energy placed on teachers? Each student is affected differently by the same measures undertaken by a teacher. All of these are significant considerations for any reasonable decision to be taken. This makes the process very challenging and requires many standards in finely different contexts while referring to conception of education. No ‘best practice’ or uniform rules may be effective for all students in all situations. The whole discourse on distinguishing teaching from training, conditioning and indoctrination is about understanding authority, responsibility and freedom in education, which is based on our assumptions about human nature and human development. Educationally sound measures are not simple and are not just matters of prevalent method (set ways) or workable technique.

Supposing student strength is very low on a particular day due to unavoidable reasons (say, bus strike or rain), whether to teach them or interact for their enrichment and interest or leave students to themselves and do other jobs or chat with other teachers on days when. There is another situation when fewer students choose to turn up and didn’t want any teaching on that day. What’s the most appropriate response of a teacher? Both situations need right perception beyond facts requiring right interpretations, discerning the intents of students and teacher herself and full implications of any stance. Deciding ones action on basis of mere observations or facts, rules or guidelines one may turnout to be inappropriate and irresponsible acts. This may amount to losing the educative potential of the situation, while remaining accountable to authorities. Any choice of action conveys some values, message and sets patterns for future also.



What would be educationally worthy, whether to be consciously consistent about such decisions and messages or do as pleases the teacher at that time? Imagine that students from a particular community have poor food habits and poor health which a sensitive teacher finds is affecting their learning. Whether the teacher should eat voluntarily with class sometimes to improve their food habits and help them be aware of food and appreciate healthy food choices or deliver a talk about it or call an expert to do that? She has to generate alternatives, evaluate which alternative can be more effective and feasible along with concern for learning and overall development of students, she might as well only pressurize students to ensure learning. The choice of method is also an evaluative exercise (of judgment for choice), with concern for students' development/change.

Another ordinary school situation that teachers deal with is about classroom organization, that is, about arranging seating of students. Whether to change seats or fix them for a session or a month and in which pattern to change, how about seats of students with special need? It has implications for justice in regard to equal opportunity for learning. Class rules and arrangements get addressed according to teacher's sense of justice and her will to exercise it. Justice "requires situation-specific moral reflection and sensibility" (Carr, 2000, p. 167). Fair and apt treatment for best learning would call for personal active and reflective engagement and yet proper detachment, not settled just by evidence or school rules.

How about <sup>1</sup> teachers coming dressed as they like parts, may be with coloured hair, short dresses, tattooed and pierced body? What if a teacher likes some student and is physically involved with that student outside school?

Few more such aspects in school everyday are touched here -

students lagging behind in work, learning and ability may improve given special attention and support. Whether to do so? Whether the family and parents or teacher should attend to it? How should a teacher attend to it- in a class one may separate them as a group or merge them with brighter ones to improve them or arrange special remedy classes for them.

Whether teacher is to be personal- friendly, motherly, mentor-like, or formal and authoritative, or simply encouraging and respectful but does not share her personal/private life with them will affect students' learning in many ways. Or change the tone of approach in varied contexts for adequate reasons. Should such matters be framed for teachers as to what is right for a teacher? I am trying to say, there will always be some significant dimensions that depend upon the teacher's capacities and concerns so she has to discern.

Such issues emerge from teachers' sensitivity and concern and need complex discretion over perceptions, understandings, tuning to culture, educational and social practices, what's desirable, what possibilities, what alternatives and the pros and cons are involved and are not matters of skill, knowledge or management alone. Teachers' perceptions about her relationships with students, their needs, abilities, what promotes best learning in them and what constitutes their well-being will shape her teaching and conduct. Teacher's perceptions and beliefs set her relationships which set the discipline in class. Discipline is not just a matter of techniques of managing students, the 'firmness of character' of teacher also help set it.

1. The source of this idea was from sections '*Virtuous and Vicious Speech and Attire*' pp 214-218, and '*Professional Persona and Personal Probity*' pp 221-23 in Chapter 12, Ibid.
2. David Carr (2000) has discussed how teachers have to be self-consciously vigilant to establish non-threatening classroom climate of mutual respect and trust in section, '*Teacher Character and Personality*', pp 219-221 in Chapter 12 of '*Professionalism and Ethics in Teaching*', Routledge Taylor & Francis Group London and New York.

The teacher may believe that her teaching in the class is independent of her apparel in school or her actions outside school. What would a right stance be based on- school norms, societal expectations in these matters, student response to it, right representation of culture, freedom for unique preferences of teacher? Is a universal code of dress for teachers justifiable?

When schools try to simplify and have predefined rules and practices for all such matters, teachers' sensitivity, reflection, discretion become limited and irrelevant. The engagement with what should be, what would be appropriate becomes constricted, if not lost.

So, we see that teaching appears to be a set of tasks, series of acts, and systems may define 'right teaching' as institutional rules, practices and through accountability mechanisms (perhaps in tune with their mission and vision assertions). Yet we see that teaching is very complex, sensitive work

that demands and depends a lot from/on teacher as a person- teacher's style, personality, conceptions, perceptions, perspectives, understandings, of situations, learners, subject taught, oneself, to list a few, and importantly in line with ones priorities and sense of purpose. The quality of teaching (and education) perhaps lean heavily on such dimensions. Therefore teaching rightly is more flexible, yet more responsible teaching, where teacher engages reflectively with everything that can affect her decisions and practices. This may take us beyond the circumscribed rules and norms for 'right teaching'.

This has serious implications for what all should go into making right teachers and in which order of significance, and how. They need to be considered separately.

# Book Reviews

# Glimpses of a Forsaken State and its People

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## Book Review

**Bhonsle, A. (2016). *Mother, Where's My Country? Looking for Light in the Darkness of Manipur*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger. (Rs. 499/- , pp. 250)**

In the book, the author attempts to present the history of conflict, the various episodes of brutalities that people have long endured and the everyday struggles of the people of the state. Coming from a background of journalism, the author has done extensive research which has shaped the book with nearly nine years of fieldwork. She has conducted over two hundred interviews and studied documents and court testimonies to verify the accounts that have been recorded. She has tried to give account of all the stakeholders: the civilians, the army, the state bodies or the insurgent groups. While giving account of the civilians, the author has tried to give space to the many ethnic groups residing in the state. While reading the book, we get to know about the historical narrative of the state along with an unbiased description of the tensions that exists amongst the ethnic groups. This is a commendable portrayal that is usually missing in books of other authors on similar topics, where focus has been on the history or tensions of their own state or focus on the history and problems of their own ethnic group/ community only.

The book has 15 sections with an introduction and an epilogue. The sections do not form an uninterrupted flow. Each section focuses on different issues such as incidents of rape, the Malom massacre<sup>i</sup>, Irom Sharmila, her family, her fleeing to Delhi, history of the state, experiences of the insurgents at their camps, Manorama incident<sup>ii</sup> and the protest by a

group of women at Kangla Fort<sup>iii</sup>, and many more. The descriptions of the rape accounts and the court proceedings are heart wrenching. It vividly brings alive the images to anyone reading the book and makes one feel for the men, women and children in the state. There are descriptions given of people who have been caught up in the conflict and have been killed in encounters, facing extortion threats from the insurgent groups or checking in the name of security by the armed forces. The extreme experiences of the people and the mistreatment they face reflect the complete denial of human rights. The physical and mental trauma experienced by the people cannot be measured, one can only try and empathise with them.

The author brings to the forefront the hardships faced by the people and the everyday struggle for basic goods due to the numerous economic blockades in the state. The blocking of the National Highways could be called by any of the ethnic communities or the insurgent groups for voicing issues or for showing resistance to various decisions taken up by the state. This results in the complete absence of movement of vehicles. Goods could get stranded on the roads for months which results in the unavailability of many basic products such as medicines, cooking gas, petrol, kitchen products, among others (p. 169). The functioning of the banking system may get hampered due to the non-availability of cash. The whole country was in

chaos for a couple of months, post-demonetization due to shortage of cash, but Manipur had been in this chaos since a very long time. The long queues at petrol pumps and ATMs have been a common sight and daily struggle endured by the people of the state. The book also highlights how the continued struggles for survival reflect the resilience developed by the people, be it the quiet struggle by Irom Sharmila against AFSPA<sup>iv</sup> or the strong front shown by her family members or the fight for survival by the people in the midst of prolonged conflict.

One chapter is entirely devoted to specifically discuss the problems faced by children due to the prevalent conflict. Her focus has been a family who lost two children in the Malom massacre (p. 44-50). This could be one example which reflects the perils in numerous families in the state. This act of being caught unaware during encounters between the armed forces and the insurgents could be many. What was most hitting was the fact that one of the children who died was the recipient of the National Bravery Award in 1988, and the mother continued to receive letters from the Ministry of Child Welfare in Delhi asking about the child's welfare nine years after the incident. This reflects a complete lack of awareness of what is happening in the rest of the country and the attitude of the Centre towards the people of the north eastern states.

The author has also highlighted in the backdrop of a court testimony the story of a young boy of twelve years studying in class VII, who was brutally beaten and killed in a case of fake encounter, 150 metres away from his home (pp. 232-237). He was accused of being a member of an insurgent group. Another case is of a nineteen years old teenager who also became a victim after he was suspected by the state police of being an insurgent member (237-240). These are only two cases which have been reported in the book; nearly 1,528 cases of extra judicial killings have been petitioned in the Supreme Court, filed by relatives

and friends of victims who had been killed in fake encounters in the state (Hazarika, 2016). An important aspect raised by the author is of young boys who are members of the insurgent groups. She has described young boys in their late teens who are living in camps, as temporary residents, post the negotiation between the insurgent groups and the state. Some of the groups have signed the Suspension of Operation agreement where they no longer carry on insurgent activities; instead they stay in encampment authorized by the government and get a monthly stipend of 3,000 rupees and basic infrastructure (p. 125). Here the author describes the inactive and bored lifestyle of these young boys. When they are at their competent best and could accomplish much if given the opportunity, these young boys are simply wasting their time and life.

The prolonged conflict and the uncertain political situation have led many families to send their children to the metro cities for education, and also many young adults to migrate for work. This leads to another problem faced by the people of the north east region such as racist experiences and labelling (pp. 13-17). From calling names to prejudices, being judged and in extreme cases, physical assaults have also been reported. This is an important aspect which needs to be explored further regarding these young boys and girls who are already facing the trauma of conflict in the state and double harassment of extreme racism, which many a times are subtle and unreported. All these contribute to mental disturbance and needs to be addressed for the complete well being of individuals.

This leads us to reflect on the larger role that education could play in mitigating the conflict, in helping to untangle the cause of conflict or understand the issues that affect the various ethnic groups. The experiences gained from interacting with fellow students and shared learning could help to question rigid beliefs about self and the



others. Plus, the opportunity to attend school or college in the midst of conflict would help bring some normalcy in the lives of the students and help them cope with the conflict with the hope of a better future (Winthrop and Kirk, 2008). Though there are numerous books on conflict in the north east, the focus has mostly been on the political situation and the history of conflicts. This book gives a glimpse into the everyday struggle of the people and the detailed description of the incidents make you relate to the pain felt by the people. The book introduces the readers to a state, and its people, which has been neglected and is constantly fighting for survival.

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1. Ten innocent civilians, including school students, were killed when an Assam Rifles convoy was attacked by an insurgent group and they fired back in retaliation on November 02, 2002.
2. Manorama Devi was accused of being a member of an insurgent group and was brutally raped and killed in a fake encounter by Assam rifles personnel on July 10, 2004.
3. In retaliation to the Manorama incident, twelve women of a women's group had stripped off their clothes in front of the historic Kangla Fort, the seat of the royal power and then occupied as a post by the Assam Rifles.
4. Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which gives unprecedented power to the armed forces to arrest any suspect without any evidence. This is in implementation in select states of India, which are identified as problem states such as Kashmir, Manipur and Nagaland.

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