Indian Journal of
School Health & Wellbeing

● Health Services ● Life Skills Education ● Healthy School Environment

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

Submission Guidelines

- All submissions should follow the APA 7th Edition style

- All submissions should have an abstract summarizing the main points.

- 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.

- Submission emails must contain an inline declaration stating that the research work is the author's original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.

- 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 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 or 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 paraprofessionals. 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. Book/ Movie reviews: Reviews of books or movies relevant to school mental health and wellbeing may also be submitted. The word limit is 1000 words.

11. 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).

Faculty members are invited to be the guest editors of the journal on a theme relevant to school health and wellbeing.

The Manuscripts for publication in the peer-reviewed and refereed Indian Journal of School Health and Wellbeing (IJSHW) are to be submitted via e-mail to journal@expressionsindia.org along with a copy of the email to the editor.

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Message from the Editor

The development of young children is an essential part of the process of growing up as adults. The child's early years of life have consistently been shown to be the foundational phase of development. Most often, the way in which a child physically progresses follows a common sequence: the child is born, crawls, walks, runs etc. The emotional, social and physical development of young children certainly has a direct effect on the adults they will ultimately become. This is why understanding the importance of early education is very important.

There is consistent and strong evidence which shows that brain development is most rapid in the early stages of a child's life. The quality of stimulation, support and nurture is important at this stage.

Early childhood education can make a substantial contribution to the physical, psychomotor, cognitive, social and emotional development of the child. Tremendous growth and development take place in the first eight years of a child's life and brain connections multiply exponentially in the first three years. It is imperious that this opening of opportunity is fully used and strengthened to ensure long term benefits, not just for each individual child's development but also for the larger community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to school closures in nearly every country in the world, putting approximately 1.5 billion children and youth out of school. For many countries, a learning crisis existed before the corona virus pandemic, with an estimated 260 million children out of school, and 53% of ten-year-olds who are in school in low- and middle- income countries living in poverty, unable to read and understand a simple text. Indian government is springing to action to roll out remote learning through various channels to try and reach children at home.

Within the field of early years education, development and care there is currently a focus upon the role of the adult when interacting with very young children. Delays in development during this period can lead to lifelong consequences in terms of learning abilities.

In India, despite increasing population and inflation, efforts are underway to provide holistic early childhood services. According to National Education Policy 2020, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age 3 is also included, which is aimed at promoting better overall learning, development, and well-being. The overarching goal will be to ensure universal access to high-quality ECCE across the country in a phased manner.

With this conceptualization, this issue of the journal focuses on Vital Issues in Early Childhood Education. 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 Early Childhood Education. Papers also address what Children in this age group are going through during the pandemic. This issue of **Indian journal of School health and Wellbeing** thus hosts articles that are Reflections from the Field, Research Articles and Perspective Papers, and Book Review. The concerns that this issue attempts to address is the children as the focus.

Dr Jasmeet Kaur

Message from the Patrons

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 Sills 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 a adopted by all schools including Higher Education System.

It is 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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Are we Really Marching towards Inclusion? : Usage of Sign Language at the Foundational Stage of Students with Hearing Impairment in Inclusive Schools

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Abstract

Growth and development refer to the changes that occur in relation to the physical, mental, social, and emotional domains of an individual that leaves a direct impact on the quality of life. Hence, to ensure the long-term benefits, a strong base must be formed at the early years of the child through quality education. Researches documented that children who miss on the early skills cannot independently access the curriculum in the later years. These deficiencies widen the learning gap, which accumulates over time and leads to unsatisfactory experiences in the school. One of the reasons for the lack of development of foundational skills is the limited access to a child's 'first language'.

In this paper, the researchers had tried to highlight the learning needs of students with hearing impairment at the formative stage of life, with a special focus on language accessibility in the schools. The paper made observations on the teaching-learning process of inclusive classrooms at primary schools of Delhi in relation to the strategies used to mainstream the students with hearing impairment at the primary stage. The study reported the attitude of special educators towards the use of sign language in the teaching and learning process. The study had a cross-sectional survey design. The researchers used an observation schedule and attitude scale to collect the data. 20 general teachers and 50 special educators were selected in the sample through purposive sampling. The findings of the study revealed that most of the special educators expressed less confidence towards handing the students with different disabilities with limited time and resources. Most of the teachers in inclusive schools either have a negative or neutral perspective towards the usage of sign language for teaching and learning of students with hearing impairment and supported the oral-aural approach. The implications of the study indicated the need for up-gradation of skills of teachers to deal with all the students in the best possible manner and also to provide a conducive environment for the development of foundational skills in the early years of life.

Keywords: *Foundational Skills, Indian Sign Language, Learners with Hearing Impairment, Inclusive Schools and Attitude*

The formative phase covers the period from 0 to 8 years of age, is considered to be most crucial for the right kind of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of an individual. Researches acknowledge that approximately 85% of the brain of the child develops before 6 as the majority of neural connections are established during this phase (NEP, 2020). Children require a loving and stimulating environment, proper nutrition, positive social interactions, and appropriate attention for optimal development, and deficiency of any of these may lead to irreversible outcomes in life (UNICEF, 2000). Shreds of evidence from various researchers had also confirmed that putting in efforts, time, and money during the childhood phase is one of the most worthwhile ways to enhance skills, competencies, and efficiencies.

NEP 2020 highlights the need to be equally focussed at the foundational stage of the children and defines the foundational stage as the three years of pre-school and 2 years of Primary school; (Grade I and Grade II, covering children of 3-8 age). In total the foundational stage consist of 5 years of flexible, multi-level, play/ activity-based learning and the curriculum pedagogy of ECCE with more focus on laying a solid foundation across academic subjects, creative subjects, and co-curricular activities (NEP, 2020). Therefore, the role of the teacher has become more complex and multi-dimensional. Researches revealed that a child, who performs poor and falls behind early, often finds difficulty in engaging self with the

curriculum of higher grades. Hence, the school must continuously attempt to provide a wide range of knowledge, develop competencies and foundational skills right from the early years of life. These skills increase the likelihood of performing better in all domains of life. This paper attempts to explore the readiness and level of preparation of general teachers to deal with the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and also the attitude of special educators towards the use of signs to teach and learn curricular content in schools.

What does inclusivity in school mean?

Inclusivity means the practice of bringing in people who might otherwise be debarred or marginalized, for example, people with some kind of disability and people belonging to minority groups like schedule caste, schedule tribe, gender issues, etc. In this research, Inclusivity in school is operationalized as 'mainstreaming of students having a disability, into the same schools and classrooms, with students without any disabilities' (SSA document, Government of India, 2015). Inclusion is both a process and outcome of understanding, preparing, involving, accepting, supporting, valuing differences, and respecting diversity among today's school children and youth. It is potentially both a process and an outcome for achieving social justice and equality in our society.

Table 1

Grade Wise Enrolment Status of CwSN in School Education, All India

Year	Primary (I – V)		Upper Primary (VI-VIII)		Secondary Stage (IX – X)		Higher Secondary Stage (XI-XII)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
2014-15	6314	5005	5688	4933	3458	2874	2462	2166
2015-16	5434	4553	5577	4636	3430	2872	2009	1726
2016-17	5376	4332	5279	3897	3259	2461	1898	1447

Table 1: the U-DISE data (2016-17), indicates the grade-wise enrolment status of Children with Special Needs (CwSN) in India from 2014-2017. The table clearly shows the decline in the enrolment and retention of CwSN in India. The census 2011 (Figure 1) data showed that out of the total population of disabled students of age group 5-19 years, 61% of the children were attending educational institutions, 12% attended earlier and dropped and 27% never attended. This indicated that there are more students in the educational setup and it is completely the

responsibility of the system to accept, modify andadjust as per the requirements of the students with special needs in the best possible manner.
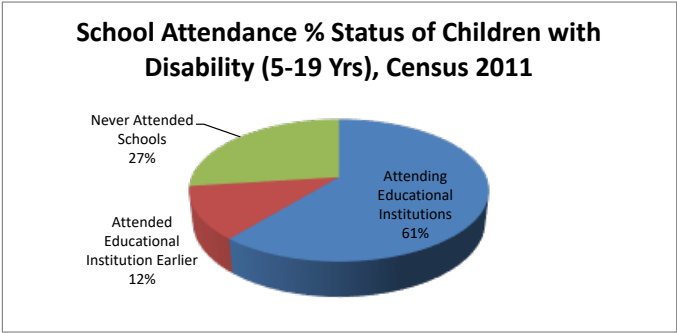
Figure 1: Status of School Attendance of Disabled Students (aged 5-19 years), Census 2011, India

Language deprivation and learners with profound hearing impairment

Language deprivation is defined as a state of chronic deficiency of complete access to the natural language during the formative phase of a child's life. Access to language and language development is one of the most important aspects of an individual's growth and progress (Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L., 2006). And, ethically, it is not less than a crime to keep a child deprived of his/ her natural language. Connor, in her research in 2002 emphasized on development of early vocabulary skills and stated in her research that early vocabulary skills have a significant positive relation to later literacy skills.

In the past, the two main groups, the oralists (people favoring the oral approach-lip reading, speech development, and mimicking the mouth shapes) and the manualists (people favoring fingerspelling and sign language) presented their opinions and arguments on language accessibility, education, and socialisation concerns of the people with complete hearing loss (Deaf). People belonging to the hearing world who have never come in contact with deaf people generally have negative preconceived notions and beliefs about deafness and sign language (Dirksen, H., & Bauman, L., 2004). Oralism was advocated by most of the people in hearing society as it was believed that the deaf people shall adjust better and lead a happy life in a so-called 'hearing world'. Deaf children in developing and under-developed countries have very little or no access to their primary language

at the formative phase (Adoyo, 2007). Language deprivation is considered the same as child abuse as it leads to a profound impact not only on participation, education, independence, relationship building but also on critical skills like concept building and memory organisation (Kelly Kasulis, 2017). Researches repeatedly reported that the lack of exposure to language in the critical years of the child has distressing and everlasting effects (Gleason, 2000).

Deafness, Indian sign language and the power of language

Deafness: Deafness may be defined as partial or complete inability to use the acoustic modality or hear the sound which varies on degree, ranging from mild to profound. In the past, there were different models of disability being practiced in society like the charity model, bio-centric model, functional model, social model, human right based model, etc. Currently, with respect to people with hearing impairment, the culturo-linguistic model is in trend and accepted worldwide. From the culture-linguistic model approach, it is believed that the deaf culture is not a culture of individualism but collectivism. Deaf people see themselves as the people belonging to linguistic minorities and advocate the right to conserve and promote their language and culture (Emerton, R. G., 1996). Sign language is an integral part of deaf culture and is considered the natural language of deaf people (Mitchell, R. E., & Karchmer, M. A., 2005). A large number of deaf people depend on sign language for communication. NEP 2020 acknowledges the power of language and stated that children at the formative stage learn about the world better through the languages used at their homes and hence schools till grade V must provide educational experiences in a child's first language. Learning gaps created due to the non-accessibility of language and medium of instruction must be bridged. NEP, 2020 also approves the use of local sign languages to make the curriculum accessible to the child either through NIOS sign language modules or through general teachers'/ special educators' efforts. Language, literacy, and numeracy are the basics of achieving all higher-order competencies; these foundational skills are necessary for children to engage in future learning as well as to fully participate in society and the workplace as adults. Sign language is a mode of communicating ideas and thoughts, through visually transmitted gestural patterns, by using hands, facial expressions, body (movement and orientation) rather than using acoustically conveyed sound patterns i.e. speech (Stokoe, W. C., Jr., 2005).

"Education delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize personal, academic and social development both within and outside formal school settings". (RPwD Act, 2016, para. 35, p. 10)

Gleason in research conducted in the year 2000 reported that if a conducive and stimulating environment is provided to children, they begin to learn the language much before then they acquire physical maturity of speech organs and improper development of organs involved in speech should not be the reason of hindrance of expressive communication. Marilyn Daniel (1995) reported in her research that the use of sign language was found to be encouraging in the language development of hearing children also.

Review of related literature

This review of related literature is dealing with the researches conducted in past in the area of deaf education and the use of sign language. Some of the most relevant researches are discussed in this paper:-

Monney, M. (2017) conducted a study to know the influence of using Sign Language on the hearing students in the inclusive classroom. The study revealed that signing has a visual and kinaesthetic approach and could act as a tool for teachers to cater to the diverse needs of the learners in inclusive classrooms. The author mentioned the theory of multiple intelligence in support of this and highlighted the positive impacts of the usage of sign language on hearing individuals. The study revealed that the use of sign language in the inclusive classrooms showed the change in the attitude of the hearing students towards disability and made a positive impact on the interest of the hearing students in assisting and knowing more about disability. It helped to remove the misconceptions regarding the deaf world greater sense of responsibility and made the hearing students culturally sensitive with advanced communication skills.

Seven-week research conducted on the primary school students to determine the effects of

American Sign Language to develop second language vocabulary i.e. Spanish by Mejia-Menendez, I. (2016) revealed that the group which was taught new words accompanied with signing performed better in learning and recalling the words than the group which was taught without signing. Further, the study suggested examining the effect in the retention of learned words in the long run.

A study was conducted to explore the impact of sign language in addressing the communication difficulties of the non-deaf learners by Toth, A. (2009). The researchers in the study tried to put efforts to know if signing can help children with communication difficulties. The sample consisted of autistic, children with down's syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and learning disabilities. It was found that learning of signs has proved to be a bridge in the communication process of children with communication difficulties. The performance in vocabulary acquisition and production was found to be better than before.

Wilson, R.M., Teague, G., & Teague, M. (1984) researched to determine the effectiveness of the use of sign language and fingerspelling on improving the spelling performance of hearing students. The research revealed an improved performance of the kindergarten students in memorizing the spellings. The researchers suggested to replicate the study with a more precise design (ABAB) as this study with a single case design had given encouraging results.

On reviewing the literature, it was found that the use of sign language in the teaching and learning process had benefitted not only the children with hearing impairment but also the hearing students. Sign language had been found effective in enhancing vocabulary, language and literacy skills among children of different age groups. It was also found that very few studies have been conducted in this area in India but in the West, ample researches have been reported. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the same in length and breadth in Indian context so that focus with the right intensity and well-structured approach shall be used for the students with hearing impairment at the earliest.

Objectives of the research:

The current study was conducted:

- To observe the teaching-learning process of the inclusive classrooms having students with

hearing impairment at the Late Foundational stage.

- To study the attitude of special educators towards the use of Sign language in the teaching-learning process of students with hearing impairment at the Late Foundational stage.

Operational definitions:

Teaching-learning process: The teaching and learning process includes many variables and is referred to the usage of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies to bring the desired changes in the students. In this study, the teaching-learning process is defined as the 'strategies' used by the teacher

- to teach the curricular content,

- to make students learn the content

- to assess the students

- to give feedback for improvement of the students with hearing impairment in the inclusive classrooms of Delhi Government schools (MCD Schools).

Inclusive classrooms: The classrooms having students with and without disabilities studying together for the entire day and throughout the academic year.

Students with hearing impairment: In this study, students with some damage or malfunction of the hearing apparatus, which in turn, disable the child in terms of functional use of his/her hearing senses, wholly or partially affecting his/her normal functioning like daily living, educational or vocational, etc, studying at the primary stage (grade I to grade III) are referred as students with hearing impairment.

Late foundational stage: In this study, the children studying in the late foundational stage (grade I and II) are said to be students of late foundational stage students (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Classification of Foundational Stage
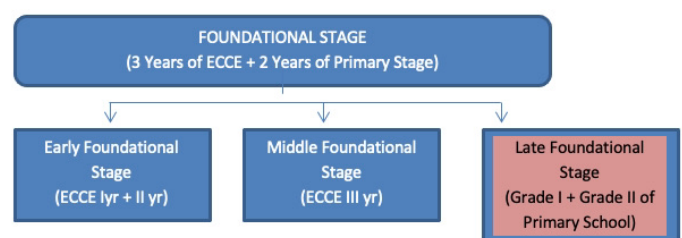
Attitude: An attitude includes a complex organization of evaluative beliefs, feelings, and tendencies toward certain actions that can have a powerful influence over the behaviour of the individual. Attitude covers three components: an affective, a behavioural, and a cognitive component which drives the feeling, belief, interest, knowledge, and behaviour towards a particular object.

Special Educators: In this research, the teachers who are professionally trained and qualified to teach and deal with the students with disabilities of the early primary stage (grade I and II) are referred to as Special Educators.

Sign Language: The language used to communicate with each idea and thoughts to others through visual-manual modality like, gestures, hand shapes, facial expressions, body movement, etc. is known as Sign Language.

Research methodology

Methodologically, the present study had a cross-sectional survey design. 70 teachers were taken in the sample, 20 general teachers (professional qualification: D.Ed./ B.El.Ed.), teaching at early-primary stage (grade I to grade II) and 50 special educators (professional qualification: D.Ed.: Special Education/ B.Ed. Special Education) dealing the students with disabilities studying at the primary stage in government schools of Delhi (inclusive schools).

Tools used in the study:

- Observation Schedule was used to observe the teaching-learning process of the inclusive classrooms (grade I and II) having students with hearing impairment. The tool had 20 statements with 4 point scale namely very evident, evident, slightly evident, and absent. The maximum score obtained on the tool was 60 and the minimum was 0. The observations were designed to know if and how the general teachers meet the needs of students with profound hearing loss in the regular setup. The schedule was developed to document the types and frequencies of differentiated instructions that students receive through modification in the teaching-learning process covering 4 main dimensions i.e. a) student's engagement, b) adapted instructions, c) motivation, and d) assessment and feedback.

- Attitude Scale was used to find out the attitude of special educators towards the use of Sign language. The tool with 20 items was prepared covering 4 main dimensions i.e. a) acceptance of inclusion of students with severe to profound disability (5 statements), b) awareness of the benefits of sign language (5 statements), c) competency on ISL (5 statements) and d) parental support (5 statements). The tool had 3 point scale namely agree, undecided, and disagree. The maximum score obtained on the tool was 40 and the minimum was 0.

Procedure: The research started after seeking permission from the principals of the schools taken under study. The researchers initially built rapport with the teachers for few weeks through casual interactions with them and then explained the objectives and rationale of the study. As per the rapport formation with the teachers, the attitude scale was administered. The researchers then purposively selected 20 general teachers who have a student with profound hearing impairment in their classroom and observed 4 classes of each 20 teachers. The observations carried on for 6 weeks wherein the researchers observed the teaching-learning process with respect to strategies adopted by the teachers to cater to the needs of SwHI.

Analysis and findings of the study

Objective wise analysis and findings of the study are as follows:-

Objective 1: To observe the teaching-learning process of the inclusive classrooms having students with hearing impairment at the Late Foundational stage.

Analysis and findings:

Table 2

Dimension Wise Percentage Analysis of Observation Schedule

| Teaching Learning Process (Dimensions)	No. of teachers observed	No. of classes observed	Very Evident	Evident	Slightly Evident	Absent
Student's Engagement		4 classes of each teacher:	0%	0%	56.6%	43.4%
Material Preparation and Adapted Instructions	20		0%	12.4%	48.3%	39.3%
Motivation		Total class	0%	39.6%	56.8%	3.6%

Assessment and Feedback	es:80	0%	8.6%	34.8%	56.6%

Graphical presentation of Dimension wise Percentage Analysis of Observation Schedule

- Table 2 depicts in the student engagement dimension that it was observed that the behaviour of only 56.6% of teachers was slightly evident in engaging the SwHI in the teaching-learning process. Teachers were observed communicating with the SwHI through pictures or trying to make the child do lip reading or through local signs. The researchers observed that 43.4% of teachers were most of the time busy dealing with other students and were not able to communicate well with the SwHI.

Figure 3
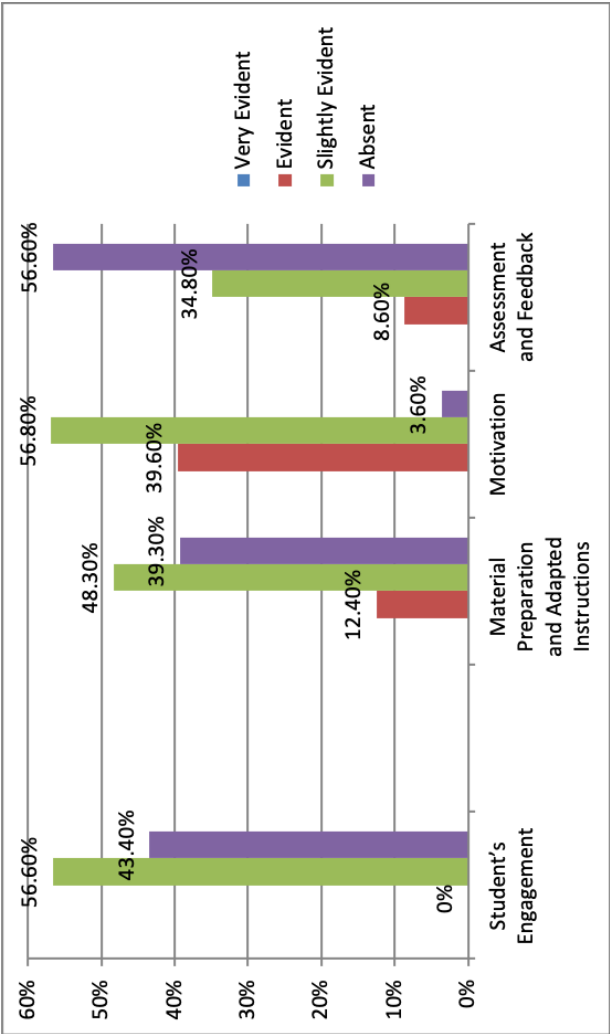
- Figure 3 indicates that as far as material preparation and adapted instructions were concerned, there were 12.4% of teachers who show evident behavior of being concerned about modification and adapting the curriculum as per the need of the SwHI. It was observed in one of the class that the teacher made significant efforts in making a picture

book for the teaching of EVS so that the concepts of types of houses, different types of festivals, our earth, different landforms, etc. can be taught to the students in a better way. The same picture book was given to SwHI for home, for further recapitulation, after the class. On the other hand, 39.3% of teachers seem to be reluctant in making any extra efforts in including SwHI in the class and classroom activities. Regular textbook and chalk and talk method were used to teach in the class. Few of the SwHI were found to be giving sometimes confused expression and sometimes 'lost in his own world' expression. Most of the SwHI were found to be copying the written texts from the blackboard. It was observed that most of the time; the curriculum is transacted through oral mode only which made little opportunity for the SwHI to get accommodated in the teaching-learning process. It was observed that approximately half of the general teachers believed that making modifications in the content and teaching a special child is the duty of a special educator and whatever was taught in the class, would be taken again in a different manner by the special educator. It was observed that teaching SwHI was found to be the duty of a special educator alone. The prosodic components of speech of some of the teachers were also found to be not appropriate as they should be for the students of early primary stage and SwHI.

- The behavior of providing reinforcement and motivation to the SwHI was found to be evident in approximately 40% of the teachers. In 56.8% of classrooms, it was observed to be slightly evident and was absent in 3.6% of classroom observations of teachers. Depending on the degree of disability, non-verbal reinforcements were expected but it was found that verbal reinforcements were used more than half of the time. Most of the teachers were found to be posing questions to SwHI which was a good sign of motivating them to participate in the class but in the absence of any answer for them, the discussion was not taken forward. Efforts to explore the ways of increased participation from SwHI were visible in very few teachers. The zeal of finding out the reasons behind the silence of the student on questioning was not evident in the behavior of the teachers and hence the

motivation or reinforcement used by the teachers in the class seemed ineffective.

- Only 8.6% of teachers were found to be concerned (evident) about bringing in different means of assessments and providing feedback to the SwHI and due to the communication barrier, 56.6% of teachers were not able to bridge the learning gaps. The Flexibility in teaching, learning, and assessment was missing in the inclusive classrooms. As the SwHI were studying in the inclusive schools with no exposure to deaf school (where strategies to learn oral or aural or signing are taught) at the formative phase of life, the language and speech development of the child was found to be quite affected. The affected speech and language understanding led to poor performance in classrooms. 56.6% of teachers were found to be more focused on completing their daily lesson plans and getting the written work done in the notebooks rather than learning or participation of SwHI in learning. Furthermore, the traditional methods of assessments didn't help much for SwHI in the classrooms, where they were expected to speak, read, comprehend and write the curricular content as other students do. The formative assessments conducted by teachers on regular basis were the same for SwHI, on which they used to perform poorly. One of the teachers was found using pictures and drawings to assess SwHI and used to give feedback through self-made signs (local signs).

Interpretation: It was interpreted from the data analysis of the above tool that though students with disabilities are included in the mainstream with the regular students still most of the students are not receiving what they are entitled to in the mainstream classrooms. Notionally, teachers in inclusive schools have divided their work between special educators and general teachers. The general teachers take the task of teaching regular students whereas the special educators are expected to teach the students with disabilities (SwD) in a pull-out model (SwD is taken out from regular classroom for some time to teach the contents taught in the class in a simplified manner). It was also observed in the inclusive schools that there is only one special educator appointed in the school and her/his specialization in special education could be only one, it could be either visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning disability, intellectual disability, or multiple-disability. There is no active course in India which trains the special teachers in cross-disability. So, a special educator who is not professionally qualified to teach SwHI is not able to deal with the needs and problems of SwHI, especially of students with a higher degree of disability.

Objective 2: To study the attitude of special educators towards the use of Sign language in the teaching-learning process of students with hearing impairment at the Late Foundational stage.

Analysis and Findings: To study the attitude, Likert scale was administered to 50 special educators dealing with students with disabilities of primary stage, the analysis of the scale is as follows:-

Table 3

Attitude Analysis

Attitude of Teachers	Negative Attitude (0-10)	Neutral Attitude (11-30)	Positive Attitude (31-40)
Number of Teachers	20 (40%)	20 (40%)	10 (20%)

Interpretation: On analysing, if the score was found to be in the middle range of the psychological continuum, the attitude of the individual was described as 'neutral' and if it fells towards the favourable end of the continuum, it was described as a positive attitude (Table 3). Similarly, if the score fell towards the unfavourable end, it was described as a negative attitude. The table indicates that on analyzing the data through percentage analysis, it was found that 40% of the teachers i.e. 20 special educators, had a negative attitude towards the usage of Indian Sign Language in the teaching-learning process, and 20 teachers i.e. again 40% of the special educators had a neutral attitude towards ISL and its use in the classroom. Only 10 special educators, which makes 20% of the sample were found to have a positive attitude towards ISL and usage for the teaching and learning of students with hearing impairment. It shows that the majority of the special educators do not have a favourable attitude and were not much convinced towards its usage.

To find the plausible reasons behind the neutral and negative attitude, an interview was conducted with the special educators having an unfavourable attitude. On analysing the findings

of the interview through content analysis, main themes were identified and are presented:-

- Use of Sign language limits the socialisation process: Approximately 4/5th of the special educators (80%) carried the opinion that children with profound impairment must learn to communicate through oral-aural mode as learning of sign language would make them capable of interacting with other deaf people only but not with the people belonging to hearing world. One of the special educators while interview said that:-

"*Socialisation with the hearing world is very important for deaf children as ultimately, the children with disability have to adjust in the society where they would find more of hearing people. So, they should be trained from the initial phase to adjust to the norms laid by hearing society, otherwise, they may feel isolated.*"

- Positive approach towards Speech reading and Auditory training: Nearly 3/5th of the teachers (60%) had a positive approach towards the training on speech reading and auditory training. One of the special educators said

"*It is very important to make the child with profound hearing loss read the lips of the speaker. And if the child tries to use signs to communicate, the parents must be strict and should not allow the child to use signing. If the child would be comfortable in signing, he would never make efforts to learn through oral mode. So, teachers and parents need to be stringent towards it.*"

- Overly Optimistic: 2/5th of the special educators (40%), seemed to be overly optimistic towards the positive effects of oral-aural mode of communication and opined that the SwHI would develop listening and speaking skills with time. On questioning further on this that why do they feel so, one of the respondents said

"*If parents emphasis is more on stimulating the auditory and speech system in deaf children, the children will learn to talk and hear speech at a better rate as compared to other deaf children, and I believe it would be good for both, the deaf child and the people around him to understand him*".

The other teacher said

"*If God takes away the power of one sense organ, he blesses the people with disability with a higher degree of sensitivity of other sense organ and this is how the loss is compensated and balanced to some extent. So, deaf children would also have one or the other sense organ which is substantially better than the normal individual.*'

- Distraction in understanding: Approximately 3/5th of the respondents (62%) stated that teaching through different modalities may confuse the deaf child. So, to avoid confusion and putting undue efforts, deaf students should be taught to use either oral-aural mode or sign language.

"*Focus must be on face and mouth rather than on hands. If we make them communicate through hands also they may get distracted and their focus may shuttle between the face, mouth, and hands, which is I suppose quite difficult.*"

- Near about half of the special educators expressed their concern towards the development of speech first for language access rather than teaching sign language for language access. It was observed during the interview that teachers believe that working on the auditory modality and making the speech organs function as much as possible is more important than giving the deaf child an alternate of these. It was understood by the discussion that the teachers consider sign language as the last resort of communication. A sense of doubt and fear was very much visible in the statements of the special educators.

- Use of sign language makes the deaf individuals look different from the regular ones: Approximately 1/3rd of the respondents (31%) believed that if the deaf child would use sign language for communication, it may make the deaf child look different from others in the class and would make deafness real for them.

"*I believe that we should try to make the children with disability as normal as possible. So, if we allow them to use sign language, their disability would become visible to all. Why create opportunities in the class for other students to make fun of their problem.*"

Table 4

Dimension wise Attitude Analysis

S. No.	Sample Size (n)	Dimensions	Percentage of Teachers	Attitude
1		Acceptance of inclusion of students with severe to profound disability	50% : Agree 40% : Undecided 10%: Disagree	Neutral
2	50 Special educators	Awareness of the benefits of sign language	30% : Agree with benefits 40% : Undecided/ Not sure about benefits 30%: Disagree with benefits	Neutral
3		Competency to communicate through ISL	20% : Agree that they are competent in ISL 20% : Not Sure, make their signs as and when required 60%: Disagree, not trained on ISL	Negative
4		Parental support	20% : Agree 20% : Undecided 60%: Disagree	Negative

Interpretation: The table 4 indicates that the attitude scale had four dimensions and on analysing the tool dimension wise, it was found that most of the special educators had a neutral attitude towards 'Acceptance of inclusion of students with severe to profound disability' and 'Awareness of the benefits of sign language' dimensions. Furthermore, it was also revealed that the special educators had a negative attitude towards the other two dimensions namely 'Competency to communicate through ISL' and 'Parental support'. There were less than 1/3rd of the respondents who were positive towards these dimensions.

Conclusion: The teaching-learning experiences of students with profound hearing impairment in the inclusive schools of Delhi were found to be not appropriate and as per the guidelines of UNCRPD (2007), RTE (2009), RPwD Act (2016), and NPE (2020). Moreover, the attitude of special educators towards the use of ISL was found to be negative and neutral in this study. This study highlights the need for counseling

and conducting refresher training for teachers and special educators.

Educational Implications:

• The main objective of every teacher is always to make the subject and content accessible to all the students. Considering this fact, the findings of this study support that the students with benchmark disabilities, especially children with hearing and speech impairment, must be provided with the opportunity to access the curriculum, classroom activities, and co-curricular activities with an appropriate communication system (use of oral-aural approach, ISL, augmentative and alternative communication methods like communication boards, synthesisers, pre-stored utterances, use of signs, use of lip reading, etc.) must be made available to students.

• Indian Sign Language is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. So, the findings of this study imply that ISL shall be adopted and offered as one of the language subjects in school education (NCF, 2005).

• The onus of all-round development of the disabled child in the Inclusive system is not only on the special educator. This is the responsibility of every teacher to reach every student. So, to reach the student with severe hearing impairment, teachers and special educators should make the learning of basic sign language a part of their professional cum personal development. There are several free online Indian sign Language dictionary apps like https://www.talkinghands.co.in/, https://indiansignlanguage.org/history/, and https://indiansignlanguage.org/abbreviation/

• The teaching-learning process of the inclusive classrooms having students with hearing impairment at the late foundational stage (grade I & II) requires major reform. For this, the general teachers need to be prepared through frequent in-service training/ refresher training.

• Students with hearing impairment are observed as the learner with kinaesthetic and visual learning styles. Considering this, the teacher must plan the learning experiences in the classroom.

- The attitude of the special educators, who are assumed to be placed in the general schools for teaching and assisting students with disabilities, needs to be changed. A favourable attitude towards ISL is expected from the special educators. Rather, a total communicative approach must be adopted by the teachers and special educators. For this, teachers need to acquaint themselves with recent researches on total communicative approach and interact with people from the deaf community, to know their real-life experiences.

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Extending Children's Learning with Sensory Based Practices

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Abstract

The primary education across the nation should be designed in the frame of New Education Policy 2020 that envisages a new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3 to 18 years. In the new scheme a strong base of early childhood care and education from age 3 is also covered ensuring overall wellbeing and strong foundations of learning for all the children. From the early stage, children use their five primary senses to explore and seek out to make sense of the world around them. For optimal brain development it is important to actively use their senses. As they explore their world through 'sensory play', children develop the understanding of the world around them. For this, it important to plan and provide opportunities where children can actively use their senses. The school and home environment should provide for space and opportunities for extending children learning through sensory practices. Especially early childhood education should be built on the foundation of sensory learning. Some interventions for sensory learning at primary level is referred that can be carried out in schools and at home for holistic development of children at primary ladder of education. The sense of vision, sense of hearing, sense of touch, sense of smell and sense of taste must be crafted in a well planned manner.

Keywords: *Sensory based practice, Sensory Learning, Learning Environment*

Introduction

The purpose of education is to nurture good human beings capable of taking wise decisions. Human beings who are rational in thought and action, who possess compassion, courage, scientific temper, creativity and hold ethical moorings above all. For this, we need to build the primary education in a safe and stimulating environment where children feel valued. A major development in this regard is right of children to free and compulsory education act 2009 that laid down the course for universal elementary education. A wide range of learning experience must be designed with appropriate resources and quality physical infrastructure. The primary education across the nation should be designed in the frame of New Education Policy 2020 that envisages a new pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3 to 18 years. In the new scheme a strong base of early childhood care and education from age 3 is also covered ensuring overall wellbeing and strong foundations of learning for all the children.

In the earlier period, the early childhood care and education of the child was mainly informally carried through the caregivers at home in joint family system. This beautiful practice declined in the wave of urbanization and so called modernization where nuclear family system replaced the existing family structure. Children are now in the hands of teachers and dependent on the learning exposure given to them in educational institutions. It is important to have an understanding and child friendly atmosphere based on fundamentals of child psychology. An environment which focuses on foundational literacy and development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities. For this sensory based practices play a crucial role in extending children's learning.

Sensory learning

From birth to early childhood, children use their five senses to explore and try to make sense of the world around them. For optimal brain development it is important to actively use their senses. As they explore their world through 'sensory play', children develop the understanding of the world around them. For this it is important to plan and provide opportunities where children can actively use their senses. In infants, babies and young children sensory exploration comes naturally and enhances with the kind of environment they are provided. On this basis children build an understanding of objects, spaces, people and interactions around them.

As adults, our senses provide us with vital information that we use to make decision most of the time in a day. We may take this ability for granted and barely notice it, but it's for this reason that helping children to learn about their own senses is so important.

Role of sensory learning

Sensory engagement in recreation includes all actions that stimulate a young child's senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as anything which engages movement and balance. The easiest way to facilitate children connect their learning with senses is by playing outside with nature, movement, colours, textures, sounds and smells. Picking things up and feeling their texture is what people often associate with sensory play, but it's about a lot more than touch. Sensory learning is infinite and it is only really limited by your own imagination. So early childhood education should be built on the foundation of sensory learning. When one thinks of sensory learning some questions crop up in the mind like:

•Why is the physical environment important for learning and play?

•How can we use nature for sensory learning?

•What makes for sensory learning environments?

•What are the developmental characteristics of play?

•How do we distinguish play from other behaviors?

•How can teachers use play to help children learn and develop?

The answer to these questions can be discovered through execution of sensory play in learning situations. For the optimal utilization of sensory play, the readily available material like sand, mud, cooked, uncooked food items like rice, beans, popcorn or lentils, water, ice or snow, small pebbles or stones, cut up pieces of clothes, jute, paper, straws, cotton balls or craft material can be used in school and home. Teachers and parents should be cautious when using physical play material and also ensure supervision of young children closely when using smaller items that could be choking hazards. In a more planned manner art and craft, drama and role play with the help of props and musical instruments can be used in play way educational settings. Through

this the child can express freely and help to develop psychomotor skill among them. Music, drama and art in education develop communication, language skill and creative expression in the children.

Effect of Immediate Environment on sensory learning

Small children are always enthusiastic towards "hands-on" learning. They learn by exploring and manipulating objects in their environment using the five senses: seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing. Eating and preparing foods can be a great sensory experience for children and a fun learning opportunity. The children at this primary stage are able to represent the world internally through mental imagery and language. They are capable to symbolic thinking i.e., the ability to engage in make believe play by imagining the things as real when they are not e.g. pretending a stick as a sword. The most common play amongst young children is 'ghar ghar' literally translated to "house-house" that involves children pretending to have tea parties having imaginary guests, cutlery etc. Through this memory and imagination are developed.

Because of their age and fine motor skills, infants and toddlers use their fingers to eat, and meals easily become sensory activities! Especially when trying foods for the first time, they often "play" with foods squishing food, pushing it around, licking, smelling, and finally tasting it. For preschoolers, the expectation at mealtimes is to develop social and cultural meal skills, and "playing" with food is discouraged. Yet, it's still natural for preschoolers to enjoy the sensory properties of foods.

Kitchen at home is very practical place in the house to encourage sensory learning where child can see, touch, feel and explore the world around him. Things like measuring cups and spoons, scoops, cups, strainers, or anything else that children can play with provides for play material. Practice scooping, dumping and filling containers with your child. Teachers and parents during the play can narrate what they are doing together with dialogues, such as, "Look how much water we can fill in the jug, glass and a cup." Ask questions that help children think about what they are doing, such as, "What if we mixed water and milk together"? It will lead to development of thinking skills among children at a tender age. As the child grows, the need to

provide them with learning experiences to engage all senses to understand the environment emerges. Same way the teachers of preschoolers must keep a class space for activities that promote sensory learning and may themselves participate to develop the learning better.

Some interventions for sensory learning at primary level is referred that can be carried out in schools and at home for holistic development of children at primary ladder of education. The sense of vision, sense of hearing, sense of touch, sense of smell and sense of taste should be designed appropriately in curricular frame of learning. Some activity examples are listed below in reference to sensory learning.

Sense of Vision: A young child tries to make sense of the world around them by "seeing" it. Eyes are used to see the surroundings and to identify shape, size, colors and to read. Eyes give us a great deal of information to understand the world around us.

Activity 1: Provide the children with color cards. Make a game of color matching by using different colors and different shades of a color.

Activity 2: Show children some items, then ask them to close eyes. Take a few items away. Now ask them which items are missing.

Activity 3: Take some glasses. Fill them with a liquid at different heights. Ask them to arrange the glasses from full to empty.

Sense of Hearing: Referred to as auditory sense, it aims at improving listening skills, recognizing, attending to and responding to sounds in the surroundings and be able to discriminate between them.

Activity 1: Take the children outside in garden/ playground, ask them to listen to variety of sounds such as of birds, animals, humans, vehicles and ask them to share how many they can identify.

Activity 2: Ask the children to close the eyes or blindfold them, now let their friends speak. Ask them to name the child who they think is speaking. They can also be asked to identify soft and harsh sounds, to identify one particular sound among others or to concentrate on a moving sound and point to its moving direction.

Activity 3: Make the child listen to silence. Make him sit quietly and ask what all they can hear e.g. clock ticking, their own breath, faint outside sounds etc.

Sense of Touch: Referred to as tactual sense, it helps grasp a number of features of objects such as hard, soft, texture, temperature etc. and in framing concepts about them. For this, the children must be allowed to explore the characteristics of things around them by touching.

Activity 1: Let them make a variety of toys, animals, objects etc using clay or blocks.

Activity 2: Provide some daily life objects such as banana, pencil, stone, ice cube and a sun warmed metal scale and make them identify properties as hot, cold, rough, smooth etc.

Activity 3: Play the game - rock, paper, scissors. Provide them all three and make them identify differences among them on the basis of size, shape, texture and touch.

Activity 4: Put different things like grains, stones, nuts of varying sizes in boxes in which children can insert their hands but can't see them. Ask them to identify.

Sense of Smell: Sense of smell helps child understand and learn about what to expect in situations or objects. Sense of smell is particularly linked to sense of taste as food flavours are tied to it. Thus, an emphasis on teaching children to be able to identify and discriminate between different smells would be helpful in providing them better understanding of their environment. It is particularly helpful in avoiding dangers and mishaps.

Activity 1: Smelling bottles activity involves giving children two sets of bottles. Both sets have bottles with matching smells of strong scented objects like cinnamon, peppermint oil, vanilla extract etc. Children have to identify and match the pair of bottles in each set that smells the same.

Activity 2: Provide the children some fresh and stale food items; clean and polluted water and ask them to share what they feel about the condition of these based on smell.

Activity 3: Take them to school garden and ask them to collect three flowers each of different smell.

Sense of Taste: It aims to make the child aware of different kinds of food flavours and to identify them by taste. Taste is an important sense as it

helps us determine flavours of food and other substances. Historically, it has been closely tied to human survival as it gives an indication of what's safe or poisonous to eat.

Activity 1: Provide food items that are salty, sweet, sour and bitter, and ask them to separate them by tasting them.

Activity 2: Give them two bottle sets of each type of taste and ask them to match the pair.

Sensory activities allow children to refine their thresholds of sensory information, helping their brain to create sturdy connections to sensory information and learn which are useful and which can be filtered out. It helps to build nerve connections in the brain and encourages the development of motor skills. language development is excelled in sensory learning activities. It also encourages 'scientific thinking' and problem solving. The longing to engage with sensory play comes naturally for children and should be encouraged and supported both at home and in early learning environments.

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Educational Neuroscience and Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the neuroscientific approach in education, its positive and negative impacts on children, the associated ethical and moral concerns, and its application in early childhood learning. Numerous scholars are of the viewpoint that the educational techniques applied in education are linked to recent advancements made in the field of neuroscience, like application of brain-based education in early childhood learning. They suggest that methods of instruction, compatible with the brain tend to follow constructivist approaches and involve open-ended, process-based, discovery and learner-centred activities. "Brain compatible" teaching is believed to be accomplished by catering to different learning styles of students and also to multiple intelligences. Sensory experiences in the form of different kinds of play and video games prove to be effective in enhancing cognitive and emotional abilities and also in seeking attention. Creation of a congenial environment, adoption of developmentally appropriate practices taking care of the ethical and moral concerns are crucial elements in Early Childhood Education. An amalgamated approach looking into aspects of child development, cognitive and behavioural science needs to be adapted along with the neuroscientific approach, in order to promote positive learning outcomes and all around development of the learners.

Keywords: *educational neuroscience, neuroscientific approach, neuromyth, neuroethics, early childhood, learning, cognition*

Introduction

The current era has witnessed rapid technological advancement which has brought forth many challenges before the educationists, philosophers, neuroscientists and researchers, as to how children should be taught, so as to bring about positive learning outcomes, at the same time catering to individual differences and addressing the needs of special children. These challenges are being faced by educators at all levels of education. Zambo (2013) has highlighted the usefulness of educational neuroscience in teaching young children. She argues that the schools, homes and communities can contribute in creating a congenial environment for learners, if findings from neuroscience, education, psychology and sociology are substantially utilised to understand not only the strengths and weaknesses but also the abilities and needs of each and every child. With the development of the field of cognitive neuroscience which explores the mechanisms of change at the level of cognitive and neural systems, much attention is being paid on the role of educational experiences in shaping the functional circuits in the brain, associated with complex cognitive skills such as reading or math. Such kinds of studies marked the emergence of the field of 'Educational Neuroscience.' This paper attempts to explore the neuroscientific approach, its positive and negative effects, the associated ethical and moral concerns, and its application in early childhood learning.

Educational neuroscience: Boon or bane

Educational neuroscience connotes the intersection between the mind, the brain and education. It has not only percolated the textbooks but also in the curriculum of teacher training programmes. Numerous researchers have highlighted the importance of neuroscience in education. Educational Neuroscience (EN) draws upon varied theoretical perspectives from neuroscientific, pedagogical and classroom praxis and establishes a judicious interrelation of insights, drawing upon an ethos of evidence-informed scientific understanding of the behaviour of the brain and its association with development of innovative and novel teaching and learning strategies. Gaeke, 2009, states that educationists need to work in collaboration with neuroscientists in order to contribute to effective realisation of educational applications (p.8). Gaeke enumerates the benefits of neuroscience in education, by saying that application of

evidences gathered from neuroscience in education can prove to be an effective means of reclamation of eroded professional autonomy (Gaeke, 2009, p.7).

A number of researchers argue that neuroscience guides several theories and principles of learning for e.g. many theories like 'Theory of Cognitive Development' (Piaget), 'Identity and Personality Development' (Erickson) and 'Moral Development Theory' (Kohlberg) have stated that development is a linear progress which passes through various stages. A belief which was commonly held by these psychologists was that the development stages are largely predictable. The effect of neuroscience on Piaget's cognitive development theory can be seen when he talks about the processes of assimilation, accommodation and equilibration. Zambo states that neuroscience goes on to a large extent, in helping teachers understand the biology of their pupils, their learning styles, behaviours etc. It not only helps in development of effective behaviour regulation strategies but also proves as an effective means of aligning the conceptual challenges by understanding the processes adopted by the human brain to decode and comprehend language (Hruby & Goswami 2011, as cited in Zambo, D. 2013, p.11). Traditionally, EN is believed to be of utmost importance for children, especially those with learning difficulties and struggling to progress in mainstream curriculum. It not only offers insights into variations in brain development and its relationship with variation in the cognitive, affective, and social development which are of utmost importance for development of not only robust but also valid learning theories, which can be applied on all kinds of learners (Gabrieli, 2016).

It is no doubt that EN has multiple benefits but several researchers have provided empirical evidences and have warned educators to be very cautious while applying the neuroscientific approach in dealing with the learners (Paradis, 2007; Wilis, 2006; Bruer, 1999, 2006, as cited in Zambo, D. 2013, p.11.). The inability of teachers to understand the functioning of the brain and the process of development is likely to influence their views on various learning disorders in their students, which in turn impacts the learning outcomes in students suffering from any kind of disorders (Jones, 2014, p. 817). OECD (UK's Brain and Learning Project, 2002) defined Neuro

myths as "misconception generated by a misunderstanding a misreading or a misquoting of facts scientifically established (by brain research) to make a case for use of brain research in education and other contexts.'' Neuromyths are not only influenced by cultural conditions but also by language barriers and biases (Jones, 2014, p. 818-819).

As rightly stated by Howard Jones (2010), neuromyths have a strong bearing on moulding the perception, beliefs and views of educators. So, it is very necessary for the teacher educators to be cautious that their student do not gain any faulty ideas from them and engage in unethical treatment with children later during their professional life. A similar argument was made by Geake, 2009, p. 12, stating that neuroscience account of learning is sometimes not applied appropriately in the classroom. Teaching being a noble profession and a moral enterprise should take care of the ethical principles while dealing with the young and innocent minds.

Brain based education in early childhood

Last several decades have witnessed important developments in the field of neuroscience and in technology, that have provided insights into how the brain function of students can be monitored while they are reading, finding solutions to mathematical problems, or are engaged in performing other kinds of educational tasks. Jensen (2008) called for "a new paradigm," what he referred to as 'brain-based education'. This novel paradigm gave rise to numerous claims, that techniques which are "brain-based" are presumed to be more effective, without any empirical evidences of their effectiveness, so the claim seemed superficial. Research in neuroscience provided possibilities to critically evaluate these claims and engage in evidence-based-practice in education. Several educationists have tried to establish links between educational techniques to recent advancements made in the field of neuroscience, suggesting that some instructional techniques are brain based (Laster, 2008), compatible with the brain (Tate, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009; Ronis, 2007), brain friendly (Perez, 2008), or brain targeted (Hardiman, 2003). They suggest that methods of instruction that are compatible with the brain tend to follow constructivist approaches involving open-ended, process-based, discovery and learner-centred activities. Some authors are of the viewpoint that "brain

compatible" teaching can be accomplished by catering to different learning styles of students and also to multiple intelligences (Sprenger, 1999; Ronis, 2007; Tate, 2009).

Creation of suitable environments to promote learning and cognition in children

Gaming experiences in the form of video games enhance performance of children on a variety of tasks like tracking of multiple objects (Green & Bavelier, 2006), exploration of a distracting background and identification of target objects (Green & Bavelier, 2006). However, video games have little role to play in enhancement of perceptual, visuomotor and attentional skills (Green & Bavelier, 2006). In early childhood learning, free play appears to be more useful for cognitive development than organised physical activity (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). Free play mainly involves gross motor play but activities such as role-playing, pretend play and those involving manipulating and building or creating objects can also be included. Burdette and Whitaker have reported that these bring about improvement in attention, emotional and cognitive effects in children. According to Szalavitz & Perry, 2011, play nurtures brain development through involvement of emotions and cognition in sensorimotor activity, executive function, and language expression. Synaptic connections are stimulated through pretend play.

Principles of learning: Connecting theory with practice

Brian Cambourne (2001), an Australian educator, on the basis of his observations of writing skills of children unto 3 years, developed eight literacy learning conditions. Rushton et al., 2003, on the basis of the brain research principles aligned Cambourne's "Conditions of Literacy Learning" in the same way as Rushton and Larkin (2001) did with the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) principles. Rushton and Larkin (2001), believed that if DAP and ''Cambourne's Conditions of Literacy Learning'', are aligned with the principles from neuroscience, a compelling theory can be created on which teaching practices can be based. They suggested the following principles of learning:

- Immersion of the child in a stimulating environment involving all the senses and characterised by emotional elements that alert the neurological networks of the child's brain

enabling him/her to be attentive and thus learning is likely to occur.

- Providing stimulating lessons which are modelled in a non-threatening manner focus student's attention and their creative abilities are expressed.

- A non-threatening environment is characterised by 'freedom of choice' i.e. the students are free to make relevant choices with regard to daily activities and the content of study.

- Children need to feel safe and hence allowing mistakes and recognising their accomplishments help them learn more effectively without any fear. The amygdala in the child's brain is believed to have an intense impact on children's response to stress. If the amygdala is stimulated in stressful conditions, the hormones and the neurotransmitters inhibit rational thought.

- Play method is useful if it is open-ended and caters not only to the individual differences but also the unique talents of the young learners.

- If the early educators are caring and imaginative, accept the 'child,' as a whole and encourage natural progression of learning, they make the children feel more confident. about their abilities, children have trust in their teacher, and hence find themselves more inclined towards learning.

Interface between Neuroscience and Education: Ethical and moral concerns

With the increased percolation of neuroscience in the lives of young children, it is very important to look into the ethical and moral issues too. Neuroscience being a boon as well as a bane can have social, ethical and legal implications. The concept of 'neuroethics' has emerged to help educators to pay attention to these concerns. According to Racine and Illes (2006) (as cited in Zambo, D., 2013, p.12). Neuroethics focuses on the inappropriate manipulation of the human brain. Zambo, on the basis of her experiences as a teacher educator while dealing with pre-service and in-service teachers has talked about the neuromyths which her students had, and that too with little scientific truth. They seemed to pay attention to only those ideas which were in consonance with their own beliefs and seemed to ignore the valid information which was being provided to them

through the lectures during their teacher training programmes. Gazzinga states that neuroscience and ethics do not amalgamate easily and this is clearly evident from the fact that we tend to focus only on those ideas which are in consonance with our beliefs and emotions, which may unfairly cloud the judgement of the educators. Not only teachers but parents and the caregivers unconsciously propagate ideas which may hamper a child's development for e.g. providing medicines to children suffering from attention deficit and having trouble in self-regulation. We need to question ourselves whether it is just to put our children on medication just because we want them to be successful not only academically but also in other spheres of life. Zambo, on the basis of her research observations has categorised teachers into: believers (those who consider neuroscientists as experts and rely on new technologies to ascertain what and how to teach and on dealing with students with special needs) , believers with reservations (those who believe that apart from neuroscience , information from the fields of child development, educational psychology and psychiatry should also be used) and non-believers (who believed that interactions between students and teachers are more important than a brain image captured on a screen) .

Teachers nowadays seem to find it very difficult to care for the free will, identity and feeling of self-worth of every child and every teacher has her/his unique way of responding to these issues. The values which the teachers hold influence their behaviour and the ways in which they respond to their students' needs. Brunkhorst, 2005, as cited in Zambo, 2013, p.15, on the other hand goes to the extent of saying that the values that the teachers have influence their actions and the teachers who have genuine interest in their students' moral development adopt such teaching strategies which help in development of creativity, enhance interest of their students and also bring out their inherent potential. These teachers do not fail to accept the moral challenges which appear before them, are passionate about their profession and are very cautious of retaining their genuine interest in deep learning. As rightly stated, the best way to inculcate values in our learners is to model sensitivity, care and genuine respect towards each individual, their family as well as the community which they are a part of, overcoming racial, gender, religious and other biases. Zambo, 2013, pp 17, states that philosophers have outlined five approaches to moral decisions:

*A **utilitarian** approach:* which believes in prevention as well as cure. In other words, it aims in preventing acts which are harmful, which penalise offenders and prevent rehabilitation of those who can be saved from the bad consequences of immoral and unethical acts.

*A **rights** approach:* which believes in an individual's right to know the truth, safety, freedom of choice, take decisions and the right to have their choices honoured. These rights are considered more important than effects of scientific advances.

*A **fairness or justice** approach:* which is strongly against favouritism and discrimination as proposed by Noddings (1999, 2005a, 2005b) (as cited in Zambo, D. 2013, p.17.) who highlights the importance of finding out the answer to the question that "who would be the beneficiaries of such an approach, and who will be the losers?"

*A **common good** approach:* believes in developing communities based on common goals and values. A similar approach was suggested by Law, 2005, as cited in Zambo, D. 2013, p.18., who proposed the idea of moral schools which ensure development of each and every individual.

*A **virtue** approach:* proponents of this approach like Bullogh and Brunkhorst believe in nurturance of values with a spirit of compassion, reflection, honesty and integrity, to enable everyone to live up to certain ideals.

Each approach has its benefits and the responsibility lies on the teachers, parents as well as the caregivers to derive the best out of them, to benefit the children.

Conclusion

Educational Neuroscience (EN) is a field which draws upon a number of theoretical perspectives from neuroscientific, pedagogical and classroom praxis and establishes a judicious interrelation of insights drawing upon an ethos of evidence-informed scientific understanding of the behaviour of the brain and its association with development of new teaching and learning

strategies. The ethical and moral issues associated with application of neuroscience in education are still a matter of debate. The teachers, parents and caregivers of young children need to be very cautious while dealing with them. Teachers need to to have a thorough understanding of the needs of the learners, aim at their overall development and be cautious not to promote neuromyths, as their own beliefs and decisions can have a negative impact on the young children. We need to realise that the information derived from neuroscience can be extended, modified according to our own beliefs and myths. An amalgamated approach looking into aspects of child development, cognitive and behavioural science needs to be adapted along with the neuroscientific approach, in order to promote positive learning outcomes and all around development of the learners. No doubt, there are a variety of evidences to support the contribution of neuroscience in suggesting good pedagogical practices, their contribution in resolution of dilemmas and in suggesting alternatives in pedagogy and curriculum design and its potential in improved practice needs further exploration.

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Inclusion in Early Childhood Education – Fostering Culture of Belonging

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Abstract

Each child enters the learning environment with diverse educational needs which must be catered and fulfilled to ensure that each student becomes an important and integrated member of the society. The NEP 2020 has been envisioned with keeping in focus, the future needs and beliefs of India. It emphasizes on inclusive and equitable education which is also critical for achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is the need of the hour for our education system as we are a nation of enriching diversities in terms of culture, language, religion and customs to name a few. To achieve the goal of universal brotherhood and fulfil the dream of universal education we need to inculcate positive sense of belonging in our young students so that they can contribute to a compassionate and tolerant society in their later years.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Culture, Equitable*

Introduction

Inclusive education for all is an essential goal which is decisive for envisioning an equitable and just society. National Education Policy(NEP)2020 states that the Indian education system must aim that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth and background. This vision of Government of India encompasses the need of fostering culture of belonging in our classrooms.

Culture of Belonging

Culture of belonging is the development of sense of belongingness as a valued member of community. Belonging is also defined as the need to form at least a minimum quantity of affectively positive connections within one's context (Baumeister and Leary 1995, Fairclough, 2009). Maslow's (1999) hierarchy of psychological needs also stressed that the need for belonging must be met before motivated engagement can be attained. As pointed by Osborne (1997) and Voelkl (1997) children who do not enjoy a positive sense of belonging are distinctly more likely to be disaffected or disengaged at school. Further, Baumeister and Leary (1995) stressed that the need for belonging is so prevalent and far reaching especially in younger kids that it dominates an individual's emotions, cognition, behaviour and health.

Dewey's philosophy of education also comprehends an intimate relation between child's life and his experiences as a continuous process. Vygotsky (1978) put forwarded - "The law of Cultural Development" which states that "every function in the child's cultural development appears at two levels: Social and Individual". These inter-psychological and intra-psychological relations led to formation of actual relations among humans. These aforementioned theories form the basic concept of "culture of belonging". Culture of belonging is a pragmatic dimension of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The ancient Indian education system was based on values of compassion, love and tolerance. Gupta (2000) summarises that the ancient Indian education system aimed for a) formation of high character b) the development of personality c) Inclusion of social and cultural values, to name few. Similarly, the "educultural wheel" presents a model based on a dynamic relationship across a set of core values and knowledge. It reinforces the integrity of cultural knowledge the students and teachers bring along with them to the learning environment. Though set up on core values of Maori culture (indigenous to New Zealand), it has universal appeal in instilling culturally responsive pedagogy.

The Educultural wheel as suggested by Macfarlane et all (2004) comprises of few basic values.

- whanaungatanga (building relationships)

- rangatiratanga (teacher effectiveness)

- manaakitanga (ethic of caring).

- kotahitanga (ethic of bonding)

All these values lead to development of culturally responsive environment which inculcates a meaningful culture of belonging. A positive culture of belonging showcases teacher's effectiveness and willingness in building and maintaining relationships among her and students.

As teachers, educators and facilitators we need to follow certain practices which would ensure my classroom becomes more inclusive, culturally responsive and exhibit culture of belonging. I, hereby share few such classroom management tips and recommended practices

- By planning "me time" in the class weekly. For a class of forty students, every Friday eight students will be allotted five minutes for their "ME TIME". They will be encouraged to share their experiences of last weeks, something special that took place or even share some thoughts which may have disturbed them. This will help in building relationships and also the bond of caring.

- By putting students in small groups for classroom interactions. By making groups of students with varied interests and soft skills will help them to know each other and feel bonded with each other.

- By leading oneself as an example in showing compassion, respect and care to all students irrespective of their diverse cultural and or intellectual pursuits.

- By planning adequate participation of "special children" in class assembly, so that they are also encouraged to showcase their talents to the wider audience. This will help in fulfilling a teacher's role in culturally responsive pedagogy.

- By holding regular discussions, and interactions with parents, so that they are also engaged in their child's academic journey.

- Allocating projects in small groups so that collaborative work can be done. The same can be done for online projects also.

- 'Show and Tell' is also an effective way wherein children can show anything from their house, garden or can even show any article or a book cover.

Suggested Resources

A few meaningful resources which can guide teachers further in this right direction.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M6whw9k8N4

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ylsG5zx6Mo

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdYJr03eJjE

- Videos for teachers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfWhQUz2J70 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGPDqzhjtj0&t=109s

- Usage of various e-assessment models for formative and summative assessments (especially for students who find difficult to write or speak). One can use quizzes, kahoot, pro quiz and quizlet.

All these are suggestive aids. However, readers are encouraged to scout for such resources and use them to make their classroom more culturally responsive and to exhibit positive culture of belonging.

Conclusion

Fostering, culture of belonging in early childhood classroom is a prerogative on teachers, as facilitators of education, we need to think and critically reflect upon our teaching. Thinkers like Dewey, Skidmore and many other writers along with the Educultural framework can shape and guide our thoughts. One can hope strategies devised and discussed above will hold worth and will be able to inculcate respect for diversity existing in our classrooms and do justice to inculcate inclusiveness. I know it is deemed challenging but small steps towards building culture of belonging, respect for diversity will surely help to complete the arduous path.

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Why Early Childhood Education must be a National Priority in the Post-pandemic Era with Increased Inclusion?

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Before we answer the question "Why" let us build a perspective on the current status of the havoc wreaked by COVID-19 on children's education globally.

Spanning from March 11, 2020, to February 2, 2021, schools were closed for an average of 95 instruction days all over the world – this makes up for ~50% of the classroom time allocated for instructions. On a global scale, 214 million students from pre-primary to higher secondary education missed 75% of their classroom instruction time since March 2020. Of these 214 million, a whopping 168 million kids missed school altogether due to closures. As of February 2, 2021, 196 million kids hailing from 27 countries (~13% globally) had their schools still closed. Of these schools, ~80% of classroom instructions had been missed in the eleven months starting March 2020!

Figure 1: Source -UNICEF, COVID19-and-school-closures.pdf
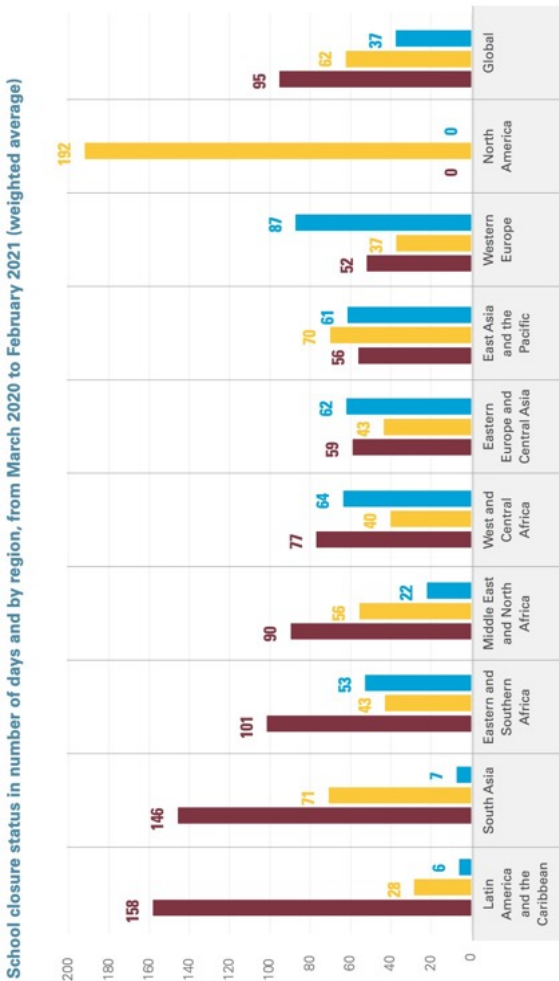
Here's how much each continent was impacted in the process:

As is visible in the chart above, kids in South Asia were the second most affected strata globally. With further school closures, the impact is expected to be aggravated, with the worst affected kids being the ones who are most vulnerable a.k.a. the primary students. The impact on them has been unprecedented.
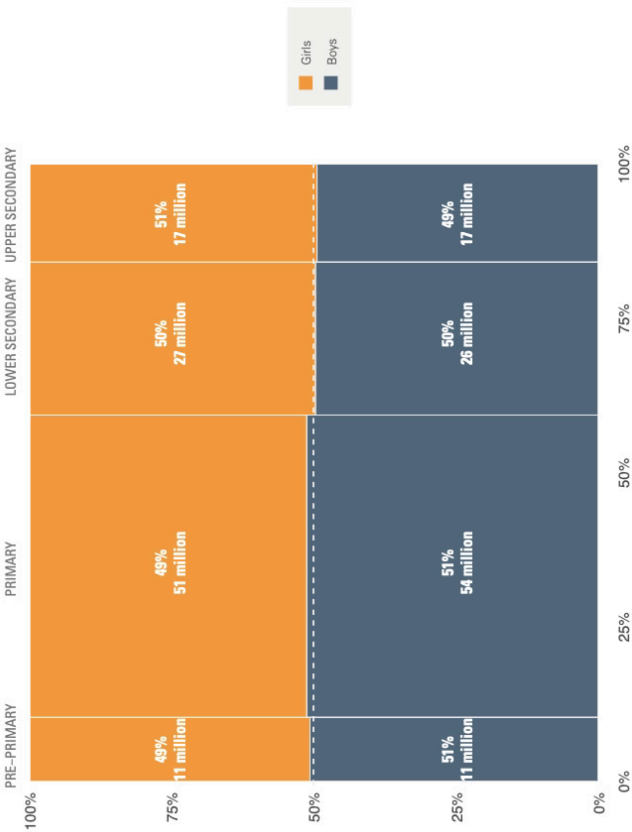
Figure 2: Source – UNICEF COVID19-and-school-closures.pdf

Primary students also constitute the largest fragment of the affected 214 million students and are therefore also the majority of those who missed 75% of their classroom instruction time (105 million)!

Here's where the problem worsens. Even more distressed are the students who belong to the lesser privileged sections of society with no access to the basic learning infrastructure.

Figure 3: Source UNICEFCOVID19-and-school-closures.pdf
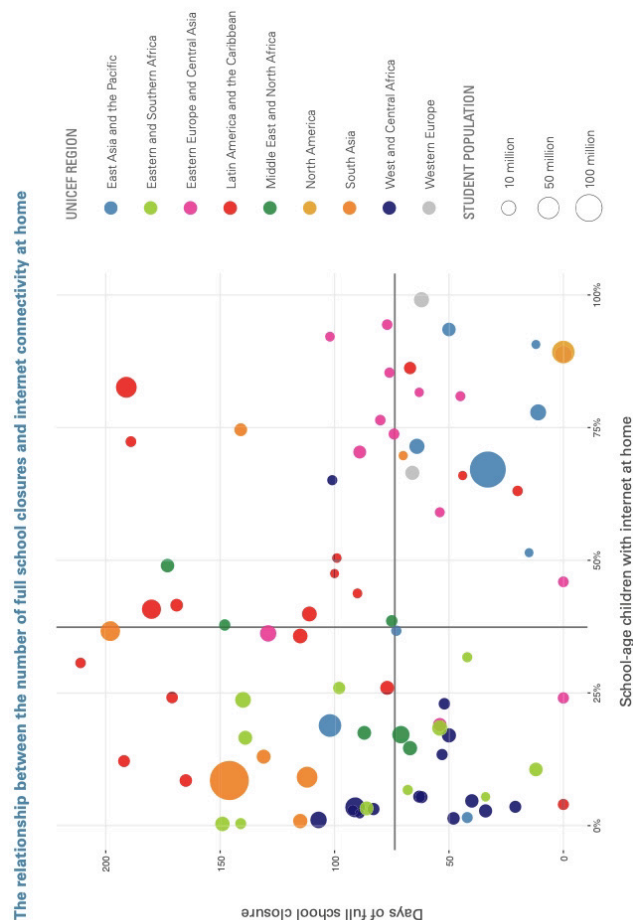
Tackling this problem requires a two-pronged approach from two different stakeholders the government / other partners and the parents of these children.

Here is what governments & related partners can do:

- On a war footing basis, invest in enhancing the services that provide the little ones with a befitting start to their lives. E.g., 10% of the education budget can be dedicated to pre-primary education. This will give more children access to learning opportunities as well as requisite facilities.

- Significantly improve access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) services (be it at home or school). E.g. regular health screening, nutrition support, antenatal care, etc.

- Introduce more family-friendly ECD policies immediately and issue private sector directives. These must enable parents or guardians to provide the best possible start to the lives of their kids. This can also be effectively sustained by implementing better workplace policies. Gather data on the key metrics of ECD& monitor progress. In order to

track progress, we must first figure out a way to measure the children's development with respect to the following aspects social, cognitive and emotional. This must be compared with global data to arrive at a comparison and progress report.

- Establish competent and dedicated leadership to manage ECD programs & strategize efforts across ancillary sectors. Related sectors include education, health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene. Policies can be set up and a certain ministry can oversee the initiatives as well as drive progress.

- Bolster the demand for high-quality ECD services. Awareness must be created among parents, guardians and caretakers to better apprise them of what Early Childhood Development entails. Informed decisions will undoubtedly drive demand and give the ECE sector a boost.

Here is what parents can do:

- Unfailingly establish a routine together with your kid. Factor in education, playtime, reading and other activities. Try to arrive at these plans together and include your kid in the decision.

- Promote open and transparent conversations. The little ones need to be encouraged to ask more questions and easily express their emotions. Invite them to conversations and reinforce their knowledge of the importance of good practices.

- Be patient with the kids. Begin learning sessions that are shorter in duration and gradually make them longer. E.g., for a 30- minute study target, start with a 10-minute session.

- Keep in touch with the kids' educating faculty. This is aimed at learning more about the child than monitoring him or her. Try and get some guidance from them to facilitate the process of learning and improving the quality of your interactions.

Most countries in the Asia Pacific region have not implemented 1 year of cost-free & compulsory pre-primary education. At the same time,household incomes have dwindled throughout the pandemic causing a direct impact

even on student enrolment. The ECCE (Early Childhood Care & Education) sector became the most vulnerable since a large portion of it is privately funded and operated. With the right policies and efforts, we can give these kids a brighter tomorrow irrespective of their socio-economic background.

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Parental Involvement in their Children's Education During the Pandemic

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Abstract

Parental involvement in children's education has always been considered as important but its significance has increased manyfold during the pandemic. As the schooling takes place from the home, parents have to take up the role of full-time educators, manage household chores and work from home and fully take the responsibility of child care and children's education in absence of any institutional support. The parental engagement becomes all the more challenging in single parent families and dual earner families. The role of schools become important to ensure home-school connect (for the child) and to ensure parental participation and collaboration in the time of pandemic.

Keywords- *Parents, Education, Children, Online teaching, Pandemic*

COVID -19 as a global pandemic has drastically impacted the schooling experience for children. The online continuation of schooling requires sustained and considerable parental involvement, especially, for young children. The current article summarises author's observations and reflections on the parental involvement in their children's education during pandemic. It is based on the case study of a young child whose online classes were observed for a span of four months last year. The author carefully took down notes during the classes which were further studied and discussed with fellow colleagues and scholars. At varied times, author also had telephonic and face to face conversations with few parents who have young children and are currently involved with their online education. The present article is based on author's observations of the online classes and interactions with select parents. It comprises of three sections namely- Parents taking on the role of full-time educators in the pandemic, coping with health concerns and economic uncertainties in pandemic and parental involvement in single parent families and dual earner families.

Parents taking on the role of full time Educators during the Pandemic

Parental involvement in their children's education has always been considered important in many scholarly writings and research literature (Coleman,1966; Epstein, 1989; Haack, 2007; Redding, 1991). Coleman's famous research of 1966 (as cited in Dickinson, 2016) highlighted that a student's family background is the most significant determinant of how well a child would learn in school or child's

educational success over many other factors such as physical amenities at school or funding. Joyce Epstein's decade long research (1989) on parental involvement in their child's schooling emphasizes the need to understand the relevance of family-school continuity in a child's life along with understanding how schools and families can support one another. Haack (2007) in her doctoral thesis cites various research studies that have shown parental involvement being critical for child's academic success- language development (Senechal & Lefevere, 2002), mathematics achievement (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005) and better adjustment in schools (Mc Wayne et al., 2004). Haack (2007) also discusses many research studies which emphasis that the parental involvement also leads to improved school attendance, inculcates regular homework habits and positive attitudes towards schools, leads to increased educational and career aspirations in children. Redding (1991) states that identifiable patterns of family life manifested in the parent-child relationship, routines of family life and family expectations and supervision contribute to a child's ability to learn in a school.

The role and engagement of parents of young children has become all the more pertinent during the times of pandemic as children continue with their schooling in an online mode. Not only do the parents have to continue with the role of caretakers for their children, they also have to assume the role of full time 'educators'. It involves parents multi-tasking various aspects of child rearing along with taking out time to attend online sessions along with their children.

During these sessions, parents provide technical assistance, translate and simplify instructions given by the teachers, arrange and organise for materials, stationery and books needed for online classes, prepare a conducive (silent and clean) space for learning in the house, respond to child's queries and repeat instructions/procedures wherever necessary, make sure that the assigned tasks of the school are completed and submitted on daily basis and so on. The engagement of parents is not limited to attending the classes with their children. Parents are intimated about necessary information regarding worksheets, projects and home tasks all day long through the social networking platforms and Emails. They are also advised to regularly check school websites for any notifications.

The processes and practices of the school are emulated and conveyed very effectively through the agency of the parents. These include disciplinary as well as pedagogic processes. Parents are expected to guard and monitor the mobility and behaviour of their child while he/she is on screen. There are regular reminders for the parents to ascertain that children are presentable during classes, have eaten food before the class to minimise disturbances, are sitting in right posture while attending classes and even responding in a manner which is acceptable to the school. The parents are also trained in pedagogic processes by giving meticulous instructions on daily basis regarding how the written work is to be done in the notebooks, conceptual progression in different disciplines, practice and revision schedules that need to be followed and so on. Through the online classes, not only children but their parents are also becoming subjects of disciplinary and pedagogic practices of the school.

Coping with health concerns and economic uncertainties during the Pandemic

The online classes provide a sense of continuity with the schooling experience. It also provides an assurance that the learning process of children is maintained along with the covering of the prescribed syllabus. Day after day, conceptual progression of various disciplines unfolds and children are taught to excel in various skills and abilities. The consistency and perseverance through which slotted syllabi are covered in pre decided time slots, elevates the process of learning from the existent crisis of health scare and financial constraints that the child's family

may face. It is almost as if the normalcy and everydayness of the school life is replicated through the online classes. No attempt is made to address the mental health of the children and their families or to attend to their anxieties, doubts and fears. The fact that the children are only able to have minimal or no peer interactions for months at length is something not considered as important to be included in these online sessions. Parents would need to spend considerable amount of time to address these concerns in absence of regular schooling.

Spending time exclusively with children while not worrying about doing the household chores and financial constraints is a luxury that only few parents can afford during the pandemic. This idea is explained well by Lareau (2003) who states that the social class of parents shape their attitudes towards parenting, cultural beliefs and practices about child-rearing. Economic and material resources of a particular social class influence educational outcomes of children belonging to those classes. The parents of middle and upper classes employ a peculiar way of parenting (termed as concerted cultivation), which focusses on "Children's structured activities, language development, and reasoning in the home, and active intervention in schooling" (Lareau, 2003, p.32). Parents practicing concerted cultivation actively volunteer, intervene and participate in educational activities of their children. They structure their children's lives by systematically organising leisure and extra-curricular activities, leaving no time for free play. In comparison to concertedly cultivating the children, parents of working and low-income classes value natural growth of children.

Parents who have economic and material resources use this 'concerted cultivation' to best of their advantage in the pandemic times. This is done by ensuring uninterrupted network coverage, devices to attend the class, being able to regularly attend online classes with the child, preparing them to converse well in English, helping the children to efficiently complete the assigned home tasks and perform well during online interactions.

Parental Involvement in Single Parent Families and Dual Earner Families

In contemporary times, there are many families which are unique in terms of number of family

members residing in a home at a particular time and roles/ responsibilities as shared by family members. Few such families can be of single parent families and dual earner families (D'Cruz & Bharat, 2001). Single parent families are those where children are dependents and the responsibility of upbringing of children lies predominantly on one parent and dual earner families are those where both parents are contributing financially to the household income and jointly sharing the upbringing and rearing of dependent children (ibid, 2001).

Online classes for young children, during the pandemic, would often require continuous presence and availability of the parent. The process becomes tedious and challenging in the families of single parent or dual earner, due to absence of any institutional support system (daycares, creches and household help) or help from other family members. The parent (s) living alone at the time and working from the home often juggles between managing the everyday household work and sustaining the family financially. They have to face the additional stressors of meeting the requirements and expectations of the school. It is to ascertain the regular schooling experience for their children by increasingly pedagogizing the home space. It means to work out a daily schedule that reflects certain time slot to attend children's classes, to get the homework done, to figure out ways to engage children all day long. Also, to create learning opportunities for the children at home like reading storybooks, playing boardgames and so on. Single parents and dual earner parents also experience anxiety about increased daily screen time and guilt of not being able to spend qualitative time with their children.

Conclusion

The importance of parental involvement in their children's education has emerged as an important aspect of online teaching during the pandemic. Parents are increasingly perceived as crucial stakeholders and participants in the learning process of their children as schooling is happening from home. This essentially requires that regular and detailed communication transpires between schools and homes so as to enable parents to continue the engagement of their children in structured learning. We can learn tremendously from Joyce Epstein's work (1989) on teachers' practices of parent involvement and effects of family-school connection on students, parents and teachers. She discusses five types of parent involvement and states that parents wish to be more involved in their children's learning, especially at home and they need clear direction from school. She describes five major types of parental involvement in terms of basic obligation of parents, basic obligations of schools, parent involvement at school, parent involvement in learning activities at home and parental involvement in governance and advocacy (Epstein, 1989, p.25).

Besides ensuring persistent home-school connection in this pandemic, we also need to have regular counselling and support sessions for the children and the parents. Schools can facilitate online platforms for parent support groups, individual teacher- parent interactions, engagement with school counsellors, training sessions for parents to orient them with the use of technology in their children's education. The nature of home tasks and assignments also need to be such that young children can independently engage, with minimal or no support from the parents. The focus of children's education during pandemic needs to go beyond the purview of syllabus completion and should also include the concerns of mental health, better adjustability and preparedness for the ongoing pandemic and creating safe, comfortable environment at home which is conducive for learning.

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Empower Children to Be Safe in Cyberspace

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Abstract

Cyberspace has opened up new vistas for this digital generation with seamless access to knowledge (good & bad) and new frontiers which could have never been imagined until a few years ago. Today, individuals are presented with the power to choose the kind of information that they wish to consume and the way they want to consume it. This unprecedented power called the Internet is becoming more and more accessible to one and all.

With all its positives and a few potential pitfalls, the nuances of cyberspace are introducing new questions but more amorphous answers for all of 'netizens', especially for young adults and children of all age groups and even younger ones. The virtual world has also opened up before us, the opportunity to participate in unsupervised online environments; the stakes are higher and the responsibilities greater.

Considering easy availability and accessibility to digital tools, we must understand and uphold our obligation for safe, moral, ethical and legal behavior. The article enlists five simple cyber safety rules which are essential for keeping children safe in the online world and empowering them to be responsible digital citizens. The five rules discussed in this article are: 1. Pause before post, 2. Privacy of personal information, 3. Limit Screen Time, 4. Don't befriend strangers, 5. Deal with Cyberbullying.

Keywords : *Virtual World,Cyber space, screen time*

Introduction

With its millions of web sites and thousands of social media platforms and apps, there's never really been any medium like the World Wide Web! The Internet is like an 'information superhighway' or a 'huge bulletin board', where things change at the blink of an eyelid.

The misunderstanding that nothing in this dynamic environment is permanent further leads to a misconception. It makes the Internet like a safe haven, anonymity and impermanence adding to its fake aura, but actually the opposite is true. As a naive user, you tend to overlook the fact that whatever you post on the Internet stays on the Internet and that it's far more permanent than you can imagine - a simple fact with deep ramifications. The digital footprints are not just superficial but are very deep .Children as young as 4-5 year old are posting videos on youtube or are making fake facebook accounts and posting pictures. They don't understand the repercussions it can have on them or their families.To safeguard our children from these it is very important for teacher, caregivers or parents to discuss the following rules with them.They will help them in getting trapped.

Rules for cyber safety

Just like following traffic safety rules can help avoid road accidents, following **five smart cyber safety rules** can ensure online safety.As a parent and a teacher

Rule 1: Pause before You Post

Let's understand that sharing information online is not a bad thing, especially if you are using the experience to spread good things. The peril is that - unlike a chalkboard that you can write on and erase at will, the Internet has no 'delete' button**.**

Information which people thought was private doesn't always become public, through the machinations of predators and hackers. Often its people's own misunderstanding of the nature of digital communication and so the best way to protect yourself is by developing your digital consciousness.

Now many netizens believe that – Whatever happens in Cyberspace remains in Cyberspace…. Forever!

This is a myth. Unlike something that you can write on a blackboard which you can rub or change, an online comment /picture/video/email

once posted can never be removed. A few seconds after posting it, you might want to go back and delete it, but someone, somewhere on the World Wide Web would have already read, copied, downloaded, and forwarded your post. It's like putting up a notice on the school notice board and going back after sometime to remove it. By then it would've been read by many and spread by word of mouth.

Prior to the advent of the Internet, youthful indiscretion might only have existed in the memories of people who were present there, or in the form of blurred, easily destroyable Polaroid photographs. Now, in the digital era, these things can be posted online and broadcast to the world and even if they are taken down, cached versions of web pages can still be viewed, copied, morphed and re-posted. Images and text messages can be forwarded, screen shots can be captured within seconds and even corrupted or deleted files can be easily retrieved.

Remember there is no delete button on the Internet, so before posting anything online, ask yourself:

- Who will be able to read my post?

- Am I proud of what I am posting?

- Will I be comfortable if my parents or peer or teachers view my post?

- Rule 2 Privacy of Personal Information

We've all heard the story of little Red Riding Hood. She would have never got into trouble had she not told the wolf that she was visiting her Granny, at the other end of the forest. Her story is relevant even in today's digital world because it can help you relate to the dangers of disclosing personal information to a stranger.

Would you ever share personal information - such as name, age, address, school name, phone number – with a stranger on the street? You would **never do** that. However, when it comes to Cyberspace, we tend to lower our guards. You know, sitting in the comfort of our homes, surrounded by four walls and a just screen in front of us - we feel safe. But are we really safe?

Unfortunately, this tiny gateway that has given us unlimited, instant access to information is also turning out to be a breeding ground for bullies, paedophiles, unethical activities and cybercrime. Dating and social networking sites allow people to make new connections, but also harbor risks such as 'stranger danger', identity theft, cyber bullying and abuse.

So it's important to keep your personal information, private.

Rule 3: Limit Screen Time

Another harsh reality is that we have become slaves of the very technology that was meant to free us. From smart phones to laptops, one click is never enough. You start, but you can't seem to stop! With its never-ending supply of games, apps, social networking sites, instant messaging and information sources, users often forget to heat the clock ticking.

No wonder 'Internet Addiction' has been recognized as a 'disorder' by WHO and the numbers of sufferers seeking help for 'technology addiction' is sharply on the rise.

Simple technique like ABC of screen time

ABC of Limiting Screen Time in children where each alphabet has a meaning

Alternatives - If you wish to cut down screen time, you'll need to think of **activities to fill in place of screen time.** Each child has a unique talent, a passion that excites them. Explore that passion and interesting fun activities that excite you, steering you away from screens. It could be anything from singing, dancing or playing a musical instrument, playing football or tennis, skating or swimming. The idea is to generate the same feeling of fun and excitement that unsupervised screen time fills you up with.

Budget – Depending on the age of the child, certain daily screen time is permissible. Decided on X amount of time per day, and in case you don't use those minutes, you could **bank them for later use**.

With its unlimited scrolling potential, social media doesn't have a natural end point, likewise YouTube and online games, use a **timer** to keep track of time or use apps such as stay focused to clock the minutes.

Create a Digital Detox Plan - Set aside times for the entire family to unplug devices and connect with each other. For instance, meal times or an hour before bedtime could be family time for quality time together without TV, smart phones, online games and computers. Families could also consider a longer digital detox over the weekend and improve family bonding.Take out those old

games-name place ,animal thing,chineese whisper,Ludo,Bingo etc just to name a few.

• *Rule 4 – Don't befriend strangers, online*

Often, the need to attract more 'likes' for social media posts encourages users to accept friend requests from strangers. What we don't realize is that – The internet gives people the freedom to create an online identity which may be very different from their real identity. In the real world it might be impossible for a 40 year old to pretend to be a 14 year old girl. But when it comes to Cyberspace this kind of impersonation is possible.

This means that you need to be very cautious! Don't assume that strangers you first meet online are really who they claim to be. It could be a big, bad, hungry wolf, pretending to be granny or a predator pretending to be a princess.

• *Rule 5 – Deal with Cyber Bullying*

Technology is taking bullying beyond the school premises and teenagers may not be sure how to handle the impact. Rather than speaking up, victims just stay silent while trying to figure out ways to get out of it. There have been instances world over where children have resorted to taking extreme steps, because they silently suffered the trauma of being bullied, until it became unbearable.

One thing is very clear - Silence is not the solution.

In fact, there are various coping strategies you can adopt if you're being targeted by online bullies. Victims could initially try passive ways to deal with them - such as blocking the bully, ignoring or avoiding messages and protecting personal information.

At the same time it's important to keep a record of what is happening and where. This could be done by taking screenshots of harmful posts or content. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records can help document it, if required.

Depending upon the gravity of the situation, it could include parental involvement, reporting abuse, legislative action and evidence-based intervention by professionals, counselors or teachers.

The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal is an initiative by the Government of India to facilitate victims to report cybercrime. This portal caters to complaints pertaining to cybercrimes such as cyber bullying. Complaints reported here are dealt by law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

In the times to come we all will rely more on cyber space but as parents.caregivers and teachers we have to be watchful for our children. These simple cyber safety rules will empower and enable young netizens to be safe in the online space. Children studying in the preschools or primary classes all are relying on online teaching and learning but as their caretakers one has to be extra conscious so that they are in safe hands.

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Aspirations of Primary School Students: A Study of a Government School in Delhi

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Abstract

The paper 'Aspirations of primary school students: A study of a government school in Delhi' posits that when children are motivated to dream and aspire, they become aware of a world full of opportunities, choices and the world itself. The research is based on the various aspirations that the learners of age ten to twelve years have. The purpose of the paper was not just to inquire about the aspirations of the students of a government school of Delhi but also to introduce them to a pool of career options that they could choose from, irrespective of gender, post or income. A mixed approach, both qualitative and quantitative, has been employed throughout the whole study. The objectives of this paper have been fulfilled by activities like, 'drawing oneself after fifteen years from now', 'using circle of influence worksheet',role-play, using flashcards for portrayal of different occupation, and survey questionnaire. A range of literature has been the foundation of this research work. It has been found that children aspire on the basis of their current lifestyle and past experiences. Their aspirations, influenced by parents and neighbours, are often gendered. Their aspirations change over time and often revolve around earning a handsome salary. Children strive for a change in their lifestyle and in their societies as well. They believe that their status in the society shall be uplifted by learning and speaking English language and attaining a government job. The research concludes on a note that children should be encouraged to dream and to aspire. They should be supported by their parents and facilitators and also the choice of profession should essentially be based on interest rather than the income or the post.

Keywords: *Aspirations, Scaffolding, Profession*

Introduction

The postulate of this research paper is that when children are encouraged or motivated to aspire, they become familiar with a world full of choices, opportunities and the world itself. Scaffolding should be provided to children to dream and to aim throughout their lives.

There are certain processes that don't require efforts, those that begin from early childhood and are continued till the last breath. We watch others playing, working for survival, loving and dream all of them on our part. The children don't just watch but also observe and internalize the various tasks their caretakers do.

From the pre-school days, children begin to dream and aspire. Primarily, as the children are around their families, they may aspire for the profession of a family member but as the social sphere of the child enlarges, she/he may choose the profession that best suits her/him.

This study has been chosen to widen the scope of some jobs in the market, that is, to introduce the V graders to various career options available for them as per their passion and talent but also

introduce to them the vast pool of occupations, they could choose from. Also, I hope to eliminate certain gender stereotypes like a nurse or a teacher is a lady and only a father can go out to earn. In 'Neighbourhood attributes as determinants of children's outcomes: How robust are the relationships?', a process was suggested by Wilson (1987) according to which the status, choices or values of the neighbours helps in the attribution of positive and negative attributes in those particular neighbourhoods, which affects the aspirations and motivations of individuals in these areas and thus their achievements.

In the study, 'Elementary school pupils' aspirations for higher education: The role of status attainment, blocked opportunities and school context' explains about the term *educational aspirations*. These are the goals or ambitions which pupils and their parents hold with regards to their educational experiences, developments and outcomes. The role of family has been emphasised by the status attainment model which leads to the formation of a child's aspirations related to education and career. The blocked opportunities model emphasises the role

of school experiences of children in forming educational aspirations. Besides these models, other variables have also been used in predicting the educational and career aspirations of pupils like the peers' influence, parental involvement, social support from teachers, neighbourhood and social capital.

'Capabilities and aspirations' talk about one's capacity to aspire as unevenly distributed among different groups which depends on the pre-existing capabilities and practices. Modifications in the aspirations can be made by consciously intervening in the nature of education and the widening world. Aspirations help individuals relate to what kind of life they want to live. The capability set determines the ability of individuals to live different kinds of lives and to work upon their capabilities to live those chosen lifestyle. In a traditional system, one might say that parents expect their children to be as they have been but now-a-days there is a dissatisfaction with the way they have been, leading parents to want something different for their children. Aspirations are realistic, not fantasy ones that are clearly beyond reach. The capacity to aspire is related to the past, the history of the group. It is also a link between the past and the future - since it is determined by past capabilities.

According to Hart, 'How do aspirations matter?' describes that children aspire for a better future and that their intentional and unintentional motivations drive them. The aspirations may be short, medium or long and may vary in importance to the individual as well as their significant others. They vary in importance and time scale, that is, aspirations change. Some aspirations may provoke criticisms. Some may be harmful for the society but, some individuals may aspire in a non-specified way for wanting a 'better life' whereas others might strive for a transformative change in their society. Habitus, as mentioned by Bourdieu, also influences the aspirations of the learners. It relates to the roots, both cultural and familial, from which an individual grows. Aspirations may be altered and adapted pertaining to different histories, cultures and power dynamics.

The book 'Constructing School Knowledge: An ethnography of learning in an Indian village' mentions that the contents of schooling are in relation to the hierarchy of the aims of schooling. Literacy and numeracy, both more functional skills are in order to get jobs. Additional skills and knowledge, acquired with increased years spent in school, provide advantage in getting jobs, in securing promotions and ultimately becoming a *'bada admi'*. Children in the village were also very sensitive to the school as a source of 'cultural capital', providing access to the knowledge of English, General knowledge and social adeptness. They were aware that it was possible to convert cultural capital – especially the knowledge of English into social capital through government employment.

Subsequent to these articles, there is a list of questions that were inquired for the fulfilment of this paper's objectives.

Objectives

This paper had been carried out based on the following objectives:

- To inquire about the dreams and aspirations of young children.

- To introduce different professions the learners could choose from, irrespective of gender, post or income.

- To assist in understanding the relation of the nature of aspirations with the development of the human being.

Methodology

This section addresses the sample size and the procedure for data collection. A mixed approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was employed throughout the whole study.

Sample

The participants in this paper are 28 girls from class V of Sarvodaya Kanya Vidhyalaya, Delhi. Their age range was between ten to twelve years. The sample had been selected based on the regularity of learners.

Data collection

The data for this paper was obtained during the activities planned in the Environmental Studies for the theme – 'Work and Play'. These activities were drawing how the children see themselves after 15 years, introducing occupations on flashcards, mentioning reasons on 'circle of influence', role-play and the survey questionnaire.Data obtained from the above-mentioned activities were analysed in the form of tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

Data analysis

The data collected through survey questionnaires and different activities has been analysed with respect to literature reviewed earlier.

The survey question was:

Do you feel inspired by any of your neighbours? If yes, how? Figure 1 indicates the responses of the children.89% are not inspired by the neighbour whereas only 11% are inspired.
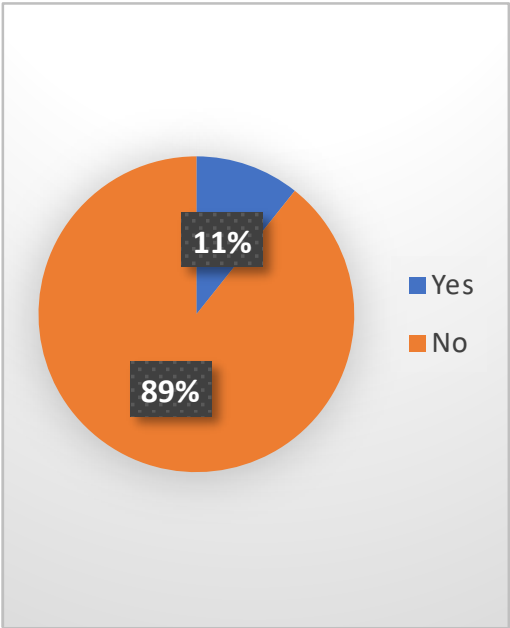

Figure 1: Availability of an inspiring neighbour

Another survey question which relates to parental influence for children's aspirations was to choose between the profession of mother and father. Figure 2 mentions the responses of the children.
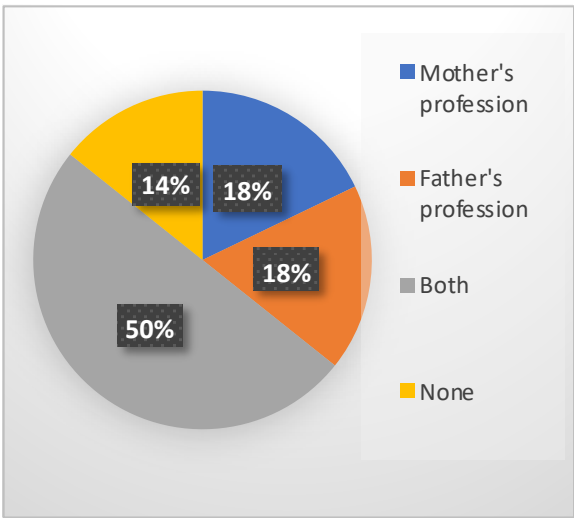

Figure 2: Student's choice of profession

As John Dewey states that a school is a society in miniature and that the role of a teacher is to relate home environment with the school

environment, an activity – role-play was planned with the learners. With the class of 34 students, seven groups were formed – six groups of five students each and one group of four students. The groups performed a role-play on one of the professions: cobbler, taxi-driver, rickshaw-puller, sweeper, peon, florist and vendor. The objective of this activity was to respect all sorts of labour and develop empathy towards labour classes.

'Khushbu' (the name has been changed), a student of V grade was a member with four other classmates and performed a role-play over the struggles of a rickshaw-puller. Co-incidentally, this matched with her father's profession and this was what made their performance different from the rest. Khushbu was able to narrate several incidents which not only melted our hearts but also raised awareness about the difficulties faced by the rickshaw-pullers and daily wage earners, like the nights spent on the roadside, unpaid journeys covered, travelling and pulling rickshaw in mid-days with sun at the horizon and also irrespective of rain and fog. The survey questions and role-play together were in light of the fact that parents and school influence children's aspirations.

The survey questions based on 'Capabilities and Aspirations,', was-

Do you wish to live like your parents lived or are living (in terms of facilities and opportunities available to them)? What is it that you wish to change?

The survey showed that most students wanted to change their life-style and attain higher educational qualifications in comparison to their parents.

Figure 3: Lifestyle students would like to have.
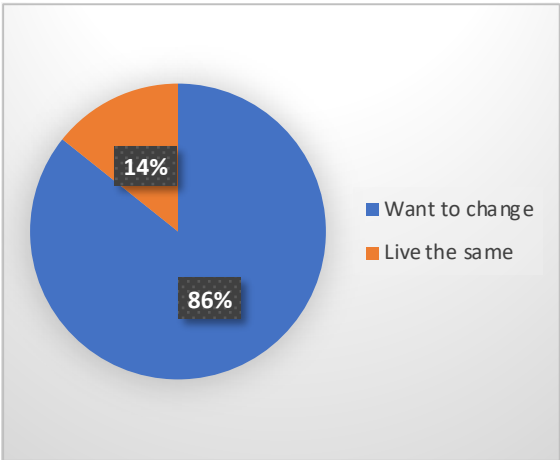
An activity was done in which students were asked to 'draw how they see themselves after 15 years from now'. Various responses were given as shown in the table below:

T1: Table showing the aspirations of the

Profession	Frequency
Doctor	5
Police inspector	3
Dancer	2
Engineer	1
Air hostess	1
Artist	1
Singer	1
Skating coach	1
Magician	1
Astronaut	1
Prime Minister	1
Actor	1
Ice-cream seller	1
Carom player	1
Teacher	7

students.

This table shows that the majority of the learners aspire to become a teacher and also doctors. However, the aspirations range from becoming an ice-cream seller to becoming the prime minister of the country.

Another noteworthy thing was the change in the aspirations, when students were given a survey question – What do you aspire for?
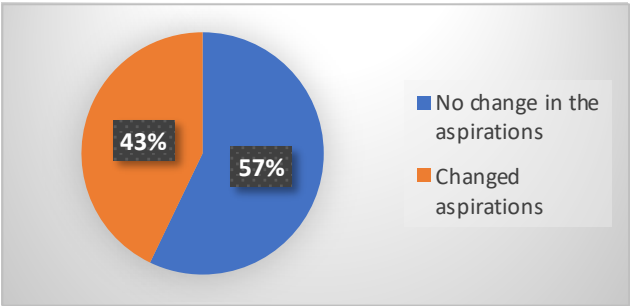

Figure 4: Changes observed in the aspirations over three months.

The article – 'How do aspirations matter?' also states that the aspirations may vary with importance and time-scale. The survey question under this article also includes a choice between a better society and a better lifestyle. The survey

holds the same opinion as the article does, as about 43% of the learners aspire for a better life-style.

Based on Padma Sarangapani's 'Constructing School Knowledge', following questions were taken up for survey.

Choose one of the following:

- Good person/ Rich person
- Hindi/ English
- Private job/ Government job

This book shows that students aspire being a *bada admi* by learning English language and attaining a government job.
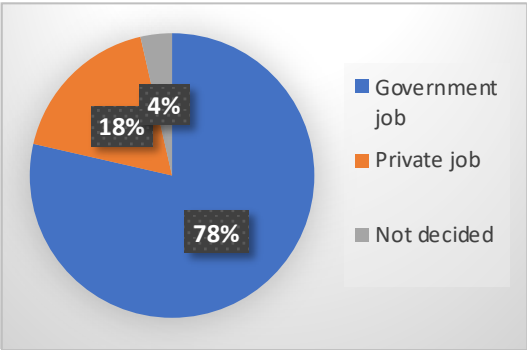

Figure 5: The type of job students aspires to have.

According to figure 5, 78% students were not decided on the type of job.18% wanted a private job.4% wanted a government job. Figure 6,mentions about the type of person student aspires to become.
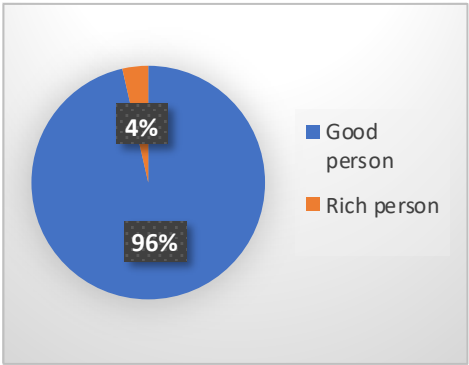

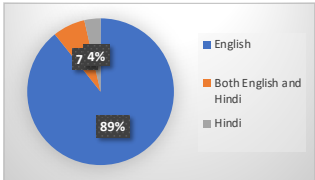*Figure 6: The type of person student aspires to become*

Figure 7: To represent the most influencing language that students wish to master.

The study by Padma Sarangapani does not apply to the V graders as students aspire to be a good person. Figures 6 and 7 are in consonance with the text 'Constructing School Knowledge' as students of the author's study claim to learn English and aspire for a government job, like the sample of this paper.

Another activity called 'Circle of Influence' was executed to find out the reason or factors affecting the choice of professions.

T2: Table showing the frequency of the reasons

Factors	Frequency
Money	24
Fame	3
Helping poor people	4
Parental pride	3
Revision of Content	5
Parental aspirations	2
Inspirations from external sources	9

for selecting a profession

From this table, it is clear that students chose professions which could give them good income. This is much against figure 7 which showed that students aspire for becoming a good person than becoming a rich person. Hence, it can be said that Padma Sarangapani's study stays valid in this aspect as well.
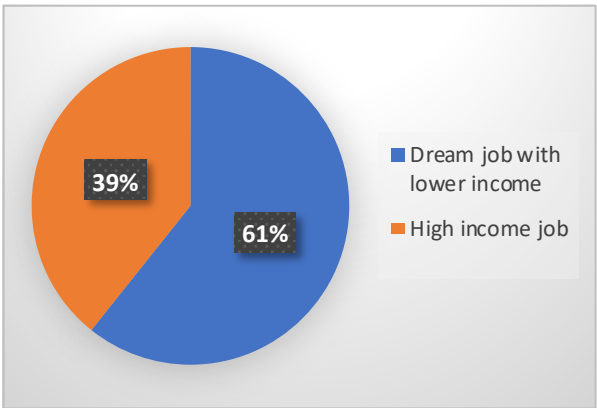

Figure 8: To represent the choice of job in relation to income.

Money factor and inspiration from teachers, parents and relatives play a dominant role in choosing a profession. Another question in the survey was to choose between Job with higher income/ Dream job with lower income

The result is as follows:

Key findings

- Children aspire on the basis of their current life-style.
- Aspirations are influenced by parents and neighbours too.
- Aspirations change with time.
- They revolve around earning a handsome salary.
- Status in the society shall be uplifted by learning and speaking English language and attaining a government job.
- Children strive for a change in their society and in their life-styles as well.
- Gendered choices are made for the selection of profession.
- Money factor and inspiration from teachers, parents and relatives play a dominant role in choosing a profession.
- It is found that students would take up their dream job even if they are paid little.

Further research

- Upon assisting the learners in designing path towards fulfilment of occupations.
- Scope for a comparative study of aspirations among boys and girls.

Educational implications

- Students should be encouraged to dream and aspire
- Support from parents and teachers is essential
- Choice of profession should not be gender stereotypical but based on interest.

Conclusion

This paper has acted as a stimulus upon which the formation of aspirations, its refinement and adaptation of individual or group practices could be reflected and evaluated. To fulfil the objective – 'to inquire about the dreams and aspirations of young children,', an activity was taken up where the children had to draw (or simply write) how they see themselves after 15 years. Theories by Ginther, Haveman and Wolfe (2000); Sabic and Jokic (2019); Elsom, Terton and Greenaway

(2017) and Hart (2016) suggest that feasibility is subjective and socially situated. It varies as per the agent which can be their resources like some form of capital or their significant others and problem solving will differ.

After 3 months, when in survey students were again asked about their aspirations, 43% changes were noted, thereby proving the theorists correct. The activity 'Circle of Influence' was executed with the objective of enlisting the factors that affect students' choice of profession. T2 shows the reasons with 'money' as the most common factor of influence. Padma (2003) entails that students in her sample aspire for a government job and to become a rich person but in this study only one learner aspires to be a rich person, when asked directly to choose between becoming a rich person or a good person. However, 78% aspires for attaining a government job.

For the objective which demanded 'to introduce different occupations irrespective of gender or post or income', several professions were introduced in the form of flashcards. This investigation confirms that there are certain factors which affect the capacity of individuals to be a part of primary and higher education. It means that the pupils' aspirations can expand as they gain cognition of the various opportunities or chances available to them.

On a concluding note, I suggest that aspirations are of vital importance to human development. Children should be provided autonomy to aspire and we should also support them in the process of conversion of aspirations into capabilities, especially for the underprivileged.

'To build understanding of the nature of aspirations in relation to human development', role-play was conducted. Students showcased empathic conditions of 'cobblers', 'rickshaw-pullers', 'florists' and other jobs which are considered to be of lower dignity. The research goes in hand with Nathan (2005) stating that the capacity to aspire is related to the past, the history of the group.

This research also included discussion with children about the aspirations of their parents, the difficulties and formation of the pathways to achieve their aspirations. Gary Crew (1997) has mentioned the future of children as limitless as stars. Children should be encouraged to face the starry sky and should never be criticized. They should dream from a young age.

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My Child is a Reader…

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Reading gives us someplace to go. This saying holds good, for the year that has gone by. Everyone of us, especially children have explored their love for books, stretched themselves beyond imagination, in pursuit of knowledge. We as parents, educators, want our children to be, lifelong readers and thinkers. Those who don't read just for the sake of reading, but are able to pause, think, ponder and excavate.

Reading is Thinking- It is all about supporting children to be critical thinkers. It is a lifelong skill. Critical thinking, helps readers, see things in a wider perspective. It helps them have engaging conversations. It promises to build purposeful thinkers and change makers. Reading is a science, in it's own right! There are many factors to be taken into consideration when helping a child /children choose book/books- build a repertoire of strategies, thoughts, ideas and skills, to make the reading wide and meaningful.

Picture books appeal to all ages from 0-99 yrs. They indulge our imagination, prompt us to look at captions, pictures together, and understand what's happening in the picture. Visualize the story elements, interpret the author and the illustrator's purpose. Emergent readers, before they read conventionally, learn to tell a story, by looking at photos and illustrations. A complex skill ,that keeps thinkers sustained for their entire reading life...

 Good readers infer, think, question the author's writing. They look for clues, synthesize information, put it all together, visualize their thoughts-those that help them to draw conclusions. They are able to identify the problems and the solutions in their reading. All to spur their lateral thinking. To be able to identify and comprehend, the purpose, the author has for writing the book- all of those to help develop powerful readers, who grow ideas.

Fluency is achieved over time. Children must aim to read wide and long, set the bar high. The Five Finger rule of choosing books: To be able to hold up fingers for the number of words they can read and decipher on a page is essential. A book is a far reach, if a child is unable to read and understand, three or more words on a page. Help them choose books that are just right and adhere to, age appropriate reading levels. It builds confidence, increases reading stamina, leads to fluency and comprehension. Makes reading a successful experience.

Exploring different genres, including graphic novels brings variety and flavour in reading. It teaches readers from a very young age to explore titles, authors, styles in writing and reading. It sustains a lifelong interest in books, reading and fluency. Reading builds vocabulary. It familiarises readers with: figurative language, like similes, and metaphors. It helps them understand phrases and writing styles, authors use. Over time, they learn to do the same in their writing- use phrases and words that are fun, colourful and away from the ordinary. Reading is Writing & Writing is Reading.

Following characters, when reading is what makes reading real. To understand, how settings impact characters and how characters change from the beginning of the story until the end. To be able to identify the feelings and traits of the characters, to slide into the shoes of the character, to feel emotional about character/ characters. is what makes reading fun and wholesome.

Parents are the best role models to help build good reading habits. Here are some ways in which parents can help with reading specially the children in the early childhood years.

Let children watch you read, and have engaging book talks and conversations.

- Play word games, to build vocabulary.

- Read mystery stories with children, and together help them find clues- make the reading exciting.

- Assign a reading corner at home.

- Visit public libraries.

Encourage children to use Graphic organizers to break down story elements and record their thinking

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus within reach, to help children look up words- origins, meanings, synonyms and antonyms.

- A reading journal for recording thoughts and ideas, sketch and doodle their thinking.

- Talk and sketch about story mountains- Beginning, middle and story endings.

- Have discussions around the why, what & how of stories- their settings, themes, characters and characters.

- Open ended questions and discussions- How readers can think of different endings to the same story.

- Discuss your characters, their challenges, problems, and how characters solve problems in the story.

- Character study- discuss traits vs feelings

- Continue your reading journey at home and wherever you go.

- Swap books with other readers.

According to Albert Bandura, 'Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling from others'. So if the young children see adults around them reading, they will also model the same.

Digital Storytelling in Early Childhood Online Classes

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Abstract

As COVID-19 continues to influence the way we operate our everyday lives, educators are expected to adjust and adapt their curricula in order to accommodate not only online learning, but also to keep their students engaged and motivated. Children are now born into a world dominated by the media. They engage with technology so much from infancy that they are often referred to as "digital natives." However, early exposure to and experience with technology does not always leads to digital competency. Since digital ways of reading and writing are becoming more integrated into our lives, the role of technology in the development of digital literacy in kindergarten children is a timely and important subject. The paper analyses the use of digital storytelling as a vehicle to help students build capacity for storytelling, engage in literacy practices, and strengthen interactions with others in and out of the classroom.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Child-Computer Interaction, Early Childhood Care Education*

Introduction

The tradition of storytelling is extensive and has grown and extended to assume a complex, contemporary appearance in a variety of settings and functions. Emerging digital methods are modifying the essence of storytelling and allowing for new forms of collaboration. These approaches promote repositioning learners as co-producers of knowledge who collaborate on problem classification, theory formulation, and solution implementation in the learning environment. Technology's ease of use, interactivity, and affordability have resulted in a rapid and diverse expansion of participatory storytelling strategies. Digital storytelling has been demonstrated to be an effective method for teachers encouraging students to participate in discussions and improving content comprehension. Digital storytelling is the use of a digital medium to tell a story. Digital tales, in their simplest form, are those that include images, videos, animation, sound, music, and text. Like traditional storytelling, digital storytelling focuses on the creation of a specific theme or focal point for the story. Students usually brainstorm, perform research, write a script, and create an interesting story as part of this process. A variety of interactive multimedia technologies are used to promote digital storytelling.

Review of literature

Storytelling as a creative counselling tool for children is well supported in counselling literature (Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, Parr, & Jones, 2008; Burns, 2004; Pehrsson, 2005). Storytelling, whether in the form of oral, pictorial, written, or film media, has been an essential element in the lives of mankind throughout history (McClean, 2007). Stories facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one individual to another. With the rise in popularity and accessibility of multimedia resources, the use of storytelling as a therapy method with children can be extended. Both the creator and the audience will benefit from the production of digital stories. End users will be able to build or download digital stories, which will serve as a multimedia tool for supporting therapy sessions with clients, allowing them to more effectively narrate or explain their own personal stories, and assisting them in recognizing and improving social or behavioural skills.

Olney, Herrington, & Verenikina (2009)study looks at how iPods were used with preservice early childhood educators in an introductory ICT course. The mobile devices were used as cognitive instruments to complete a complex and authentic project. Students worked in groups to develop digital stories in the form of a children's picture book for very young children using iPods. The study looked into the students' responses to the task as well as the pedagogical

benefits of the devices in an early childhood environment. As a result, it proved to be a challenging and rewarding experience for students to learn to use mobile and other technologies as cognitive instruments to produce a genuine product and significant learning outcome.

(Dreon, Kerper, & Landis 2011) While digital storytelling can be an engaging way to instruct and assess students, it is not without its challenges. Despite the fact that our society has become expert on being digitally connected, educators who use any web-based form of instruction must be concerned about equal access for all learners, taking into account an individual's socioeconomic background and learning needs. While there are numerous platforms for creating and sharing digital stories (e.g., iPod Touch, Animoto, ScribePics), teachers who use digital storytelling for instruction must weigh the educational benefit for all students and ask, "Would all of my students be able to access content online or benefit equally from its presentation?" While offering digital stories that are culturally relevant to today's students may be beneficial, teachers must ensure that all students have equal access to the content. What we say to our students is only as important as how we say it. In today's world, the noise of information can be a little extra, and competing for students' attention can be exhausting. It would be a matter of broadcasting on the frequencies that students are paying attention. The digital narrative, which dials into digital natives and links them to the curriculum, represents one of our most effective instructional tools today.

According to Rubegni, & Sabiescu (2014), the educational potential of digital storytelling as an evolving research and practice field with a focus on modalities for bridging the gap between research-based innovation and formal education implementation. The key point is that DST's educational potential can be better realized by conceptualizing it as an educational practice that is consistent with the pedagogical curriculum and structured to meet particular educational goals. Digital storytelling as an educational activity (DSTEA), a framework for the design, implementation, and assessment of DST interactions in structured educational settings, demonstrates the viability of this role.

The three key features of DSTEA:

- alignment to the scholarly curriculum

- emphasis on the generation of educational outcomes

- co-design involving researchers and school teachers – frame DST as an educational practice that can be tailored to the needs of each pedagogical context and is likely to become part of the standardized approach to learning used by schools all over the world.

O'Byrne, Houser, Stone, & White (2018) research examines an instructional model aimed at empowering students as emerging visual storytellers in an early childhood classroom. Educators may use digital storytelling to help students learn by empowering them to organize and share their ideas and knowledge in a unique and meaningful way, all while cultivating voice and computer interaction skills. This work also aids in the development of traditional communication skills, teamwork, and emerging literacy activities. Students improve their communication skills by learning to organize their thoughts, ask questions, share opinions, and create narratives by creating digital stories with others and computers. In the early childhood educational context, the "Emerging Digital Storytellers" instructional model focuses on social-emotional growth and finding student voice through writing and digital content creation. This study contributes to the field's understanding of how children develop their voice through storytelling. Higher order skills are incorporated into this medium and related resources, as well as social interactions in and out of the classroom. This gives further insight into CCI, as well as the use of digital technology and their impact on a child's motivation to write, develop, and share their stories.

According to Yuksel-Arslan, Yildirim & Robin (2016) study looks at how early childhood education (ECE) teachers implemented interactive storytelling in their classrooms, as well as the difficulties and successes they encountered along the way. In-depth phenomenological interviews, observation, and focus group interviews were used to gather data after the teachers completed a multimedia storytelling workshop. Phenomenal data was obtained from five kindergarten classrooms, each with about 20 students and a teacher. The study included examples of how ECE teachers had used interactive storytelling to improve

student learning. The findings revealed developing strategies would help teachers, parents, educational researchers, and policymakers use technical resources in the learning environments of young children.

Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis & Kalogirou (2013)emphasis that digital Storytelling is discussed as an alternative method for improving children's ability to express themselves in the kindergarten classroom. Storytelling is a worldwide culture that depicts how people work, feel, and communicate. Especially in early childhood, storytelling emerges naturally in children's play, allowing them to practice a wide range of skills. Digital storytelling is a modern form of storytelling that has emerged as a result of technological advancements. The narrative, on the other hand, is enhanced by a variety of multimedia elements. Children can develop their own interactive stories that allow children to become co-authors in the story writing process. This paper describes a teaching experiment that took place in a kindergarten in a Greek city in February 2012. The three-week teaching experiment was a success. The research presents an attempt to create an educational environment in which children may combine different elements and Information Computer Technology resources in order to express themselves and create a digital tale. Children were found to be engaged in the process demonstrating responsibility, self-confidence, and teamwork skills.

Yoon (2013) aims to see how using digital storytelling in an after-school English class affects Kore an ELL learners' attitudes and perceptions about learning English. 32 ELL students in the 5th grade engaged in a 12-week study in which they were exposed to digital storytelling in English class at a public elementary school in the Eastern Kyunggi province of South Korea. The researcher designed and developed 'digital storytelling' as a primary teaching and learning resource, which was adopted and adapted. A mixed study approach was used to examine students' responses in order to determine the influence and effect of digital storytelling. Students' self-evaluation reports and lecture summary reports, as well as quantitative data from a pre-/post-survey on the improvement in students' learning attitudes and reading comprehension, were gathered for data analysis. The results revealed

that the possible benefits of digital storytelling had a positive impact on the attitudinal changes of 5th grade ELL students in learning English by assisting them in having a deeper understanding of the lesson, which contributed to their voluntarily active involvement in class. The findings also showed that digital storytelling engaged students in the story's content not only by encouraging motivation and interest, but also by instilling faith in their ability to learn English.

Methodology

The research has been done using secondary data source. The choices of measure of similarity are based on multidimensional observations. Online libraries and open educational resources were used for collecting data.

Online learning and digital story telling

E-learning systems that simply convert conventional educational material like books, lecture notes, written material into digital media fail because e-learning content that only presents facts and figures loses learners' interest more quickly than a good teacher. A good teacher tries to catch the learners attention with personal charisma. The lack of a personal link with a real teacher can be resolved with e-learning material by developing "educational stories" that follow good storytelling principles. Since Aristotle, masters of storytelling have formulated good storytelling values. These ideas can be used to create good educational stories as well. A story's narration must interact with the learner's emotions and generate emotional movement in order to catch and retain the learner's interest. Any learning that occurs as a result of a story, especially one that provides an emotionally moving experience, is much more durable and therefore easier to remember. The use of e-learning material that inspires learners to be imaginative and inventive necessitates the use of innovative pedagogy. Digital storytelling can be used to create this creative pedagogy. To keep the learner interested, these digital stories must be engaging, with a well-defined spine and a moving plot. However, further research is needed to determine how to inspire creativity and instil the spirit of innovation through e-learning content. A successful educational story must generate new insights by connecting information from various domains, as imagination implies obtaining some new insight. Similarly, drawing on concepts from various

fields multiplies one's ability to invent. Thus, in order to create e-learning content that fosters creativity and innovation, it must facilitate the simple amalgamation of information from various fields. Today's e-learning technologies, especially online systems, can provide a wealth of knowledge. We need models and resources that promote the systematic development of good educational narratives in order to create good e-learning stories.

Discussion

According to Bruner (1986–1996), both adults and children are capable of narrative thinking. Children are competent storytellers thanks to the narrative thinking skills they can draw on, that also emerge through symbolic play (Yuksel, 2011). When children pretend to be doctors, for example, they are making up a story. In Vygotsky's idea of creativity (1962), making up stories is also a creative act, because in order to do it children must combine the things they know to create something new. Making up stories is therefore an interactive task that enables children to act freely (the right to make up whatever story they want), but within a set of constraints that guide their thinking and action. Digital storytelling is becoming more popular as audio-video capturing technology and making it easier to create innovative e-learning content presented as digital stories. Such creative content will help students learn more deeply while also making content more appealing.

Inviting children to make up stories (storytelling) means encouraging them to develop narrative thinking as well as a range of other skills, such as linguistic and artistic abilities. Digital storytelling promotes digital competency as well. Making up stories entails using materials and previous experience to create new story sequences. The process allows children to acquire new knowledge about the world and to consolidate the knowledge they already have (Barret, 2006). Moreover, it enables them to acquire or consolidate their skills (digital and narrative) through action. Ausubel (2000) would call this process "learning by discovery" (as compared to mechanical learning). Story-centred curriculum, proposed by Roger Schank (2007), and scenario-based curriculum growth, proposed by Ray Bareiss & Sukhjit Singh (2007), are two recent pedagogical models based on storytelling. "Learning by stories" is a common thread that runs through both of these pedagogical models.

Since prehistoric times, stories have been used as an educational tool because they encapsulate four key aspects of human communication: information, knowledge, context, and emotions (Norman, 1993).

Child–computer interaction (CCI) is an evolving area of research that focuses on the reciprocal actions between children and the Internet and other communication technologies (Read and Markopoulos, 2013). Read and Bekker (2011) define CCI as the "Study of the Activities, Behaviours, Concerns, and Abilities of Children as they interact with computer technologies, often with the intervention of others (mainly adults) in situations that they partially (but generally do not fully) control and regulate. For creating engaging e-learning material, embedding stories as digital media, i.e. digital storytelling, is not only desirable, but almost necessary. It is entirely reasonable for parents to be worried about their children's inappropriate use of digital devices and screens. There is no doubt that excessive screen time has significant implications, including children communicating mostly through screens rather than in person and children being sedentary and insular. Will we then discourage children from using digital devices and displays in every way possible? In this case, digital storytelling removes many of the objections levelled at screen-based play in several of its manifestations. It usually involves children in physical activity including photography, videography and interaction with the natural world. Such interaction leads to constructing and producing their stories. Digital storytelling provides enormous developmental possibilities as well as being something children find immensely enjoyable and engaging. Story content can easily be translated into films, CDs, television, PowerPoint presentations, and shared on the Internet, as well as uploaded for use on personal media players like the iPod. Digital storytelling can take on a variety of forms, ranging from simply reading a story aloud and filming the performance to developing a fully-fledged digital production of their own invention. Such endeavours help a child in developing confidence, creativity and boost's the vocabulary. Although sometimes digital storytelling may be criticized for diverting child's attention away from writing and language development but this can be overcome by encouraging a component which will help to

improve writing, spelling, and language skills in the digital storytelling itself. Every day, the availability of digital texts and resources that can be used to manipulate data and enhance student education is growing. This proliferation of technologies, spaces, and activities (such as mobile devices, digital cameras, editing software, authoring tools, and electronic media outlets) has inspired teachers to use a variety of approaches and technical tools to help students create their own narratives and present and share them more effectively over the last decade. Activities employing creative techniques such as music, art, drama, and collaboration may assist children and adolescents in gaining insight about their own behaviours and beliefs while giving them the opportunity to learn healthier ways of expressing their emotions (Veach &Gladding, 2007) It is hypothesized that students will benefit greatly from digital storytelling because they will be able to learn how to make their own digital stories. Students may improve their knowledge and academic skills by researching a subject, looking for pictures, recording their speech, and then selecting a specific point of view. By using digital storytelling as the underlying model, e-learning systems can play a major role in offering creative and innovative pedagogic solutions. Besides having media literacy competencies, educators and teachers need to be competent in teaching media literacy (cf. Blömecke 2000), which cannot be acquired by explanations, but by using and reflecting medias a result, educators and teachers are much more than content presenters when it comes to the use and reflection of media. It is also important for educators and teachers to understand how to apply pedagogic techniques in ECCE. One way to promote media literacy in this way would be to use digital storytelling as a situated didactical approach. Educators and teachers must understand the structure and functionality of digital tales, as well as the basic steps for preparing a digital storytelling project, in order to effectively implement digital storytelling. They must also have the requisite experience to carry out a digital storytelling project and the ability to evaluate the potential of digital storytelling for competence growth. The

didactic design follows a constructivist view of learning assuming that knowledge is a result of individual construction processes (e.g. Reich 2002, Reinmann-Rothmeier & Mandl 1999). Furthermore, using props to provide visual representations helps children form more vivid memories of the idea, which improves their ability to apply the experience in real-life scenarios. Art, drama, music, and movement, in combination with photography or visual images, may help improve the ability to transmit information. Music has the power to activate and release feelings, as well as unspoken emotional desires and messages. Digital storytelling is a tool for exploring social behaviour and sharing personal experiences that incorporates various techniques such as narrative therapy, drama, music, and visual imagery. Creators may adapt practically every medium to depict their own personal experiences and beliefs, including personal narratives, school or community-based scenarios, and documentaries. Group brainstorming and discussion of story ideas will bring previously unnoticed circumstances and attitudes to light, allowing for accessible discovery, dialogue, and, ideally, clarification of acceptable behaviours and actions. Individuals will be better able to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences as they explore them through digital storytelling. Internalization happens as they begin to make sense of their experiences, and they will be able to adapt their actions and apply what they've learned to other areas of their lives. The digital story can be created using student's native language art, drama, photography, or music; this practice can give the English-language learner the opportunity to share a deeper level of emotion.

Conclusion

By collaborating with children to create digital storytelling, they will learn that everyone has a story to tell. These stories can be created and shared using multimedia, allowing children to understand that learning can be fun. They learn to relate their own life stories to their studies. Digital storytelling is a great way to let students learn and share their experiences.

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Importance of Parental Involvement in Child's Learning

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Abstract

Parents play a crucial role in a child's life in all fields, parents can make a child's development happen smoothly or disrupted by the different factors which can have both a negative and positive impact on them. In the early years of a child's life, parents are always worried about the different developmental achievements and want the child to excel in all aspects thus sometimes end up disturbing the normal growth pattern. But parents can be seen as the most important and influential resource in child's education and development by supporting them and providing motivation to children.

Keywords: *Parental Involvement, motivation, learning*

Introduction

Early childhood, known as the years between birth and the age of eight, is a phase of rapid development, with brain development at its maximum. Children are strongly affected by their surroundings and the people around them at this time. Parents are one of the closest to the children in all aspects, be it literacy development, mental development or physical development. Parents play a very important role in being a constant support for their children's development in all fields and the education is very essential in the growth years. Parents are their first teachers and play an important part in defining their personalities. A student's actual learning is shaped by a blend of learning at home and at school. Encouragement from parents plays a vital role in the success of students. They play a significant role not only at home, but also at school. Family environment is the first educational environment, because in the family every child gets education and guidance. Most of the life of the child is spent in the family, so that education is most widely accepted by the child.

Family lays the basic knowledge of ethics and norms for the child In fact, today's parents are increasingly aware of the importance of their role in children's education. The role of the family as the main educator is claimed to work together to educate their children.

Children's learning and development does not work in isolation nor does development of a child. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory views the child, as one growing up in complex 'layers' of environment, each one having a significant impact on the child's development.

This theory further structures the child's environment into 5 systems which are as follows:
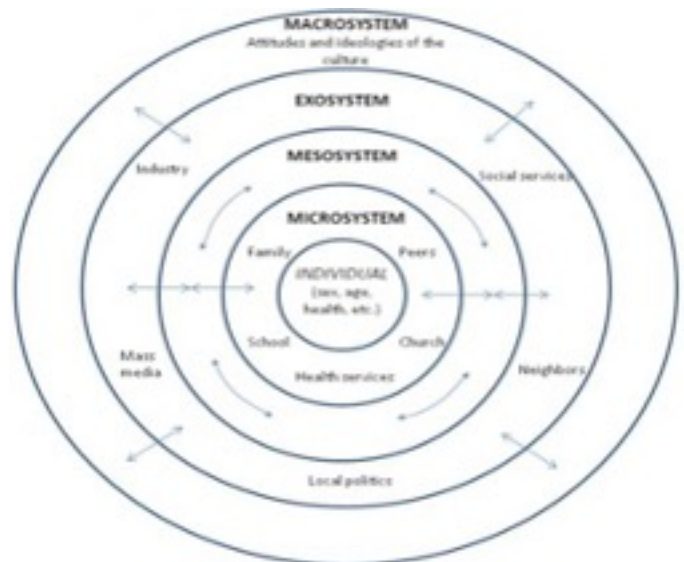
Source https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bronfenbrenner%27s_Ecological_Theory_of_Development_(English).jpg

Each layer consists of those structures with which the child is in direct contact. It encompasses the child's relationship and interaction with his/her immediate environment. The microsystem consists of family, school, neighbourhood and any other child care environment. This system has the greatest impact on a child's development.

The Mesosystem

This layer connects the different structures of the child's microsystem. It could be the relationship between a child's parents and teachers;

relationship between school and community or neighbourhood; or one between the parents and day care centres.

The Exosystem

This layer consists of the larger social systems with which the child is not directly in contact. But still the structures in this layer of the child's environment affect his/her development because they are interacting with some structure of the child's microsystem- their immediate environment. Parents' workplace can be one example of structures functioning at this level of the environment as the schedule or environment at the workplace of the parents will have a direct impact on their state of mind which will in turn influence their behaviour towards their child.

The Macrosystem

This is the outermost layer of a child's environment. This layer consists of cultural values, customs and laws. The effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem influence all other interactions taking place across all other systems of a child's environment. To take an example, how much resources are given to help the caretakers for the child's rearing will be determined by the belief about whose responsibility it is to bring up the child, parents alone or in cooperation with the State.

The Chronosystem

This system encompasses the dimension of time. This can be external to the child, like the time of a sibling's birth or internal to the child related to the physiological changes that occur within the child with age. As the child grows up, they may react differently to their environmental changes. Bronfenbrenner also argues that development takes place as a result of processes consisting of complex, reciprocal interactions among the persons, objects and symbols in the immediate environment. These interactions are labelled as proximal processes and include parent-child activities, teacher-child interactions, and instruction and participation in educational activity.

In the theory 5 systems/layers were defined out of which the first system, 'The Microsystem' consists of those structures with which the child is in direct contact. It encompasses the child's relationship and interaction with his/her immediate environment. The microsystem consists of family, school, neighbourhood and any other child care environment. This system has the greatest impact on a child's development. According to parents are the ones with whom the child is in direct contact however, family environment is seen as a major determinant of child development.

My experiences during the internship

Internship is very important component in the final year of the Bachelors of Elementary Education (BElEd)Program of University of Delhi. It lasts for 6-7 months in the primary and the middle school. During my internship period in the online mode due to the Covid-19 pandemic I could observe the importance of involving parents as partners in learning.

During the online internship as a part of my undergraduate course, I got an opportunity to work with children of two different age groups i.e., approximately 150 children from age group of 9-11 years of 5th grade and approximately 50 children in the age group of 11-13 years of 7th grade for a total time period of approximately 6-7 months.

All children, including the very young, are subjected to a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety as a result of the increasingly competitive atmosphere into which schools are being drawn. The ambitions of parents also results in very high expectations from the children hence hampering the joy of learning. Even a small dispute at home may have a significant impact on children. The kind of incalculable fear and depression that is often expressed as violence a few years later in early youth is created by a state of permanent disaffection among the elders in the house or a disintegrating relationship between parents. There is a growing need to get parents and teachers together for reasons other than academics. The love support and affection is the key with which parents involvement can be positive for young children.

So, it becomes very important to make parents as partners in the learning process in a positive manner where instead of creating pressure or anxiety in children they support and help them in learning. I believe that parents get involved with learners due to various reasons like, by helping them in school tasks, answering questions and answers, homework, projects etc. They want the child to improve his/her academics, they feel themselves as an important part of child's

academic achievements and there can be various other reasons like they want their child to be best in academics compared to his/her peers. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, "When the child has little notion of how to proceed, the adult uses direct instruction, breaking the task into manageable units, suggesting strategies, and offering rationales for using them, is referred to as scaffolding". Where the parent, instead of scolding the child or instead giving readymade solutions helps the child in finding the solution on his/her own by providing guidance which can have a positive impact on child's learning as they then feel independent and confident. They feel motivated to try out new things, but over involvement, instead of acting as a merit can hinder child's cognitive development as the child would then always depend on parents/ others to tell the solution/answer.'

According to Black, "When parents reported engaging in more instructional activities with their child, the child's achievement scores decreased."

Harris and Goodall in their study found that, "Parents were more likely to be involved in their children's education when they believed that such involvement was a key part of what it meant to be a responsible and caring parent."

So here we see that parents see it as their duty or an action of being a caring parent to the child. But excessive involvement can be a hindrance as Jered mentions, "Teachers believed that parents could act as obstacles to their students' learning by being overly engaged in certain types of learning activities." It not only affects the child but also the parent at the same time as Lewis mentions in a study that, "A parent's insertion into the academic process may cause tension between a parent, who might be reluctantly participating in the academic endeavour, and a child who is both exploring autonomy and may be struggling academically.

The school must send a clear message to the community, especially to parents who pressure their children to be perfectionists from an early age. Parents should allow and motivate their children to spend time reading storybooks, playing, and completing a fair amount of homework rather than wasting time in tuitions or at home studying the "perfect answers."

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Inclusion in ECE and Mental Health of Children with Special Needs

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The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) affected virtually all countries. Uncertain about the health risk and an increasing financial loss will contribute to widespread emotional distress and an increased risk of psychiatric disorders shortly. Posttraumatic, anxiety, and depression disorders are expected during and aftermath of the pandemic. Some groups, like children, have more susceptibility to having long term consequences in mental health. COVID-19 has brought about a complex array of factors that have an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents.

Predictability is a stabilizing force for children and adolescents, but it has been disrupted since the COVID-19 outbreak. Children have many worries related to the consequences of COVID-19 such as whether they will see their friends and relatives, go to school or get sick. It is often difficult for parents to calm their children's anxieties because of the uncertainty in their lives. Parents are typically adept at making plans for their children, but future plans are currently on hold. The challenges facing parents may interfere with their usual ability to address their children's emotional needs.

New supportive strategies have appeared during this pandemic, but there is no measure of its effectiveness. Some groups seem to be more vulnerable to the mental health burden of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the mitigation actions should prioritize them. The school's role appears to be revalued by society. This review seems to pick good targets to prioritize mitigation actions aiming to spare children not only from the severe cases of COVID-19 but also to help them to deal with the mental health burden of the pandemics.

Inclusion, as we have studied, experienced or heard about, can be of several types. It can be based on cultural differences, economic differences, language based, or on the basis of our abilities & disabilities. The coronavirus pandemic led us to the online mode of learning which according to studies & perspectives, has not been able to replace the offline mode of learning. Rather, is only a supplement to real learning. My personal emphasis in this article is therefore, on Children with special Needs of the country who are struggling in order to get an education during the pandemic.

Children's mental health during the pandemic

There are about 1 in every 6 children within the age group of 2-8 years who have some or the other neurodevelopmental, behavioural or emotional difficulty . These children with special needs [autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, learning disability, developmental delays and other behavioural and emotional difficulties etc] encounter challenges during the current pandemic and lockdown. They have intolerance for uncertainty and there is an aggravation in the symptoms due to the enforced restrictions and unfriendly environment which does not correspond with their regular routine.

Also, they face difficulties in following instructions, understanding the complexity of the pandemic situation and doing their own work independently. With the closure of special schools and day care centres these children lack access to resource material, peer group interactions and opportunities of learning and developing important social and behavioural skills in due time may lead to regression to the past behaviour as they lose anchor in life, as a result of this their symptoms could relapse . These conditions also trigger outburst of temper tantrums, and conflict between parents and adolescents.

Although prior to the pandemic, these children had been facing difficulties even while attending special schools, but in due course they had learnt to develop a schedule to adhere to for most of the time of the day . To cater to these challenges, it is difficult for parents to handle the challenged children and adolescents on their own, as they lack professional expertise and they mostly relied on schools and therapists to help them out. Since every disorder is different, every child has different needs to be met.

The children with autism find it very difficult to adapt to the changing environment. They become agitated and exasperated when anything is rearranged or shifted from its existing setup.

They might show an increase in their behavioural problems and acts of self-harm. It is a huge challenge for parents to handle autistic children during lockdown. The suspension of speech therapy and occupational therapy sessions could have a negative impact on their skill development and the achievement of the next milestone, as it is difficult for them to learn through online sessions.

The children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), struggle to make meaning of what is going around them from the cues they get from their caregivers. It is difficult for them to remain confined to a place and not to touch things, which might infect them. Due to being confined to one place the chances of their hyperactivity increases along with heightened impulses and it becomes difficult for the caregivers to engage these children in meaningful activities .

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) among the children and adolescents is estimated to be of 0.25%–4% among children and adolescents . Children with OCD are suspected to be one of the most affected ones by this pandemic. Due to obsessions and compulsions related to contamination, hoarding, and somatic preoccupation, they are expected to experience heightened distress.

Hoarding disorder has also been heightened in children and adults.Cleanliness is one key protective measure against the spread of COVID-19. According to United Nations' policy guidelines to fight the infection one has to be careful about washing their hands six times a day, and whenever they touch anything. The lockdown, which has made the healthy population distressed about possessing enough food and prevention related resources like masks and sanitizers, has made it worse for people with hoarding disorder.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs is not entirely based on the infrastructural level, instead, it also requires a quality level of interest, effort & support from the teacher, peers & parents. The online mode of education has made it difficult for regular school learners to attend classes, and gain a decent amount of understanding towards the concept. One can only think about these children who require a higher amount of practical & hands on activity-based learning. For example, a regular school

student sitting in front of his/her desktop taking notes and listening carefully to the teacher's explanation. Whereas, a student suffering from a mental health disorder, struggling to focus on the monotonous lecture being delivered by the teacher and then expected to write exams based on it. I believe that one can take a moment to think about this from the child's perspective.

Inclusive environments are characterised by repeated and impromptu interactions, which support all children in social, emotional and behavioural development. When children with disabilities or differing abilities attempt to engage their peers in social interaction, typically developing children with experience in inclusive environments respond to these initiations and progress relationships by initiating interactions, negotiating sharing and developing an understanding of other children.

Additionally, children with experience of inclusive environments have been found to approach play with a stronger focus on fairness and equity and utilise more targeted ways to include diverse counterparts in their play. But, in today's situation where the schools have been shut and instead of social interactions, we are being motivated towards maintaining social distancing, it has created a hindrance in children's social and cognitive development.

Role of teachers/educators/facilitators

Establish a trustworthy & a safe environment for all students.

Start by sharing your own struggles, experiences and fears about learning i.e. talk to them instead of only delivering the lecture. Survey your students and try to find out the possible hindrances that could be rectified.

Select resources which promote inclusive learning.

The online mode of learning comes with advantages as well. It has given us the space to look for resources and material online, select videos, graphic aids etc. One can conveniently find interesting resources which also cater to inclusive learning.

Reflect on your beliefs about teaching to enhance self-awareness and commitment to inclusion

Taking time to reflect on your experiences, assumptions about your learners, and online

learning in general is critical to practice as it provides insights into small changes you can make to foster inclusive teaching and learning.

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Use of Cultural Praise to Nurture Children and the Social – Emotional Tenets Attached to It

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Abstract

The paper explores the use of praise to nurture children and the social-emotional tenets attached to it. Often, praise is seen as an important vehicle to motivate children but the usage of it might differ significantly in accordance with one's culture. The way caregivers or parents encourage/praise their children has undergone a transformation due to a globalized world we are a part of. In a country like India which is culturally rich and diverse, the contextual usage of praise can differ. In the research, a qualitative method of inquiry was adopted to answer the research questions. The data collection was done through observations and interviews from two Punjabi families. The observations captured mother and child interactions and interviews provided an insight from the mothers on the 'usage of praise'. Then, data triangulation was adopted to analyze the data from two sources. Lastly, the findings highlighted that interviewees recognized praise as an important medium for motivation. The data also focused on the generational differences of praise, the contextual differences in which praise is used, and the verbal cues used for the same.

Keywords: *Praise, Social-Emotional tenets*

Introduction

According to Erikson's psychosocial theory in the fourth stage, Industry vs Inferiority, the child's social influence increase. The social bandwidth increases from home to school, this is when children also develop "self-concept".

Children commended by parents and teachers develop a feeling of competence and belief in their abilities (Erikson, 1958;63). Parents/ caregivers are the first set of people children interact with and they play a crucial role in moulding their self-concept. Parenting style is considered an important external factor in nurturing children (Zakeri, 2010). Parents often believe that children need praise to be confident/ motivated (Bronson, 2007). Praise is important for motivation, but it should not be vacuous praise. It should be based on reality. The kind of praise children receive from their caregivers construct a belief system, whether their attributes are fixed or malleable (Dweck, 2008).

According to a survey conducted by Columbia University, 85% of American parents think it is important to praise their kids and convey that they are smart (Bronson, 2007). Conversely, India is a diverse land with a plethora of cultures, languages, and religions, making the praising style non-linear and a complex by product of various factors.

This study explores the ways in which Punjabi families praise young children and the underlying reasons for it. Praise is a complex concept which is influenced by parents' socio-cultural beliefs, assumptions about children, childhood, and the goals they have for children. The purpose of this study was not just to document the usage of praise by caregivers but to understand the social-emotional tenets attached to it and the way children perceive it.

Methodology

Research Questions:

1)How do Punjabi families use praise to nurture children?

2)What are the reasons for using different kind of praise?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted to analyse the use of praise to nurture children in Punjabi families and the reasons behind the usage.

Sample

Erik-Erikson (1958:1963) theory of psychosocial development states people progress through a series of stages. The fourth stage around 5 years to before adolescence is the time where a child's social world expands, from home to school. An important characteristic at this age is

development of "self-concept". Children who are encouraged by parents and teachers develop a feeling of competence and belief in their abilities. On failure of passing this stage, the child might doubt his abilities and would not reach his full potential. In view of this theory, the age group of 6-8 years was chosen.

The sample of the study were two mothers and three children aged 6-8 years, who were from Punjabi families. The first family was of a seven-year-old child and the second family had fraternal twins who were eight years old.

Ansh's (pseudo name) family lived in the neighbourhood of the researcher, but she was not familiar with them beforehand. Ansh a 7-year-old Sikh boy, lived in a joint family with his paternal grandparents. His mother was a homemaker. He also had an elder brother who was four years older to him. The medium of communication in the family was English, Hindi and Punjabi.

The second family was of twin male-children Gaurav and Gautam (pseudo names), they were friends of Ansh and also lived in the neighbourhood. They both were 8 years old at the time of the observations. Their mother was a homemaker, and a nanny helped the mother. They lived in a joint family with their maternal grandparents. The medium of communication was mostly English and sometimes Hindi.

The families chosen for the study did not have any previous connections to the researchers, restricting any preconceived notions and biases about them.

Purposive sampling was adopted as a specific criterion was to be met in terms of the age group and cultural background of the child. After selecting the first participant of the study, his friend was approached, making it a snowball sample for the data collection.

Tools and data collection

Participant observation was adopted to capture children engaging in different activities with their caregivers like studying or playing a board game.

A total of four observations and two interviews were done. Each observation was of approximately two hours each. It was done in the naturalistic setting in their homes (before pandemic). Telephonic interviews were conducted with the mothers, during the

pandemic. Additionally, an informal interview was taken of the mothers during the observations.

In the second phase of data collection, a semi-structured telephonic interview was conducted with the mothers to understand their perspective about praise. In which they were asked questions about how they praise/encourage their children, manner in which other family members use praise, the difference in the style of praise comparing it to their childhood and their viewpoint on cultural praise.

Then 'data triangulation' was done to analyze information from both observations and interviews. Codes and themes were identified that helped in providing an answer to the research questions. Then, an in-depth qualitative analysis was done to comprehend the use of praise in the two families.

Analysis

This section presents the findings from the observation sessions and the interviews with the two families. The three themes that emerged from the data collection are - 1) Mother and Child Interactions 2) Encouragement 3) Praise.

Mother and child interactions

In this section, the interactions between the mother and the child were observed and analysed. The subheadings are – activities children and their caregivers do together, and activities mothers find challenging while engaging with their children.

During the observations, one study session and a play activity with their caregiver were observed. The child worked on his Maths and English worksheet in assistance with his mother. During second observation, we played a board game called 'Life'. Contrarily, it rolled out differently with the second family. Gaurav and Gautam were more interested in talking to me during both the visits. They did not agree to sit and engage in academics.

In the first family, while playing the board game, Ansh and his mother were competitive while playing against each other. The mother also mocked him in a friendly manner. Discussing the rules of the game, she commented, "he does the maximum amount of cheating" and they both laughed. When the children were trying to skip the mother's chance in the game; she said, *"rehende, cheating kartey ho"* (let it be, you

cheat). Everyone laughed and cheating remarks continued throughout.

The mother stated, during the lockdown Ansh, his father, his elder brother, the mother and Ansh's paternal grandparents played board games together. She added "her kids are very competitive while playing". She opined that Ansh always aspires to win in the game. The kids keep saying, "meine jitna hai meine jitna". While playing board games parents did not use any direct/indirect praise instead competed with the child.

Gaurav and Gautam's mother quoted, "she teaches a new game to the children and plays with them thrice and then they continue playing with each other." She added, "she prefers chatting with the kids and taking them out for movies or lunches". In the interview she said, "Sometimes board games with them are fun. I even enjoyed doing homework with them, to sit with them and make them understand. Simply chatting with them is also fun."

Gaurav and Gautam mentioned that sometimes they play badminton with their father. While Ansh mentioned, he plays playstation with his father.

I cannot conclude if praise during the activities with the father is an active component because the statements given by the children does not reveal any instance of praise.

Activities mothers find challenging while engaging with their children

This section throws light on the activities, mothers find challenging to conduct with their children.

Both the mothers pointed out to academics as challenging. Ansh's mother stated, "academics, it's the biggest challenge because he just doesn't want to sit down to study. I really want at least for an hour or so he should sit and concentrate, but he doesn't do that". Similarly, Gaurav's and Gautam's mother said, "teaching them something new, like a new concept is a challenge."

As the mother's found academics challenging, cues for praise and encouragement were stated by the mothers which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Encouragement

Encouragement is a motivational technique which helps the learner to learn better by providing support. The encouragement was provided to the children in activities like studying, talking, and playing. The sub-theme which is discussed in this section is ways of encouragement.

Ways of encouragement

An attempt was to observe a study session with both the families. The instances of encouragement were observed from the study session when the mother taught Ansh. The mother provided encouragement to the child by dropping hints like telling him to think harder, by saying, 'it is easy'. But the same could not be observed with Gaurav and Gautam.

Ansh's mother acted like a teacher as he solved a Maths sum. He asked his mother the correct answer, but she told him to 'think harder'. In another instance, they both were revising the mistakes he did in the Maths test. The mother pointed out the mistake and he immediately remarked, "I know it". The mother instantly commented, "that he knows the answer but always does careless mistakes, he doesn't read the question".

After the Maths study session, teaching of English was observed. The child mentioned his favorite subject was Maths and the least liked subject was English. Simultaneously, a transition of praising style emerged. The encouragement increased during English teaching; child asked the meaning of words in many sentences. The mother translated certain words from English to Hindi. Ansh asked her, *"honest ka matlab"* (what is the meaning of honest), she translated the same for him in Hindi. While reading a sentence, he read father, his mother prompted "is that father?" He immediately corrected it by reading aloud "friend, friend".

When Ansh said he did not want to study more, his mother encouraged him by saying "it's easy-peezy". On the other hand, explicit instances of encouragement were not observed with the second family of Gaurav & Gautam. Maximum number of instances of encouragement emerged with the first family during the academic teaching.

Praise

In this section, use of praise by the caregivers to children in the Punjabi homes has been

interpreted. Praise is not always explicit but a complex concept. Praise can have various forms like non-verbal cues, physical rewards like a gift and silent acknowledgements like a smile or a laugh. The use of praise by both the families were different. The subheadings in this section are – praise during study session, examples of praise which emerged from the interviews, and mother's perspective on praise through the lens of cultural and childhood differences.

Praise during study session

Examples of explicit verbal praises emerged during the study session, specifically when Ansh's mother did academic worksheets with him.

During the observation session, Ansh read a note where his friend Gautam was praising him by labelling him 'cute'. His mother immediately warned him not to be too proud. Meanwhile, no example of direct verbal praise could be seen with Gaurav and Gautam. In the interviews, mothers stated that they use verbal praise with their children.

The study session began with Ansh's favorite subject Maths, then moved to English the least liked subject by him. Hence, a pattern of transition in verbal praise also followed. While studying mathematics, Ansh's mother used "hmm" when he said the correct answer. In a question, when Ansh was able to tell the correct answer and said, "it's nine", his mother said "hmm" and nodded.

Whereas, doing the English worksheet, Ansh asked the mother, "can I put 'an' without reading, as the word was ox". His mother said no, "you have to read the full sentence". After reading the sentence he said it's 'an'. The mother immediately commented, "good you remembered".

In another instance, she asked him *"is it, childs or children?"* He immediately answered "children". Mother said, "yes, very good". The child was restless and tired towards the end of the session, his disliking for the English subject and tiredness could have also resulted in an increase in verbal praise. After Ansh completed his school worksheets, the mother mentioned "I did not feel the need of sending Ansh to Abacus classes as he was doing decently in Maths". Ansh added in the conversation "I can do very good maths. I will get a trophy and show". His mother replied "yes" affirmatively. Through the

assertive 'yes', mother encouraged the child by acknowledging his self-confidence.

In the above instances of praise, it can be observed praise is contextual. When Ansh received praise on his physical attribute and was labelled 'cute' by his friend, through a note, his mother immediately warned him. While Ansh's mother praised him in the subject he did not like, that is English. Whereas, the subject Ansh liked, affirmations were provided by the mother like 'hmm' and 'yes'.

Examples of praise which emerged from the interviews

The examples of praise stated by the mothers have emerged from the telephonic interviews. The two mothers were asked to elucidate on the verbatims used by them and the family members to praise their children.

Ansh's mother said, "while studying I've taken charge of his handwriting, if he's written nicely and it's legible, then, I say that "you've written it well, next time also I expect the same thing from you." She added, sometimes she physically rewards Ansh. When he won a prize in the sports competition; she had brought a gift for him. Mother also mentioned during the lockdown he and his brother are having frequent art competitions. So, to encourage his younger one she praises him, *"agar Ansh gande se bhi gande banata hai* (even if draws in an extremely poor manner) I will give him the first prize saying you made it very well". So, even when the competition is held again, he says *"ki meri toh gandi hi banaegi mein toh nhi banaunga"* (he says I won't draw because it will come out to be bad). Then I tell him, "you have done very well according to your age". The extra praise on his art pieces can be because he is the younger sibling and the youngest member of the house.

The mothers were also asked in the interview about the way their fathers and grandparents praise or encourage the children. Ansh's mother mentioned that his father also praises him a lot. He uses phrases like "well done; proud of you". The mother stated, "his father attended the annual day and parent-teacher meeting in school, he was all praises for Ansh and told him, he will do exceptionally well in the next term as well". This happened because in previous meetings they used to get complaints about him being quiet in class. The mother also talked about the way grandfather praises him by saying, "he is

too observant, witty and picks up things quickly".

The mother of Gaurav and Gautam commented "their father has a similar take". He also tells them "practice and you will be the best at it". When she remarked about the praise given by the grandparents, she said, "even they use verbal praise". Whenever the children try to make chapatis (roti) themselves, their nani (maternal grandmother) says, "it has come out to be very well, they are so round."

During the observations with the family of twins, no explicit example of verbal praise was observed. The mother acknowledged the child by smiling at his remarks.

Mother's perspective on praise through the lens of cultural and childhood differences

In the interview, the mothers were also asked about the cultural and childhood differences they experienced/observed around them. Both the mothers mentioned their childhood was significantly different. The generational difference was evident in the praise/ encouragement they experienced in their childhood and in the way do it as parents. The two mothers did not elaborate much on the cultural difference.

On elaborating about childhood differences, Ansh's mother said, "it was very different, I was in a hostel throughout. So, I have not experienced these things with my parents. Yes, they were supportive with everything. But I think these days we can improve the child overall and to make him more confident, you have to praise him more, if you have to encourage him to do anything."

Similarly, Gaurav and Gautam's mother stated, "her childhood was very different". She quoted, "I don't remember my parents encouraging me. *Karliya toh bas karliya, warna tumhare bas ka nahi hai chodo* to my sister as well (if you have done it then it is fine otherwise, her parents used to tell her and her sister to just leave it). This thing really messes up with your confidence. So, I make it a point that I never do that with my children".

When both the mothers were asked about the cultural differences and similarities they feel in their praising style, each of them had a different take about it. Ansh's mother initially said, "the similarity could be unacceptable words

(similarity could be usage of swear words to praise children). Kidding. We might be very similar I think, we say words like fantastic, very good and things like that". Here, some ambiguity is observed in reference to use of swear words with children or she might have changed her response due to the formal structure of the interview. While talking about the cultural differences between her family and others, she stated *"that I have not spoilt my children really telling you that ki woh bahut money spending nhi hai, they're not very fussy although eating mein fussy hai but not in buying things and like I know kuch bache hai in my friends who are very brand conscious, my kids might not even know what are brands"* (I have not spoilt my kids and they are not spendthrift. They are a little fussy in their eating habits but not while buying things. They are not brand conscious either, like some of my friend's children)". When posed with the same question, the twins' mother said, "Every parent is different. You cannot generalize. I have seen some of the parents who praise their kids a lot while some who don't at all."

Gaurav and Gautam's mother highlighted the individual identity in parenting style keeping the idea of culture aside. While Ansh's mother spoke about money spending and brand consciousness prevailing in her culture.

Anaylsis

The focus of the study was to understand the use of cultural praise to nurture children in Punjabi families and the underlying reasons.

In this section, I attempt to highlight the findings which emerged from analysing the data and the linkages to the existing literature in the area.

As we have moved forward in time, many things around us have changed. Globalization has weaved a new world which influences the lives of people in several ways, especially in a cosmopolitan city like Delhi.

The influence of globalization can be observed more in an urban setup through peculiar day to day activities reflecting in a person's lifestyle, the language they speak, and the kind of praise caregivers use to nurture their children. As I tried to comprehend the concept of praise many parents living in an urban setup consider it pivotal for the encouragement of their child. The mothers interviewed for the research felt *praise* is crucial for encouraging the child. The literature also states, "offering praise has become

a sort of panacea for the anxieties for modern parenting" (Bronson, 2007, p.8). The corresponding example of the anxiety relating to praise was stated by one of the mothers in the interview. Ansh's mother gives him the first prize even if his drawing was poor and praised the artwork. Whenever there is a competition, he feels demotivated and comments that his drawing will come out poorly. In this situation mother still encourages by praising him. According to my interpretation, parents often feel praising the child is synonymous to encouragement, but praise can backfire too. Meanwhile constructive feedback might go missing through which child can improve. Praise should provide valuable feedback to strive better while insincere praise undermines it. If caregivers emphasize more on the qualities that are innate, they can restrict a child's view of themselves and the ways they learn. Instead, if children are praised for their effort, they will feel motivated to take challenging tasks and learn from their experiences.

Dweck (2008) mentioned constructive feedback, wherein, she talks about children needs to be praised for their efforts rather than the qualities they possess. This will lead to a shift in perspective where they are willing to take up challenging tasks in which they are not naturally good, but which can lead to fostering an incremental (or malleable) mindset.

If children do not perceive praise the way the parents want them to, the very essence of it is lost. Simultaneously, a conflict can arise if children feel the praise is insincere. "Once children hear praise they interpret as meritless, they discount not just the insincere praise, but sincere praise as well" (Bronson, 2007).

If we draw upon the theoretical perspective of Erik-Erikson even he highlights the importance of providing encouragement. In the fourth stage of his psychosocial theory, Industry Vs Inferiority, he emphasized the importance of providing praise/encouragement to the child for him to develop faith and competence in his skills and abilities. If praise and motivation is provided to the children, they will feel industrious (competent) in achieving their goals. If they are not encouraged, they might experience restrictions and hamper them to develop competence in their abilities inculcating inferiority in them (Erikson 1958;63). Hence, providing praise for motivating children

becomes crucial as parents. The theoretical perspective of Erikson and data from interviews of the mothers, all the sources highlight the importance of praise as an encouragement methodology.

The impact of *generational difference* in the use of praise was also incorporated through the interviews of mothers. Here, the social-emotional tenets attached the mother's childhood also emerged. Ansh's mother mentioned her generation was different and she does not remember incidences of praise/encouragement. Gaurav and Gautam's mother also pointed, she felt deprived of encouragement while growing up, which affected her self-confidence. She would never repeat the same with her children. The reason both mothers mentioned praise as important could be because of their childhood experiences. They did not receive it adequately from their families.

Another finding revealed the timing and *context of praise* as important. The use of verbal praise could be documented, while observing the study session with the first family. Rest of the data in context of verbal praise was collected through interviews.Explicit verbal praise given to the child while studying Maths was less. It was more in the form of subtle verbal cues like "hmm" and nodding to the correct answer. When the mother and the child were studying English together, the use of verbal praise significantly increased. The child mentioned he did not like English as a subject still the increase of verbal praise in the second half of the session could have two reasons. First, the mother was trying to keep the child motivated as he engaged in his least favourite subject. Secondly, the child was tired and not in a mood to study towards the end. The mother even mentioned that Ansh sat down for an hour to study, because of my presence otherwise, he is always tired in ten minutes. In the second visit with Ansh's family, a board game session was documented to unpack the use of praise by his mother during the game. Wherein, no significance use of verbal praise was observed. Instead, the mother was competitive while playing with the child.

When the child was reading a two line note his friend had written for him. His mother immediately told him *"zyada upar na chad jaiyo"* (to not be proud about himself). Hence, the use of praise and the context also holds importance which the literature does not discuss.

The same mother uses praise differently depending on the context.

Gaurav's and Gautam's mother praised her children when they did well in academics or painting and used verbal praise like "you are a master of Maths or you are a genius". The literature states about the concept of process praise and person praise. Children who hear a greater proportion of *process praise* (e.g., "you did a good job at drawing") may come to believe that the sources of their accomplishments are related to their efforts and deliberate practice. Whereas children who hear a greater proportion of *person praise* (e.g., "you are a good artist") may come to believe that the source of their accomplishments are fixed traits (Zentall & Morris, 2010). In the above examples of praise, quoted by Gaurav and Gautam's mother, she uses more of *person praise*. She is labelling the child as a person fostering the belief system that the qualities are innate which makes them skilled. Although, the impact of the praise on the child was not observed.

The mothers were also questioned about their views on aspects of cultural praise. Ansh's mother mentioned that children in Punjabi culture are praised through *galliyan* (curse words). But then she changed her statement that she praises her children, maybe, just the way other parents in her culture does. By using words like fantastic, very good, well done. Here, the change of her statement creates ambiguity in regard to the cultural dynamics of praise. The mother of Gaurav and Gautam mentioned "every parent is different; it cannot be generalized." Hence, no clear perspective emerged about cultural praise.

The two mothers were similar in the manner they praised their children by providing verbal cues and quoted 'praise' as necessary for motivation. Yet different, in the underlying reasons for doing the same. The mother of Ansh felt it is important for improving the child's overall personality and making him more confident.

Ansh's mother mentioned that the grandparents of the children often speak in Punjabi and Hindi with them. While Gaurav and Gautam's mother mentioned the grandparents of the children prefer communicating and praising the children in English and they do not understand Punjabi.

Conclusion

The use and style of praise has several underlying dynamics. It keeps changing over time. The language in which the parents praise their children has shifted from Punjabi to English, especially in urban setup. In the same family a shift can be seen over the decades in the ways in which the parents deal with their children and the strategies they adopt to praise/ encourage them. Parents have started giving more importance to praise as an encouraging/ motivational strategy. This shift might be due to globalization or the experiences by the parents and the social-emotional tenets attached to it. No cultural significance in the praising style could be inferred from the study; the sample was too small to fit it into the category of culture.

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COVID 19's Effect on Early Childhood Education

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Along with fear and anxiety, one of the most common feelings and experiences that the pandemic has forced upon people, is stress. Life was brought to an abrupt halt by repeated lockdowns and movement restrictions. The institution that is affected most by these decisions, to ensure safety and security, is the schools and subsequently the students who are children; because as soon as the lockdowns and restrictions were lifted, offices markets and other services functioned as normal in a phased manner. The only institutions that remained shut, and still are, were the schools. 1.5 million schools in India were forced to shut down and remain shut due to the ongoing pandemic (Sharma, 2021). One may point out that schools resumed as well. Nonetheless, as observed, schools were opened only for teachers and at the most for students enrolled in the board classes such as classes tenth and twelfth, with only fifty percent strength allowed at once (Chopra, 2021). All hopes were shattered when the second wave hit the country and schools were forced to completely shut down once again. 247 million children from elementary and secondary schools have been affected due to this (Sharma, 2021).

This has not only induced fear and anxiety amongst all the stakeholders, but it has also put students' future at risk. As an attempt to adapt to the demands of the circumstances, government bodies and regulatory authorities have come up with alternative ways of organising classes and assessing the progress. Although these attempts are made in the best interest of students, how are they going to affect the course of their education ahead is debatable (Sarfaraz, 2020).

While students in the secondary and senior secondary classes can share and express their voice and opinions on matters related to their life and education, it is the students at the beginning of their academic life, who do not have any choice but to rely completely on the judgement of adults sitting either in offices of some regulating authorities or the ones in their families. The difference in the nature of activities and engagement in early years in school varies hugely. This accounted for the learning goals and skills developed or to be developed amongst children. While with children in higher grades, there is a possibility of assigning tasks, and expect them to finish the same either independently, or with minor help and support. Again, the nature of support would be different. Children in higher grades would require help with developing and understanding conceptual structures or with meaning-making. Hence, there is no pressing need for continuous supervision. Whereas children in their primary grades, especially the ones from the kindergarten grades to grade one and two, the primary tasks with them are to teach them to read and write. This requires the development of a range of fine motor skills, such as holding a pencil, drawing certain strokes gradually and following the dotted lines. At times, the teacher has to literally hold the hand of the children to teach them how to draw a certain stroke, which is not possible in online classes. Hence, it is on the parents to perform these tasks so that the education of their child is not affected. Another important task for any teacher in these early years of her students is to culture them into the ways and norms of the school. At times, children have to be literally caught and made to sit in one place physically. It's basically the transition from a child to a student, which requires the teacher to properly engage with the child and gain a minimum level of trust of the child. Now, by the sound of it, one might presume that this poses all the challenges on the part of the teacher. Nevertheless, it is equally challenging for children to transition to students under the circumstances such as now.

Compared to the earlier when the child had to go to an actual school, it was easier for the child to accept and begin transitioning into a student. Whereas, now a child has to get used to being part of a virtual space, in an age where a child probably does not understand the meaning of this term itself. For a child getting used to the processes of school within the comfort of the home might sound convenient, but it is equally difficult for a child in his early years to perceive the same place as his/her school for a certain period of time during the day and comfortable home during other.it is needless to say that there are families which do not have enough space to provide the child with a different or isolated

room to attend classes. In such a situation, a child might have to struggle to concentrate on his/her class, which comprises people s/he knows nothing of, when his/her family is sitting right in front.

Attending online classes also requires a basic understanding of the functioning of technology. As a result, children completely depend on their parents for technical help (Bahamani et al., 2020). In such a scenario, children with working parents are at a high risk of being put in a conflicted environment at their home. Parents working in varied sectors have different work-related demands and hence might feel pressured or disturbed while having to assist their child repeatedly so that they attend the class with no difficulty (Durante et al., 2020). Moreover, on occasions, parents have to assume the role of a professional teacher or counsellor as and when needed. For example, schools come up with various activities to deal with the monotony of classes and ensure better engagement and interest on the part of the students, such as cooking without fire. These activities are taken up starting from grade one, and, at times, it includes baking activities as well. These activities often require continuous supervision and the physical assistance of an adult. Hence, one of the parents has to be present with the child all the time. This forces the working parent to either request for leave or work while sitting with the child, which leads to divided attention. This surely affects the work discipline of the parent and puts them under stress. This stress often leads to a conflict between parents on sharing responsibilities. A child, while struggling with getting used to a place and system called a school, also struggles with the feeling of guilt and helplessness. This puts the child under extreme stress to pick up pace in academics (Wirth, 2020). Not just that, a child might be pushed to feel responsible and learn things as quickly as possible, be it navigating technology or handling tasks independently. This not only leads to early exposure to technology which can have lasting undesired impacts but also hinders the quality of the process of learning.

Further, attending online classes have a major impact on the health of the students (Mehdi, 2020). Early years are marked by physical activity and play. Online classes leave lesser scope for tasks that involve physical movement. Being seated in one place, glued to the screen,

has severely affected the overall health of the children. Longer screen hours severely affect the eyes of the children. Moreover, with an ongoing pandemic when children are already forced to stay inside their homes, being forced to stay in front of the screens and not being able to move around adds to the feeling of isolation.

For children belonging to the EWS category, the situation is even more critical. They have been enrolled into schools, but are practically out of the schooling system. Their parents cannot afford multiple devices for each child to attend classes or at times even a single device and neither a good network connection (Iftikhar, 2020). For some of those who have by some means managed to arrange a device, they lack the requisite skills and knowledge to support their child as needed. Most of them have never been to schools themselves, neither they are efficient with the use of technology. As a result, these children, even if they do attend classes, do not benefit from them much. Their parents cannot hold their hand to help them draw the strokes as asked, since they probably never held a pencil themselves. Neither can they help with technological issues as needed.

Under these conditions, children might be admitted to school in primary grades and passed at the term-end examinations. But one cannot ignore the issues that are emerging in this online mode of learning, especially for students in their early years of education. The development of the foundational skills of reading and writing that do require physical engagement to a certain level is being severely compromised. As a result, students do get promoted to higher grades, but they might not be able to keep up with the demands of these higher standards. Their lack of efficient reading and writing is not only delaying their process of learning, but also severely affecting it. If proper interventions are not made in time, this is going to lead to numerous other issues that might not be visible at the moment but will creep up later. This might range from an affected self-concept to poor performance, behavioural issues, academic stress, drop out and many more. Students when unable to perform might feel incapable and gradually start losing interest in schooling.

Therefore, it is imperative that the concerned authorities and stakeholders take cognisance of the issue and start planning interventional strategies that have a wide reach so that this

situation does not extrapolate into a range of issues that damage our education system. These interventions could be curricular reforms that cater to the emergent needs of these students or remedial measures to provide added support. Government can also team up with NGOs to increase its impact and outreach. Collaborative initiatives are needed on part of the government, society, schools and other stakeholders so that this situation is efficiently dealt with.

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Book Review

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Hanging On -A Special Educator's Journey Into Inclusive Education by Kanwal Singh puts forward a persuasive case for change in the field of special education. Bold and unapologetically upfront, the book brings to surface usually awaited issues such as the tensions between the inclusive theory and practice, the grip of traditional expertise, the creeping enough commercial interest and educator burn out. It is presented in unconventional style using humour and totally free of jargon. The non-technical and fresh language makes the book a very welcome change.

Looking back at the education of the persons with disabilities in ancient India, where it was given in the communities in which they lived, it was given in the mainstream schools alongside the non handicapped peers in a Gurukulum setting. The teachers gave individualised instructions based on the individual child's needs and age. As an act of dharma(a duty) a few residential institutions were established by the members of the royalty at different locations. During the colonial period and after, special schools were established mostly in urban areas and were expensive. However, in the post-independence years India had special schools run by the government as well as non government organizations for the persons with disabilities. The special schools were not sufficient looking at the vast population in need of special education. From there the concept of integration and then inclusion.

Education for children with disabilities has been on a rollercoaster ride, witnessing several highs and lows. The author herself has been in this journey for almost three decades. In this book, she has made a deliberate attempt to disturb and shake up the existing status quo within the special education and the inclusive education community. It also acts as a springboard for future discussions leading to a change of course for the education of children with disabilities.

The inclusion theory sounds beautiful but it does not have backing of adequate tools and strategies to guide inclusive practice. The cut copy paste technique has been applied by simply lifting practises from special education model calling them inclusive and applying them in the mainstream schools.

The book is divided in five chapters, from the time when the disabilities has witnessed a series of switches in philosophy from special education, integrated education to inclusive education. Highlighting how these declarations and conventions have made an impact on special education journey but with so many of them it has resulted in hodgepodge of special and inclusive education. Confusion in many areas has resulted in hotspots of special and inclusive education practises. Inclusion has become an overused and under defined term. People have spent decades in this field but still struggles to figure out the answers of some fundamental questions related to inclusion.

The special education schools get funding and resources, as a result of this, there has been a bombardment of news, new training forces, assistive devices, equipment, apps technology, educational aids, toys and books. It also depicts the dilemma that teachers face in implementing inclusive education. Besides this mainstream schools have invested resources in vision building exercises to bring teachers and special educators on board with the idea of inclusive education. Many schools have whipped up and displayed beautifully designed vision boards that pledged to strive towards an inclusive world where all people including persons with disability, have equal rights and opportunities. Unfortunately, that's where it all usually seems to stop. The reform seems to be stuck on thinking and very little in practice. Education of children with disabilities has been a tough journey with a lot of breakers.

In spite of the mounting evidence something is not working, we continue to trudge along, doing what we are used to doing. The idea of this book is to get the message out to as many people in the special community as possible. There is an urgent need for the special and inclusive education community to question their beliefs and actions.

The concept of inclusive education

Whatever accommodations are needed, are to be made in the mainstream schools. There should be no segregated education because eventually, every person must become a part of the mainstream society. As humans, we cannot exist in social and occupational silos. That's the concept. Inclusive education took special educators away from the special environments. Now they needed to operate within mainstream environments. They needed to become facilitators, educators, counsellors, and liaison persons for students with disabilities, mainstream school teachers and administrators, and the parents of students with disabilities. Special educators became inclusive education experts, and even activists and advocates.

It was easier said than done. Amidst fancy nomenclatures, esoteric concepts and confounding situations, most of the special educators lost track of what exactly they were trying to achieve and what was the role in the fast-changing environment. The ground reality is quite different. Mainstream teachers and students find it difficult to adjust with students with different needs, and vice versa.

The author asks some sore questions from her community of professionals: who they are, what they intend to achieve, what is the future course of action and where the professions of special education and inclusive education are heading? She grabs the bull by its horns.

There are more questions and less answers but then, the objective of this book doesn't seem to be providing answers. The objective seems to be to provoke the status quo and shake her colleagues out of the inertia they have either fallen into or pretend to be living in. She calls it the Lala land.

The objective is to encourage them to question their place in the larger scheme of things. Hence, more than providing answers, the intention of the book is to instigate a journey towards finding the answers.The book has been written in a very easy, conversational manner with the liberal smattering of hand drawn illustrations and graphics.

The target readers are special educators, inclusive education experts and all those who are interested in these subjects or those who have some sort of stake (students with disabilities and their parents and guardians). Even mainstream educators should read the book to get a completely different perspective on what goes on in the life of an inclusive education expert and what steps can be taken to make education more inclusive for all.

Inclusive education is a wonderful concept, but one which for many years has been at risk of getting lost in a sea of mediocre, donor-pleasing, one-off projects that seem oblivious to the education revolution that's really required. This book gives us a light-hearted yet powerful reminder of the changes needed. And if it makes you feel uncomfortable because it challenges the way you have been working, don't feel offended. Stop, reflect, and change!"

Inclusion in the current scenario has done its bit and is at a juncture where it desperately needs to be reviewed. This book should be distributed to the many inclusive education project managers in various agencies, bilateral contractors and international NGOs, teachers and students. It will certainly help those who make policies or those who do not have a background as a teacher to understand the challenges that teachers face in implementing inclusion.

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