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EDITOR'S NOTE

The education system does not function in isolation from the society of which it is a part. Socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of a country influence the education system. India is a pluralistic society marked with cultural and religious diversity. These diversities are also reflected in our educational institutions in general and school in particular. Anita Rampal and Deepti Srivastava in their paper 'Understanding Religious Diversity: I, the Other and Us' explored how children view themselves and other children in a school. The paper also analyses how the NCERT textbooks address the issue of religious diversity.

We are committed to ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender and social category, have access to quality education. This commitment is reiterated in various flagship programmes and initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act-2009 and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. Anita Nuna in her study tries to find out some of the barriers which prevent Muslim girls from entering into secondary stage of school education. Further, our cultural diversity is also reflective of its linguistic diversity with more than 1600 languages across the country. English has also created an important space in the multilingual scenario of our country. Now there has been a tremendous increase in public demand for teaching of English language from the primary classes in our multilingual country. The great demand for admission in English medium schools throughout the country is a testimony to the attraction of English among people living in rural and remote areas. Meenakshi Khar in her paper focuses on some of the reasons behind the spread of English in our country. R. Meganathan in his paper illustrates the ongoing exercise of curriculum renewal and development of material in English language education in Rajasthan.

National Curriculum Framework, 2005 advocates that there is a need to recognise children as natural learners having abilities to construct their own knowledge and to develop their capacities in relating to the physical and social environment around them. To realise this need, S.K. Mishra and Ajit Singh in their article discuss the changing role of both teachers and learners in the Constructivist Classroom. A Constructivist Classroom has a democratic environment supporting the active involvement of all students in collaborative activities. Rishabh Kumar Mishra's paper reports that pedagogic practices based on social constructivism can help our children in sustaining the essentials of 'learning to live together'.

Assessment and examination is an indispensable component of our educational system. This issue has been deliberated upon in four papers related to assessment and examination. Ranjana Bhatia, Sandhya Vij and Deepti Madhura in their paper highlight the stress level of secondary school students of Delhi especially during examination. Veer Pal Singh's paper elaborates some of the strategies which could be used by teachers to reduce examination stress among students. R.P. Rai in his paper analyses some of the causes of scholastic dishonesty among graduate students and concludes that teachers, students, guardians and administrators are collectively responsible for it. Nikita Rathod and A. Ramachary's study ascertains the significance of focal point and command word identification ability of B.Ed students in enhancing their answering competencies.

Educational researches being conducted in educational institutions provide new directions to teachers, teacher educators and educational administrators for curriculum development, its transaction and assessment strategies as well as policy formulation. Dipankar Tripathy in his paper shares his experiences regarding getting access, re-access and informed consents of the participants gained in an Indian school to conduct a qualitative study.

The issue concludes with Najmah Peerzada's essay reflecting on educational philosophy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

— *Academic Editor*

Understanding Religious Diversity I, the Other and Us

ANITA RAMPAL* AND DEEPTI SRIVASTAVA**

Abstract

Children's understanding of religious diversity remains an important area of concern from the standpoint of research in education. This is because schools as sites of secondary socialisation deal with children who have an already formed 'self' and internalisations of the 'other' which are tested afresh in the classrooms with mutual identifications and communication between children belonging to diverse socio-religious groups. Here the curriculum and its transaction influence children's judgments, attitudes and affiliations towards the others. Additionally, an important objective of the school is to equip children with knowledge and skills that enable them to operate effectively in a culturally diverse classroom, community, nation and the world. To understand effectively, how children view themselves and the others; to see how the revised NCERT textbooks that offer scope for accommodating multiple perspectives, allow for critical discussions on issues of religious conflict and also what are the teachers perspectives regarding the teaching-learning of religious diversity is what this paper seeks to explore.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorist attacks and bomb blasts happen. They are aired on television; adults as well as the young watch them, hear them from their friends and sometimes are

even a part of these mishaps. How do adolescents understand these events and in the wake of such public display of dissention and hatred for the terrorist 'other', how do they look at diverse religious

* Professor of Education, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007

** University Teaching Assistant, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007

groups? What are their experiences at home, school or outside? Within the school how are these proposed, accepted, rejected, modified and reconstructed in classrooms where adolescents come together to share the same space and learn? These are some of the issues this paper tries to address and grapple with.

While I sought to seek answers to these questions, Mumbai was attacked on 26/11. The *modus operandi* employed in the attack shook our sensibilities as earlier terrorists used to infiltrate crowded plebeian spaces but now they had infiltrated the secure and more privileged space. They had attacked the middle class protective psyche which took refuge in the refrain—‘don’t go to crowded places’. Even though many of us were distant from the tragedy, we felt threatened and insecure. Is there any place which is not free of threat and assault today? Isn’t it natural for children to feel scared? Do they not want to understand why it happened? Do we answer their queries maturely? Or do we rather keep them away from such talk as they are children anyway, and they would only understand as they grow older (Kumar 2007).

In fact children need adult help to make sense of social/political conflict as they do not have all the details and concepts that enable them to realise why such conflicts arise and how they are being played out (Kumar 1996). If we discuss the issues they raise or question

that bother them, we help them put pieces together and prepare them for an adult life in a meaningful manner. In growing to be an adult, the child makes sense of ‘self’ and the ‘other’ from what takes place within the family and later among friends and peers, at school under circumstances in which feelings of love, hate, fear, anxiety, pride, guilt and affection are experienced. Within the family, the individual member of the society simultaneously externalises her own being into the social world and internalises it as an objective reality. This does not mean she understands the ‘other’. She may misunderstand the ‘other’ as each family, kinship group and community views the ‘other’ from ‘their own eyes’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Thus, when a parent, who watches news of riots on television, casually says “*Yeh toh Muslim hi hoga*” it has a strong influence on children. This child might then, conjure a distorted image of a Muslim and start thinking ‘Why are all terrorists Muslims?’ Does the parent/child think the same way when *Babri Masjid* is demolished or *Malegaon* is attacked?

Children are more sensitive to noticing minute details about such issues as compared to adults whose ‘socialised eye’ becomes accustomed to and therefore insensitive to such aspects (Kumar 1999). On the other hand, children’s ‘sensitive eye’ is curious to uncover ambiguities by understanding things from multiple perspectives; perspectives that

change so fast that an adult can feel lost and confused about the direction of discussion. The adults however, avoid such discussion of social and political conflict and deliberately snub or silence the children as they feel the children are innocent and naïve to be exposed to such complexities. They want to protect their children from harsh realities and think they will understand when they grow up (Kumar 2007) not realising that the children are growing up imbibing notions of 'self' and the 'other' from their active engagement or silence. In a study by Amar Kumar Singh on 'Development of Religious Identity and Prejudice in Indian Children' done with Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian children, it is shown that children with both prejudiced parents have highest prejudice scores in both Hindu and Muslim samples thus showing that the socialisation of prejudice takes place in family through parental models (Sinha 1881). Though the influence of family is strong, there is little intervention possible at the level of family therefore one looks at other alternative sites. One such alternative socialising agency is the 'school' which is considered as a close rival of the family as a significant agent of social/political socialisation (Apple 1990).

Schools as sites of secondary socialisation deal with an already formed 'self' and an already internalised world to modify these internalisations with mutual

identification and communication between human beings (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Schools are concerned with how children understand past and present as their attitudes and beliefs are of essence for society's survival and as a normative discipline, education is closely linked with what concerns 'favourable socialisation' be it home, school or beyond in a multi-religious, multi-class, multi-caste, multilingual society as India. For a society so diverse with people holding conflicting viewpoints, yet also a society which is a collective aspiration should so it becomes "...young people be encouraged to think about such questions by hearing them discussed from every point of view?" (Russel 1961, p. 225) But do the schools allow such discussions? Do views of all religious groups get a representation in schools?

Schools often represent the 'dominant class culture', the 'middle class' value system which is not overtly stated but covertly goes on through what Jackson (Apple 1990) calls the 'hidden curriculum' i.e., norms and values that are not usually talked about in teachers statements of ends or goals. This 'hidden curriculum' contributes more to understanding 'self' and the 'other' than the other forms of teaching value orientations. The concept of hidden curriculum is crucial to understand how the treatment of social/political conflict in school curriculum can lead to acceptance by students of a

perspective that serves to maintain existing prejudices. Apple shows just how it operates through the social studies text material which presents a somewhat biased view of the true nature of the amount and possible use of internecine strife in which groups within and outside the countries have engaged (Apple 1990). In India, one such instance is the revision of History textbooks after NCF-2000. These revisions, intended to inculcate political and cultural values propagating ideological legitimacy of the Hindu nation, led to protests as “these NCERT textbooks reflected many of RSS’s (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) pet themes—e.g., the urge to prove that ‘Indian Civilisation’ is synonymous with ‘Hinduism’ which in turn is synonymous with ‘Vedic Civilisation’. This Vedic Civilisation was portrayed as the fount of all things great in the world while all the evils that beset India were traced to the foreigners—Muslim invaders and Christian Missionaries” (Sundar N. 2004, p.1601-1605).

Similar problems existed in History textbooks, used by thousands of schools across the country where facts are mixed with myth and legend in a way that makes it difficult for students to distinguish between them. This leads to a fragmented understanding for the children as is evident from the study conducted by ‘*The Sunday Times*’ where it spoke to students at a Saraswati Shishu Mandir in West Delhi, run by the

RSS, and found that they perceived Indian history to be nothing but a conflict between Hindus and Muslims. A casual conversation with students at a Saraswati Bal Mandir in South Delhi unveiled an image of India as the oldest civilisation in the world and the source of all knowledge and culture. Meanwhile the young children studying at a madrasa in Delhi’s Okhla area don’t recognize names such as Ashoka, Buddha and Chandragupta. These historical figures are alien to them. It’s almost the same story in many of the more than 1,000 madrasas operating in the national capital (Saxena S. 2008).

While misrepresentation of facts is a serious concern, equally grave is the glossing over or omission of facts and information by teachers due to their personal biases and beliefs. Pedagogically, socio-political conflict is relevant for discussion in any classroom but ‘Social and Political Life’ classrooms offer more scope as its subject matter comprises diverse concerns of society like religion, caste, class, region and language. Subsumed in these problems are the social issues such as tensions, violence, aggression, global terrorism, student unrest, health, education, unemployment, poverty, slums, population and corruption. These complex issues in the textbook require an active student-teacher engagement as an involved engagement of teacher and students with the textbook opening up avenues for further inquiry. It

is required as students as well as teachers might not comprehend all the details of why conflict arose in the first place and then how it is being shaped. But when a Social and Political Life teacher in a government school expresses disapproval of the textbooks (NCERT 2005) that discuss socio-political conflict from multiple perspectives by saying,

“जिन्होंने NCERT की किताब लिखी है उनसे हमने कहा कि आप विभिन्नता की बात करके विभिन्नता को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं। बच्चों को ये सब बताने की जरूरत नहीं है...”

One feels how and when would children know about varying perspectives then? From telling them about their stance, there are other teachers who deliberately avoid providing answers sometimes because of their own deeply entrenched prejudices and desire to be ‘idealistic’ and to present harmony where none exists.

“मैं तो झूठ पढ़ाता हूँ, आदर्शवाद पढ़ाता हूँ, पर मन मैं जानता हूँ की हम अलग हैं”

Why does this teacher say something he doesn’t believe in? If he feels we are not united does he feel a deceptive idealisation is going to serve any purpose? He just doesn’t discuss reality as he thinks, it might politicize education. At one level, we can say, all educational activity has ideological and political bias. At another level, do we ever think what education is for? Is it for ‘professional development’ or for life? Does it not have to relate to life and events affecting us?

Can a response, like the one above, that shows harmony where none exists, convince children? This kind of knowledge for the young who can experience conflict around them is misleading and unconvincing. For an adolescent it means a lack of faith in the ideological system which may result in widespread confusion and disrespect for those who govern the systems of social rule (Erikson E. in Hjelle and Zeigler 1992). It not only leads to a disbelief in the ideological system (school/family/government) but also affects the formation of identity (Apple and Buras cited in Apple 2008).

NEED, RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

All students, regardless of their gender, caste, class, region, religion or language should have an equal opportunity to learn in schools. It has been noted however, that some students have better chance to learn in schools, as they are presently structured than do others because of their cultural characteristics. As a consequence, the institutional nature of schools, deny some groups of students equal educational opportunity. The education, schools impart, is of a specific kind; it favors those who possess ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and designates those who do not possess this cultural capital as deviant by producing categories of pass/fail, dull/bright, successful/unsuccessful. The inequalities can be seen pronounced in categories of

gender, caste, class and region. For instance, it is noted that:

- Illiteracy among rural women is below the national average (46.13%) (Planning Commission 2005, p.5).
- As per Sachar Committee Report (GOI, 2004) nearly 25% of Muslim children have never attended school. The incidence of dropouts is also high for Muslims, only marginally lower than SC/STs (CIE, 2007, p.28).
- Female literacy rates among Muslims is particularly low in Haryana (21.5%), Nagaland (33.3%), Bihar (31.5%) and Jammu and Kashmir (34.9%) (Planning Commission 2005, p.12).
- Dropout rates at primary level for SCs (34.2%) and STs (42.3%) are substantially higher than the national average (29%) (Planning Commission 2005, p.5).
- Basic education in government schools is usually free in India, but the quality is, often, low and government schools have become schools for poor and deprived castes. As long as they can afford it, parents from so called 'higher castes' send their children to better private schools, thus, causing a ghettoisation of schooling (Kropac 2003, p.14)

Dominant groups, in every society, have a say in what comprises relevant education. The legitimacy of such a curriculum is not forced overtly; it works from within. It does

so by integrating popular democratic and economic claims that favour interests of community at large (Apple 1982, 1990). Even inside the classrooms, children who have the 'cultural capital' are least aware of existence of this 'culture of power'. It is those that lack this cultural capital are often aware of this existence (Delpit 1995). *Kancha Ilaiah* sees this 'culture of power' at work in schools when he says, "as we were growing up, stepping into higher classes, the textbooks taught us stories which we had never heard in our families. The stories of Rama and Krishna, poems from Puranas, the names of two epics called Ramayana and Mahabharata occurred repeatedly. Right from early school up to college our Telugu textbooks were packed with these Hindu stories. For *Brahmin-Baniya* students these were their childhood stories, very familiar not only in the story form but in the form of Gods they worshipped....I distinctly remember how alien all these names appeared to me" (*Ilaiah* 1996, p. 13).

Alienation or representation of social groups in a curriculum is a significant index of value attached to these groups in a cultural configuration that education helps to form and transmit. The children whose cultural groups are either ill-represented or not represented, are forced to identify with language, symbols and norms of dominant groups to save themselves from being labelled 'different' or 'deviant' (Kumar, 1988). Such subjection to

a particular authority and rule are normalised through the daily routine of school organisation and classroom learning. The daily ritual of a school is subjugating and stifling for a 14 year old Saddam who says,

“ये देख लें कि स्कूल में प्रार्थना करते समय कुछ धर्म की बातें आगे बढ़ायी जाती हैं, पर मैं नहीं पढ़ता।”

Even in casual conversation, when her classmate remarks at Liya, “तुम अगर *Christian* नहीं होती तो हिन्दू होती! referring to Christian conversions, Liya feels awkward but she does not reveal her discomfort. She tries to show it doesn't matter to her and thinks, “इससे मुझे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। मैं जो हूँ वो हूँ।” She thinks but she never speaks. Her voice is silenced. It does make a difference though as it affects her sense of 'self', personal to her though her social self shows otherwise.

In order to understand these experiences of diversity, the present study limited itself to explore how children view themselves and the others, the role of education in shaping and transforming these experiences and the influence of school curriculum on children's judgments, affiliations and attitudes.

It was assumed that the realisation of belonging to a particular group and distinctiveness from the other begins at an early age and develops fully by 8–9 years of age. Also children of 13–14 years form opinions and are able to articulate conflicts in the adult world and a young person has the capacity to perceive ideologies

of the society. Ideology, according to Erickson, is a set of values and assumptions reflecting religious, scientific and political thought of a culture (Erickson E. 1958 in Hjelle and Zeigler 1992, p.200). While the children see and hear conflicts in and around their society they have many pertinent questions for which they seek clarity. The classroom is one such shared space where children from diverse religious backgrounds interact with each other within and outside classrooms. These opportunities of interaction allow them to question issues of religious strife and conflict in society. Are these issues discussed in classroom in the first place? Surrounded by these conflicts, how do children view their own 'self'? How do they view their own community? How do they view the 'other'? Do religious differences really matter to children? How do they view India as a multi-religious nation? What does patriotism mean to them? How do communal riots, past and present, shape their opinions of other religious groups? How do children, then place the 'other' as a part of India? How do children belonging to mixed religious group view these issues? What role does school play to sensitize children on religious diversity?

It is noteworthy that many studies have identified the school as an important agent of children's enculturation in fostering their understanding of the nation. Education is systematically related to

children's level of political knowledge and expertise. The specific role that the school can play in fostering children's understanding of the state has been investigated in a sequence of studies conducted by Berti (Berti, 1994 in Barrett 2007, p.93). In these studies Berti examined whether the particular History textbooks that children use at school and the contents of the curriculum to which children at school are exposed can impact on children's knowledge and understanding of the state. She found that different textbooks produced significantly different pattern of responses showing influence of textbooks on formation of attitude, belief and opinion of students.

Textbook as being an important source of discussion in the class, the present study looks at 'Social and Political Life' textbooks as they offer ample scope for discussion of diverse issues related to discrimination and equity. The Social and Political Life (Classes VI–VIII, NCERT 2008), through use of narratives, case studies and reflective questions allow understanding issues from multiple perspectives. For this reason, Social and Political Life textbooks were taken as a starting point for discussion with children and teachers. How does classroom discussion take shape around this textbook, was another aspect this study wanted to explore. To study this, the research tried to understand teachers' perspectives on the textbook. How do the teachers view the textbook they are teaching?

How far do they think complex issues should be discussed? What happens when such questions come up in the class? Does additional support from school in form of external intervention of an organisation, if any, help in shaping opinions of 'self', 'other' and 'nation'? These are the minute details the study wished to understand. Broadly, they were studied as:

1. Exploring and understanding how children relate to religion in their sense of self
2. Probing children's understanding and experience of religious diversity
3. Probing children's understanding of 'patriotism'
4. Understanding teachers' perspectives of Social and Political Life textbooks.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

It requires an in-depth study to identify how notions of religious diversity are experienced, shaped, altered and negotiated within classrooms, schools and outside. This can be done best by drawing on a qualitative research approach. This approach requires 'purposeful sampling'. Such a sampling can provide 'rich information' and insight of the phenomena under study. For the data to be illuminative and to be insightful, we planned it such that:

1. Research work was carried out in three schools— one Government School, one Minority School and one Public School. The reason for

such a selection was based on the assumption that:

- a. **Government School** may or may not represent a religious ideology and would comprise of students from different backgrounds of religion, region, caste and class.
- b. **Minority School** would represent a religious ideology. The school would have better representation of the students of the religious group that the school represents.
- c. **Public School** may/may not represent a religious ideology. It would comprise of students from different backgrounds of religion, region, caste and class. The Public School to be studied would be engaged with an organisation working to sensitize teachers and students on issues of diversity.

The study also explored whether school ethos affected engaging with and interpreting issues of religious diversity among children.

1. Within the three schools, 7 students of Class IX were selected for focus group discussion which means the study was undertaken with 21 students. Selected portions of the text were taken up for discussion with the children (Class VII–IX, NCERT).
2. To get a better perspective on children's understanding, we explored Teachers' views and beliefs on the textbooks they are teaching, their own pedagogy and their personal beliefs on diversity and discrimination. This was done through focus-group

discussion and semi-structured interviews with teachers of Social Science (Classes VI–XII) in the three schools.

3. As a part of the study, we also probed views of children who underwent sessions with the organisation, engaged with the public school to sensitize them, on diversity and discrimination.
4. Going deeper, we also explored the experiences and interpretation of children of mixed religious identity on religious diversity. How do these children view diversity and how do they negotiate their own sense of belonging to two religious groups?

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the study, we sought seven students of class IX (as they belong to 13–15 year group) from each school. We engaged with the entire class and asked all of them to write on the topic 'Who Am I?' and then selected seven from among them, on the basis of their writings. The group of seven students was selected keeping in view that they:

- Hailed from different religious backgrounds,
- Were assertive in their opinions and/or
- Held strong views on religion or conflict.

To analyze writings of students of Class IX, who wrote on 'Who Am I?' a chart was prepared and similar themes were given same colour for example, gender was coloured blue,

religion orange and so on. Then the chart was read for dominant themes that emerged.

At first, after having chosen a group of seven students from each school, a number of focus-group discussions were carried out on different days. On the first day, the discussions were centered round the children's scripts. Striking opinions like 'Why can't I give my life for my country?', 'There is no discrimination in India'; 'I am with the Congress' were taken up for further discussion. Other students of the group joined the discussion.

Subsequent method of discussions varied for the three groups of students depending on their responses in the previous discussion. For instance, in the Government School, we realised that Saddam was not participating in the discussion though his initial writing was expressive and the others in the group were also hesitant to speak about religious conflict. So, we asked this group to write on— these questions. What does religion mean to you? and which religion do you want to know of and Why? After this exercise, the group became more open to discussion.

In Christian Minority School, beginning from their scripts, we discussed about textbooks and certain issues like—What is discrimination? How do we knowingly/unknowingly practice it everyday? Later, Saumya, Arushi and Payal sent their reflective writings by mail.

These reflective writings were on:

- Religion, Love and Discord,
- God, Religions and I and
- Religious Diversity of India.

In the Public School, after initial discussion about their scripts, students discussed about the social/political issues in the textbooks. During the course of discussion, when they mentioned meeting a group of college students from Lahore through Pravah's initiative, students were asked to share their experience. Later, Surabhi, who has been a part of Pravah's workshop in the previous academic session (2007–08), was asked to share if she felt Pravah's intervention has influenced her in some way. If she thinks it has/not, why does she think so?

With children belonging to Hindu–Muslim family backgrounds

Brothers, Mohammed Zanskar Danish and Mohammed Mushkoh Ramish: Their father is a Muslim and mother is a Hindu. Danish and Ramish discussed about their own experiences being Hindu–Muslim. They were read out portions from the textbook which they related to their own life experience. Later, Danish wrote on 'Why do I think it is useless to fight over religion?'— His oft repeated phrase while discussing religious dissensions. Ramish, a proud 10 year old Indian, wrote on – 'I am proud to be an Indian'.

The data was in the form of focus group discussions and interviews with teachers and children. This data was analyzed and themes were interpreted and explained.

UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Teachers' perceptions on textbooks, children's understanding, their own prejudices and their pedagogy present a variety and complexity of the teaching-learning process in the classrooms. Teaching does not merely involve dissemination of information; it requires active engagement of the students and teachers in the class. Even when the teacher is cautious of revealing her own beliefs about social realities, it gets uncovered when issues are discussed as classroom interaction cannot be pre-planned. Teachers' active engagement and silence affect children's understandings of diversity and discrimination. Through the data gathered I have identified certain perceptions of teachers which I feel are, or have been particularly important. The teachers spoken to, feel that the present Social Science (NCERT) textbooks that present content 'as it is' in the social world are difficult to deal with, in the class. One teacher is skeptical about the way the content has been presented in the textbooks of Social Science. He says, "बच्चे को ये सब बताने की जरूरत नहीं है जैसे 'अन्सारी को घर नहीं मिला' या ओम प्रकाश वाल्मीकि का... (referring to case-studies

in Social and Political Life textbook, Class VII, NCERT, p.14) ऐसा सुन कर बच्चों को अच्छा नहीं लगता पर वो (people in NCERT) कहते हैं, "ये तो *reality* है, ये तो बतानी पड़ेगी।" While the content of the textbook is given 'as it is', the teacher finds it difficult to address 'why is it so?' Is it so because his pedagogy is teacher-centric? "*Time* कहाँ है? *Syllabus discuss* करना होता है, और हम लोग ऐसी बातें करेंगे तो विभिन्नता होगी", he says. Why does the teacher limit himself to syllabus? Is education only to prepare students for exams? Does it not have to do with being aware of social and political issues that children as well as teachers see and live with? Even while teaching, teacher is providing examples to the students rather than students relating the given content to everyday life as "बच्चे उसे समझ नहीं पायेंगे।" Teacher plays an important role in quoting examples from our day to day life. The content of the textbooks rather than being teacher-centric, requires active engagement on both the sides as children are not blank slates. They bring preconceptions and misconceptions in the classroom that have to be addressed to. Having pre-conceptions is alright but misconceptions and prejudices have to be carefully addressed to by looking at the issue from multiple perspectives. But teachers are unwilling to do so as they think that school is a protective space. They feel that school is a normative and value building enterprise where talking of issues of discrimination might

cause them to grow, where none existed before not realising their own students face discrimination inside their classes and even outside the school. When a 14 year old Shweta says, “वो लोग (people in Delhi) हम पर हंसते हैं खरखर रंग के कारण,” and her classmate responds by saying, “people in Delhi do not have feelings” it means they are hurt being discriminated and it matters to them. So why then, are we not willing to accept that we discuss the issues with children? Why do we make discrimination appear remote to students by saying “पहले ऐसा होता था, अब नहीं। अब कुछ गाँव में होता होगा, कुछ *discrimination* पर शहरों में ऐसा नहीं है।” Even when laughter is evoked in the classroom as children are unaware of the rituals of other religious group the teacher who lacks pedagogical experience, feels uncomfortable in handling this situation. As a result, she does not delve into discussing with the students, their misconceptions about the other religious group. Teachers are cautious while discussing discrimination in class. This cautiousness is revealed when the teachers say, “इसके पीछे *family background* भी बहुत बड़ा *factor* है। जैसे कुछ बच्चों के *parents* भी वैसे ही सोचते हैं, जैसे यहाँ वो *person* जिसने *house* नहीं दिया। कुछ बच्चे तो सोचते हैं कि ऐसा ही होना चाहिए पर उनकी संख्या कम है। आज की *generation* में, मैंने ये देखा है, *interacting with people and children*. लेकिन बहुत संख्या वाले लोग ऐसे हैं जो सोचते हैं कि *yes individuals should be given respect.*” How can teachers,

take such a stance when they are aware of social/political dissensions in society? Do they not strengthen rather than question the status quo on issues of caste, community and religious diversity by taking a stance like this? These teachers do engage actively with students in the class and try to uncover their biases. They understand, “ये *discrimination* हम खुद कर रहे हैं। अब वो बात नहीं है कि *male dominated society* है पर जो *orthodox feeling* है उसमें बदलाव नहीं है।” But they strongly feel home has a greater role in nurturing discrimination. But is it only parents and home that are doing so? What about the teacher, who while feeling ‘patriotic’ thinks ‘देश के काम आना चाहिए। धर्म के काम आना चाहिए। धर्म के लिए कुछ नहीं कर रहा’ and does not problematize the students’ invocation of “*Pakistan* पर हमला करना चाहिए” whenever there is a terrorist attack. What sense of patriotism does he evoke and why does he not question himself and the children who need an ‘enemy’ to feel patriotic? While teachers believe that children emulate them, why do they not show them that “all people are important and merit active respect?” (Goulet in Freire 2005) Why do they think “उन्हें (*religious minority and SC/STs*) साथ भी रखना है और बुरा भी नहीं लगने देना है” rather than engaging in a dialogue with students so they can intervene in reality to change it? Rather, teachers offer a perspective of ‘हम सब एक हैं’ though they personally do not believe

in this ideal. Rather they reveal deeply entrenched prejudices when they say, “मैं धर्म को ज्यादा नहीं मानता पर जानता हूँ ये लोग यहाँ आ कर गन्दगी करेंगे और दस लोगों को यहाँ *try* करेंगे। फिर हमें जाना पड़ेगा वहाँ से।” If this is what they think about the other religious group, how do they address social/political conflicts in the classroom? They teach what is given in the book but do not get into why is it given so. They complete the syllabus and achieve the end but the process seems to be lost on the way. Also, how do those teachers, who are not convinced with the content of the textbook, teach? Do they go beyond ‘superficial’ teaching? How can such a social science teaching provide “social, cultural and analytical skills required to adjust to an increasingly interdependent world?” (NCERT 2006a, p.1) Can it ever be able to deal with political and social realities if students are passive recipients of knowledge in the class? These are some of the issues that need to be addressed.

CHILDREN’S INTERPRETATIONS OF DIVERSITY

After listening to children, one realises that they are aware of socio-political realities. They understand diversity and discrimination lived and practiced in their homes, school, society and nation. They explicate their experiences of discrimination, diversity and unity with such a fluidity that possibilities of change emerge naturally from them—

unrestricted, un-imposed. “In our textbook, it is written ‘in India we are all equal’ but we don’t treat them equally,” says Ramish who is born of Hindu-Muslim parents when his elder brother relates their experience of calling their Muslim father, “Mr. Datta” to seek shelter for a night, in a *dharamshala* near the temple while they were passing through Uttaranchal.

Why does a person need to mask his identity to seek shelter for a night? What if someone cannot in a day to day situation? What if a 14-year-old Saddam Hussain from a Government School, who carries a terrible burden of sharing the name with a well-known political leader of Iraq? He faces unwarranted remarks from his peers and friends as Ritesh, his close friend recollects, “जब ये पहले आया था तो सब कहते थे कि आतंकवादी है, इससे दूर रहो।” When he was new to the school, Saddam was verbally bullied and excluded by other children. Not only because of his name but also because of his religion, Saddam says that he has to defend his identity of being an Indian whenever there is a cricket match or news about strained relation with Pakistan. Saddam is questioned about his loyalty to India, “तू किसकी *side* है”, they ask him. “अब हिन्दुस्तान में हैं तो हिन्दुस्तान को *support* करेंगे, हमारे धर्म में कहा है कि जिस देश में हो उसके प्रति वफादार रहो नहीं तो गद्दार कहलाएगा।” he defends himself. But why does a child, belonging to a minority group, have to prove his Indianness each

time he is questioned? "It has been argued that identity problems of a Muslim child derive directly from valuation of his group in the wider society, and the status accorded to it in the social structure" (Razzack 2007, p.33).

Valuations accorded to a minority, is more often than not, rigid. This was observed in the focus group discussion of students of the Public School when a discussion about composition of their neighbourhood which comprised majority of Muslims led to describing why people do not will to stay in this neighbourhood. The students said:

Jaskirat: पर *ma'am* कोई *will* नहीं करता वहां जाने को।

Rahul: वहां पे वो नहीं जाने देते *Hindus* को।

Researcher: कैसे?

Rahul: *Ma'am* ये होता है। हमने देखा है। सारे मुसलमान ना एक हिन्दू को मार रहे थे।

Jaskirat: कभी कुछ काफी *aggressive* होते हैं।

These children, during the course of discussion are generalising that Muslims are aggressive. They depict the Muslim as assailant but cannot see him as a victim because they can only see a part; they can't see the whole. Socialisation produces mutually exclusive constructions of the 'other' so mixtures are unthinkable. Attributes and traits are thought of as fixed objects rather than a discourse. For instance, Rubina Saigol sees a similar exclusiveness accorded to Hindus in Pakistan when she says, "(In

Pakistan) Hindus are always weak or tricksters and all Hindus possess these fixed traits or characteristics." These categorisations or stereotypes govern the separation of the groups into an in-group and out-group (Saigol 1995, p.102). Prejudice is the regrettable precipitate of this process of category formation as these are applied to person categories. People slip easily into ethnic prejudice because the vagaries of 'natural and common' processes of categorisation in themselves produce bias (Barret and Barrow 2005, p.200). "जैसे हम लोग *left* से *start* करते हैं वो लोग *right* से *start* करते हैं। हम लोग आगे से *start* करते हैं वो लोग पीछे से (talking about writing) और उसके बाद जैसे तवा होता है। हम सीधे तवे पे खाना बनाते हैं वो उल्टे तवे पे बनाते हैं।" This demarcating and attracting one's kind and alienating the others creates out-groups (Saigol 1995, 103). If a group identity accurately reflects an individual's sense of self, the identity is construed as authentic, whereas if it does not reflect, or is inconsistent with, the self concept, the identity is construed as inauthentic. "वो *Christian foreign country* में होते हैं। *India* में आ कर *Christian* हो मतलब वो लोग ने जबरदस्ती किया है कि तुम लोग *Christian* बनोगे *India* में।" Liya in the focus group comments while narrating how her classmate reminded her that she would have been a Hindu, had she not been a Christian.

Minorities worldwide are frequently blamed for bothering

themselves, as if racial consciousness was the cause of social division, rather than the product of pre-existing patterns of discrimination. They have themselves to blame, if they didn't mark themselves as different, there wouldn't be a problem in the first place. But who marks them in the first place? Who 'others' them?' (Bharucha in Conference on Indian Muslims 2007, p.69). The majority in a group 'others' the minority as was reflected in Danish's (born of Hindu-Muslim parents) interview where he says, "ऐसे ही मेरा friend है। He's not very smart; once he asked me during a match do you support India or do you support Pakistan? Danish said "If I was a Bengali would you ask me do you support Bangladesh and all? His friend said, "No, I was just wondering. Pakistan has all Muslims and you are also a Muslim." Then Danish said, "Why would I choose to stay in India? I would rather go to Pakistan."

The discussion with students from the Christian Minority School revealed that individuals belong to multiple aggregations, each of which has different relevance depending on the social condition. At any given moment, what an individual does may be contingent on the person being a member of certain gender, class, caste or religion depending on which category is socially dominant. Saumya brings out the complexity of religion and gender domination in a particular context when she says, "We are brought according to this way;

you have to believe in this God, you have to follow this religion. If you are not that way then there's a problem. I have seen my sister struggling so hard. She is a Christian and the guy she loved is a Hindu. She converted into Hindu. I don't know why they had it that if you have to be a bahu of the house. And come on yaar! You obviously tend to do it for one you love. She lost her mother when she was young and her stepmother had a biased behaviour towards her. We had many problems but she is fine now. She has accepted it. She has been going around with that guy for the past 8 years. If they have done an inter-caste marriage in the social group they are wrong as if they have committed a sin. My sister has married a Hindu because she loves him but in the reception party we heard people saying... You had to see my sister cry when she had to convert to Hinduism. And then they blame the parents. इनकी वजह से ऐसा हुआ है। इनके parents ने इनको ठीक से नहीं रखा है। इसकी परवरिश ठीक से नहीं हुई है।

While on the one hand, children show their understanding of religious discrimination there is an outpouring of 'patriotism' with different connotations on the other. Many of the children's writings on 'Who Am I?' brought forth these multiple meanings of patriotism that needs to be looked into. While Digvijay from Christian Minority School says, "I am a Hindustani. I am patriotic as I would be no better in America than in India"

he reflects a sense of belongingness to his nation. Amanpreet from the Public School says, "I believe India is our motherland we should give our life to it. जब हमारी *country* आज़ाद नहीं हुई थी, *Freedom fighters* ने जान दे दी थी। वैसे ही कभी ज़रूरत पड़े तो जान दे सकूँ। *I think we should serve our motherland.*" Amanpreet reflects a sense of idealism and believes in learning from the revolutionary heroes of the freedom movement. Ankita from Government School believes that she has to take care of her country and protect it from terrorism, "This country gives me a lot. Why can't I give my life to it?" she says. Ankita's family background (father is in the Indian Army) and her sense of idealism influence her notions of patriotism. It is good to feel for the collective but why can it not be in terms of proactive action for common good rather than the jingoistic sense of patriotism which urges one to 'die for the country'.

Mudaliar Commission (1953) articulates the notion of patriotism as "True patriotism involves three things—a sincere appreciation of the social and cultural achievements of one's country, a readiness to recognize its weaknesses frankly and to work for their eradication and an earnest resolve to serve it to the best of one's ability, harmonizing and subordinating individual interests to broader national interests." When Ritesh from the Government School says, "I want to modify the present in an attractive manner" he reflects

patriotism through proactive action. It has however been observed in an interview with a teacher of the same school that he allows warlike patriotism while a lesson on global terrorism is discussed in the classroom, "9th में *global terrorism* पर *chapter* है। तब ये *discussion* होता है। हाँ पाकिस्तान की कोई बात हो तो बहुत *interested* होते हैं। सभी कहते हैं कि पाकिस्तान पर हमला करना चाहिए" he says and he did not intervene when students said so. Would it not be better to intervene and discuss peaceful ways of learning patriotism?

A jingoistic spectacle of patriotism at Wagah Border everyday is appreciated by the students of the Christian Minority and Public School who are filled with fervor and 'patriotism' generated by the cheering crowds, sloganeering 'भारत माता की जय' and patriotic songs. This ritual of constructs patriotism as surpassing the enemy thereby engendering hate among the numerous crowds present on both the sides. But watching such synchronised movements and intimidating gestures, Mayur from the Public School feels, "इतना *coordination* होता है कि लगता है कि वो *friends* होंगे।" Mayur has straightforward notions of enemy and constructs enemy as hating each other but when he sees them performing in synchronisation he feels they must be practicing together and hence, are friends. Saumya from the Christian Minority School, on the other hand feels 'patriotic' at the Wagah when she says, *O man! One superb!* पता है वहाँ जा कर पता नहीं क्या हो

जाता है। आत्मा भर आती है। *You become so patriotic.* तुम उनके साथ चिल्ला रहे होते हो। *Marching and all fantastic.* उसके बाद...

Rest of the Group: कहाँ? क्या?

Saumya: *India* की जय! *Marching* में *they lift their leg till here.*

I got the chance to see this where they show how India and Pakistan were divided. अपना द्वार इतना बढ़िया होता है ना। *Gate* है ना।

Researcher: Is it nice to see India and Pakistan divided?

Saumya: No. But this is a reality. Divided it is. *But I think* हमारा *uniform* है ना, *it is nice. Better than they have. Theirs is this black as if they are goondas.*

Saurabh: You know they must be thinking the same for us.

Saurabh is discerning not to categorize people and nations when discussing on Pakistan or religious diversity but when he explicates who a terrorist is by saying, 'All Muslims are not terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims,' he is probably taking these messages from the media. Sensitive educational programmes can probe these categorisations of the further to sensitize children as such categorisations are problematic.

The reality that is officially constructed through state curricula and media is often problematic. It is skewed to favor the dominant groups beginning from the morning assembly of the schools where each child is socialised into conforming to rituals even if they do not belong

to them. Those that do not identify with these rituals feel helpless. As an alternative, Saddam very genuinely and sensitively suggests, "ऐसा क्यों ना किया जाए कि सबके लिए कोई गीत हो?"

In fact, Saddam also appeals for another reality in his native village where his Brahmin neighbour enjoins in celebration of Eid with him in Bihar.

Saddam: सिर्फ ये है कि हिन्दू मुस्लिम, हिन्दू मुस्लिम, हमारे यहाँ इतना अच्छा है कि बकरीद भी करते हैं तो हिन्दू ब्राह्मण सबसे ऊँची जाती का, वो हमारे यहाँ आकर खाता है।

Researcher: कहाँ पर?

Saddam: बिहार में, किशनगंज *district.* जो सबसे पिछड़ा ज़िला है। वहाँ।

As Saddam points, we should share with and talk more lived realities. Newspapers bring these realities up but schools need to discuss these with the children. Especially in a divided urban set-up, children can be made conscious through media, school discourse and oral narratives such as his.

THE SCHOOL ETHOS AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

There was a qualitative difference in schools observed in the study. In the Government School, where the composition of students in the class was heterogeneous, students identified themselves with their region, religion, language and caste more than the other two schools. These children voiced their opinion openly whereas students from the Public

School were being cautious in their speech. The Public School is located in Anand Vihar which is in proximity to Seelampur, a Muslim dominated area. The Muslim population in this area is mostly poor/lower middle class. The students of this group lived in a mixed locality comprising Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and the Jains. Though in their school, there was an initiative by an NGO to sensitize them about stereotypes, yet strong feelings of prejudice existed among some students because they lived in close contact with the poor Muslim community. Among the group, Surabhi was cautious not to label or categorize people and communities. She was a part of the NGO's youth initiative for active citizenship. The NGO, Pravah conducted a meeting of various school students with students from Lahore which had an influence on Surabhi's perspective as she said,

Surabhi: When we were going in the van we were discussing that we don't have to open. Slowly slowly we have to open.

Researcher: Ok.

Surabhi: *Main topic* था *terrorist*. उन्होंने कहा कि जैसे आप सोचते हो कि पूरा पाकिस्तान ही *terrorist country* है पर *that's not true* ना। जैसे एक *class* में शैतान बच्चा है हम सारी *class* का तो नाम नहीं ले सकते ना। *Similarly* हमारे *country* में *terrorism corner* है... *main* जो बात है कि आपके मन में जो *feeling* है कि सारे पाकिस्तानी *terrorist* हैं वो *feeling* खत्म करना चाहते हैं।

Researcher: तुमको ऐसा लगा कि *conscious* हो के बता रहे थे?

Surabhi: हम लोग *conscious* हो रहे थे *share* करते हुए पर वो लोग *openly* बोल रहे थे। उन्होंने कहा *1st step colleges* और *schools* से शुरू कर रहे हैं। हम लोगों ने बात की आपसे तो आप लोगों के मन में *image* सुधरी ना पाकिस्तान की। अब आप लोग भी ऐसे बात करेंगे तो उसको भी लगेगा। फिर सब लोगों के मन में *image* सुधरेगी पाकिस्तान की।

It was also observed that the school that engages with non-governmental initiatives to provide orientation to teachers and makes effort to sensitize children on issues of plurality is helpful as it generates awareness among teachers to realize issues are important and to look for opportunity to engage with these issues. Though resolution is not immediately possible one can look for such action within the classrooms.

Students from the Christian Minority School belonged to rich/upper middle class families. These students did not identify themselves with their religion, language or regional identity. These children, in their writings, identified most with their gender and then with 'being an Indian'. A class consciousness was observed in this group with reference to terms like, 'I want to be rich', 'I hate Bajaj scooters' and 'I am extravagant'. In the focus group discussions, it was observed that students talked about discrimination by the teacher, in the class on the basis of student's performance rather than in terms of religion, region, caste or language.

One student, Saumya was aware of discrimination as she had seen it in her own family. She narrated how her sister had to go through a lot of anguish as she had to convert from Christianity to Hinduism to marry.

It was also observed that children belonging to mixed religious family are more tolerant to diversity and consider that discrimination and fight over religion is futile. Danish writes, *“I think that fighting over anything is pretty useless the reasons are good. Fighting affects both sides greatly but if the reason is so stupid as religion it is not good. I am not saying that religion is stupid but in my school if there is a fight over a small reason the reason is soon forgotten but the fight continues. Who knows the reason for the Hindu Muslim riots? It’s just he is not Hindu or he is not Muslim so kill him. I think these fights are useless as no one will win but the fights and hatred will continue so we should stop these fights.”*

While children are aware of discrimination and also sometimes offer suggestions to resolve issues, we need to understand how education system can socialize them to respect plurality. In a study done extensively on twenty-five developed countries by Andy Greene, Greene demonstrates how education system of a country can promote social cohesion. The study shows how education socialises students through formation of values and identity. The two main observations of the study are—

1. There is evidence for a number of countries, particularly from

studies of education and racism, that levels of education can affect attitudes and behaviour to do with tolerance.

2. Countries where students reported receiving effective education on pluralism, internationalism, patriotism and elections reported having high levels of tolerance (Green, Preston and Janmaat 2006).

CONCLUSION

When children were asked, ‘Can discrimination end?’ a 14 year old Nitesh said, “होगा तो कोई *timing* थोड़ी ना दे रखा है।” He is sure that India can unite due to industrial development, क्योंकि जब कोई किसी *industry* में आ जाता है वहां हर एक प्रकार के लोग होते हैं और हर एक तरह के *religion* से मिलते हैं और उनके बारे में समझते हैं।”

The rise of industries, phenomena of migration and invention of telecommunications has created potential for individuals to communicate and interact with people of other diverse communities within and across national boundaries like never before. At the same time however, nations remain riven with discord, prejudice and hostility between communities within and across their boundaries. In wake of such discord, how to promote and maintain social cohesion in the face of rapid globalisation has become one of the key policy challenges of the new millennium (UNESCO 1996 in Greene, Preston, and Janmaat 2006, p.1).

We need, then, an education which will lead teachers and pupils to take a new stance towards issues of diversity and discrimination for acceptance of plurality. Such a stance requires 'problematizing knowledge instead of repeating irrelevant principles'. An education of 'why is it so?' rather than 'it should be'. "Vitality, instead of insistence on the transmission of what Alfred North Whitehead has called 'inert ideas—that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combination" (Freire 2005, p.33).

In the 'shared spaces' of classroom, teacher and pupil interaction is vital to acceptance of plurality. The fact that the pedagogical interaction takes place inside the classroom where teachers and students are engaged with texts makes it possible to generate multiple perspectives and shared understanding (Saigol 1995). But when the teachers themselves take the onus of providing one, fixed perspective knowledge becomes remote and pupil remains passive. While Social Science education as such, is based on democratic ideas children can be taught democratic ideals through practice of democracy.

While NCF – 2005 has for the first time, linked professional and pedagogical concerns of child and teacher, it has been unable to address the 'voice and agency' of teacher, which is a challenge in the delivery of quality education (Batra 2005, p. 4349). Teachers' orientation to the curriculum proposed by the NCF still remains a major challenge.

After all, "Unity is not Uniformity. No one is asked to give up his faith in the religion of his fathers, his love for the language which the poets who have inspired his life and the life of thousands like him— chose as a medium for their sense of truth and beauty, or his pride in the lives and achievements of the great men and women who lived and worked in the part of India he himself lives in... such loyalties do not detract from the loyalty to the nation... There is no either-or relationship between sectional loyalties and national loyalty; the two subsist together" (Government of India 1962, p.2–3). It is therefore, required by schools to accept plurality for building tolerance and appreciating diversity with the teachers having a major role to play in this respect.

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Education of Muslim Girls

Barriers, Challenges and Possibilities

ANITA NUNA*

Abstract

This paper attempts to trace barriers that compel Muslim girls to discontinue their schooling at the secondary stage i.e. classes IX or X in four districts namely Bahraich, Bareilly, Bijnor and Rampur of Uttar Pradesh, based on case studies with Muslim girls aged 15–17 who had completed elementary education, but were withdrawn from schools and focus group discussions with Muslim community. Evidences from many research studies show non-availability of secondary level schooling facilities, especially in rural areas, school ethos, if available and household poverty in sending girls to schools are very important barriers that compel Muslim girls not to avail the benefits of educational opportunities at the secondary stage. Although all of these have strengths to influence parents to deprive their daughters from availing educational facilities, especially once girls attain puberty. But the argument here is that parental disinterest in Muslim girls' education is one of the significant barriers, especially when girls attain puberty. The paper explores the potentially serious problems that lead to parental disinterest with regard to Muslim girls' education at the secondary stage.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, the issue of education and women's education in particular, has been a special concern of policy makers. The

National Policy on Education, 1986 (revised in 1992) also attempted to assign a positive interventionist role to the national system of education to address obstacles

* Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies, NCERT, New Delhi-110016

inhibiting women's access to, and participation in different types and levels of education. Two major reform initiatives of the Government of India endorsed greater participation of girls in education at the elementary level: the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). To some extent both the programmes succeeded in bringing the philosophy and implementation strategies of gender equality such as gender training of all officials concerned, discussion about gender in teacher development course, revision of curricula and textbooks from a gender perspective, community mobilisation for girls' education and strengthening of support services to relieve girls from household chores among others into the country's existing education system. As the country began to implement the SSA in the right earnest, with the objective of free and compulsory education upto the age of fourteen years, an urgent need was also recognized to universalize secondary education by the country's education planners. In this background, the Eleventh Five Year Plan planned several initiatives. The foremost among these was launching of a centrally sponsored umbrella scheme called, 'Scheme for Universal Access and Quality at the Secondary Stage (SUCCESS)'. The emphasis on girls' education has been reflected in this umbrella scheme also as its overall objectives were universalising access with

major reduction in gender, social and regional gaps in enrolment, dropout, retention, and improving quality with focus on Science and Mathematics. Also, at the behest of this scheme, special interventions planned in the Five Year Plan were to setup 6,000 high quality Model Schools at block level with sharing of cost by the Centre as well as the states as benchmark for excellence in secondary schooling, especially in educationally backward blocks (EBBs) which have a significant SC, ST, OBC and minority population to provide quality education, especially to the poor and meritorious children, who may not otherwise be able to access such education by paying prohibitive fees in the private (aided and unaided) schools; increase the intake capacity of schools at the secondary stage by upgrading 15,000 existing primary schools to secondary schools; increase the intake capacity of existing 44,000 secondary schools by creating enhanced facilities such as construction of additional classrooms and providing additional teachers; encourage establishment of good quality schools in deficient areas through Public and Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode; setting up of Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs) in hitherto unserved areas; ensuring 100% trained teachers in all schools and maintaining a healthy pupil teacher ratio of 25:1 by 2011-12; and finally by way of revamping the ICT facilities in the secondary and

higher secondary schools across the country (XIth Five Year Plan 2007-11, www.educationforallindia.com). With regard to bridging the social gaps in secondary education, the Five Year Plan also planned upgradation of elementary schools to secondary schools in ethnic concentration areas of the relevant some social groups; distribution (supply) of free uniforms, text books and footwear; bicycle/wheelchairs to the needy students belonging to some social group; stipends to deserving students; scholarships, remedial coaching; and adoption of an area-intensive approach with community participation. To act upon these proposals, the Government of India launched the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) as a centrally sponsored scheme. It was done during the Eleventh Five Year Plan period itself. As things stand now, the objectives of RMSA have been laid out to be achieved in three stages. In the first stage, the objective is to achieve 75% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Classes IX–X by the end of the Eleventh Plan period by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance (5 kms) of every habitation and removal of gender, socio-economic and disability barriers. In the second stage, RMSA intends to achieve improvement in the overall quality of the secondary education by the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan Period, in the third stage, universal retention by 2020.

Despite these multi-dimensional efforts, nearly twenty eight percent girls dropout of school between classes I–V and forty four percent between classes I–VIII and fifty two percent between classes I–X at the national aggregative level, if somehow get enrolled (GOI, 2011). Available studies on education also reveal that not enough progress has been made with regard to the education of Muslim minority girls. They are moving forward in educational attainment at a very slow rate in comparison with the girls of other communities. Lack of quantitative data makes this argument difficult to establish, but the findings of various researches and surveys enable us to determine the low level of educational attainment of Muslim girls in the secondary stage (Islam 2010, Siraj 2010, Jafri 2010, 2010, Siddiqui 2010, Hasan 2003, Hasan and Menon 2005). Although Islam provides equal opportunity to education, many Muslim girls are denied access to education. Citing the figures published by the 55th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Hasan and Menon (2005) reported that Muslim boys and girls enrolment at the primary and upper primary levels is comparable to Hindus but most of the Muslim boys and girls dropout after the primary stage and at the secondary level. The report of the High Level Committee (2007) chaired by Justice R. Sachar while analysing socioeconomic and

educational status of the Muslim community of India found that though the enrolments of Muslim children in education have increased significantly in the recent years, incidence of never enrolled and dropouts is still very high among Muslims. The educational situation of Muslim children, especially of Muslim girls was reported very depressingly and alarmingly from lower levels of enrolment to the higher levels of education. The data published by the 66th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) revealed that at the all India level, in rural and urban areas alike, fewer Muslim girls attend schools after the elementary level. The NFHS, for example indicates that Muslim girls are the lowest number of enrolled in schools in the secondary stage.

MAIN THRUST OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

Over the last few decades, many studies focused on identifying barriers that affect Muslim children's education in general. But very few studies have concentrated specifically in identifying barriers in secondary education of Muslim girls. The findings of those studies available on Muslim education in India concerning low status of Muslim girls' education are varied in nature. For instance, Mander (2011) found that for children's education parents demand government institutions with both Hindu and Muslim children but

Muslim settlements lack schooling facilities. *Jeffery et. al.* (2005) in a case study of Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh also noticed similar findings. Non-availability of schooling facilities places those in a difficult situation who otherwise have desire to educate their children. Qureshi (2010) argued that many a times school ethos also create barriers in Muslim girls' education, if somehow schooling facility is available. For instance, dress code adopted in schools influence girls education negatively as many Muslim families consider it contrary to their cultural tradition. Quite a few studies also highlight that a Muslim household's concern for girls' personal safety and security is a major barrier in Muslim girls' education, especially once girls attain puberty (*Jeffery et. al.* 2005, *Srivastava* 2001). A large section of opinion also holds that the community's social biases are the main barriers in Muslim girls' education (*Ahmed* 2008, *Hasan and Ritu* 2005, *Goswami and Kabir* 2003). Many Muslim households generally believe that girls require education that enables them to perform her role in childcare and looking after the household chores. Hence, few years of schooling is believed to be sufficient for girls. Apart from these, studies have also emphasized that programmes like the Maulana Azad Education Foundation's corpus of funds for the expansion and establishment

of schools, including residential schools and colleges for girls too have failed to make a significant dent in educational deprivation of Muslim children, especially in states having sizeable Muslim population as funds allocated to these states remained unutilised. Uttar Pradesh is one among such states (Hasan and Ritu, 2005).

Had lack of schooling facilities and issue of a girl's personal safety and security been the main factors, then poor educational status of girls would have also been there in the other communities in the State that, in fact, are now showing considerable progress in girls' education. Poverty is also not the basic barrier in this regard. The fact that majority of Muslim households irrespective of economic status are not sending their daughters to schools once girls attain puberty in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh weaken the often forwarded argument that Muslim girls' education would improve if Muslim concentrated areas equip themselves with schooling facilities. It also points out that barrier behind lack of schooling facilities, school ethos and poverty are much deeper than scholars are placing on record. This research is carried out, therefore, to explore the conundrum of why, despite rapid expansion of educational facilities and huge improvements in educational status of women in general, Muslim girls

are lagging behind in educational attainment in the secondary stage; based on field-based empirical evidences generated through case studies and focus group discussions. We specifically wanted to elucidate attitudes to, and experiences of, Muslim girls aged 15–17 who had completed elementary education, but were withdrawn from schools and how they relate to low participation of Muslim girls in the secondary education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper focuses on the following two questions: (i) Are lack of schooling facilities and school ethos the barriers in secondary education of Muslim girls? (ii) Is the Muslim household's disinterest the major barrier of low level of secondary education among Muslim girls? If yes, what contributes to the parental disinterest?

SAMPLE AREA

In-depth case studies and focus group discussions with the community people were conducted in both rural and urban settlements of four districts namely Bahraich, Bareilly, Bijnor and Rampur of Uttar Pradesh with concentration of large Muslim population. The rural-urban settlements of all the four districts where case studies and focus group discussions were conducted are given on next page in table 1.

Table 1
Sample Area

Sample Districts	Sample Blocks	Rural Locations	Urban Locations
Bahraich	Risia	6 –Matera 7–Bohpatchownki	Risia town
Bijnor	Kotwali	6–Kotwali 7– Shahlipur Kotra	Nagina town
Bareilly	Mirganj	6–Sindholi 7–Parchoya	Mirganj Block Headquarters
Rampur	Shahbad	6–Pachtaur 7–Madhukar	Dakia

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on qualitative empirical evidences taken from a larger research project entitled 'Barriers in Secondary Education of Muslim Girls: A Study of Four Districts of Uttar Pradesh'. Fieldwork was carried out in 8 rural locations and in four urban locations of four districts namely, Bahraich, Bijnor, Bareilly and Rampur. The study area was purposively selected the details for which follows in the next paragraph. 20 girls were chosen for in-depth case studies in the age group 15–17 who have completed class VIII, but were withdrawn from schools. Besides, a group of people having different occupations were identified for focus group discussions. Data was collected mainly through interviews with girls and focus group discussions with community.

Case studies were carried out to explore interviewees' own attitude to reasons of low participation of Muslim girls in secondary education,

their parents' attitudes, as well as the prevailing attitudes in the Muslim community with regard to secondary education of Muslim girls.

Focus group discussions were mainly conducted to elicit Muslim community's opinion with regard to girls' education. Interviews were conducted in late 2010. All interviews were conducted in the presence of the interviewees' parents. Initial questions covered basic socio-economic and demographic information and then the interviewer asked some open-ended questions with specific follow-up prompts. The schedule was designed to broadly cover two topics: reasons of low educational status of Muslim girls in secondary education and the dynamics of Muslim household's disinterest in secondary education of Muslim girls, together with details of socio-economic and demographic backgrounds. Hence the main questions were: Do you think non-availability of secondary level

schooling facilities, especially in rural areas, school ethos, if available are very important barriers that compel Muslim girls not to avail the benefits of educational opportunities at the secondary stage? In what way non-availability of secondary schooling facility and school ethos act as barriers in their participation in secondary education? What are their experiences about parental disinterest in their education? The qualitative method was used to analyze the data. Analysis is presented in the narrative format to seek answers to the research questions.

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The National Policy on Education, 1986 revised in 1992 and its Programme of Action (POA) identified 41 districts across the country as educationally backward on the basis of female literacy rates of 1981 census. Out of these 41 districts, 13 districts were in Uttar Pradesh. Bahraich, Bijnor and Rampur were three districts among those 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh identified as educationally backward on the basis of Census data of 1981 on female literacy rates. Bareilly as a neighbouring district performed comparatively well on educational indicators was selected for the study. All the districts have high concentration of Muslim population (much higher than the state average i.e. 18.5% as per 2001 Census and low Muslim female literacy rates

(much below the state averages i.e. 38.27%). Similarly, the sample blocks selected in each district have high concentration of Muslims and have low female literacy rates.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A total of 20 interviews were obtained from the 12 locations (8 rural and 4 urban). About 10 were from rural areas and 10 from urban towns. The content analysis of case studies indicates that there are two categories of barriers that restrict Muslim girls' education at the secondary level. The first category is system level and the second one is household level.

Some of the system level barriers that restrict secondary education of Muslim girls are:

- Government schools (secondary stage) are very few and far away, if available
- Schools, if available, fail to motivate or encourage Muslim community to send their daughters to schools especially after the primary stage.

Some of the household level barriers that restrict secondary education of Muslim girls are:

- Household poverty
- Socio-cultural and religious ethos that work against Muslim girls' and women's education

SYSTEM LEVEL BARRIERS

Poor accessibility to secondary schools generally contributes significantly in non-participation of girls in the secondary education

everywhere, but it varies from location to location and community to community. The study area is no different in this respect. The empirical evidences revealed that Muslim girls' participation in secondary education is low due to poor accessibility to schooling facilities in rural areas. In Uttar Pradesh, the average distance to secondary education generally exceeds 5 to 6 kms. in rural areas as the secondary education is linked to inter-colleges. The need to travel to long distances to inter-college is found to be a significant barrier in Muslim girls' education in the secondary stage. The Muslim community, especially the elders in the community do not favour girls' education, if girls have to go to attend school at a distant place for reasons of girls' personal safety and security.

Case Study 1

The story of a Muslim girl illustrates how non-availability of government schools or the availability of private schools is acting as a barrier in secondary education.

My parents always said that girls have no need to continue learning once they attain puberty, so I did not have a chance to go to school after the elementary stage (a Muslim girl aged 15, rural Rampur).

She narrated that she resides in the village Madhukar, Naya Panchayat Uncha Gaon, Shahabad block, Rampur district, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents belong to a Teli community (basically from backward

class). Her parents are illiterate and her father supports his family by running a small auto workshop in Dakia town. She has two sisters and two brothers. She is the third one amongst her brothers and sisters. Both of her elder sisters have already got married. Her two brothers are elder to her and help in father's occupation. She studied upto VIII standard in a village school. After VIII standard, she wanted to continue her studies and told her mother of her wish to continue studies. Her mother also wanted that her daughter continues her studies. So her mother agreed to get her enrolled in inter-college for secondary education.

She said: "There is an upper primary school in my village as well as a Madrasa run by State Madrasa Board. The inter college run by private management is available at a distance of 3 kms. from my village at Dakia. Children have to go to Dakia for schooling after class VIII. The college management charges ₹ 50/- per month as a tuition fees. I got admission in class IX in inter college in Dakia in 2009. But I left my school after six months. I could not continue my studies because the elder members of the village community oppose girls' education after a certain age. So after class VIII, I discontinued my studies. My mother wanted me to study. But the other elder members, especially males of my family, objected to my attending school and, therefore, I had to leave my schooling."

She further said that though non-availability of schooling facility near the place of residence of girls is one of the major barriers in Muslim girls' education; elder members of the village Muslim community do not like that Muslim girls attend those schools after a certain age where girls from other communities also attend. Since Madrasas are not available for secondary level education in villages for girls, Muslim girls are deprived from schooling after certain age.

Schools, if available, fail to motivate/encourage Muslim community to send their daughters to schools especially after the primary stage. It is widely recognized that the presence of women teachers tends to make schools more girl-friendly and provide parents greater confidence to send daughters to schools, particularly once girls attain puberty. But non-availability of women teachers in schools, especially in rural areas that have concentration of Muslim population emerged as one of the important barriers that restrict Muslim households to send their daughters to schools. Many schools in rural areas do not have women teachers despite recommendations of National Policy on Education, 1986 of appointing at least 50 per cent women teachers in elementary schools for more than 3 decades now. In Uttar Pradesh, 46.8 per cent primary school teachers are women, but only 21.1 per cent women teachers are in secondary schools (GOI, 2011). This is the overall scenario of the state.

The shortages of women teachers in schools discourage many Muslim parents to send their daughters to schools in rural areas, especially after a certain age.

The story of a Muslim girl from a village Pachtaur illustrates how non-presence of women teachers in schools acts a barrier in secondary education of Muslim girls.

Case Study 2

Ruksana, aged 15, resides in the village Pachtaur, Naya Panchayat Uncha Gaon, Shahbad block, district Rampur, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents belong to a Meo community (basically from Mewat region). Her father has a small piece of agricultural land. He is illiterate and supports his family by growing vegetables in his land and selling them in the market in Rampur. She has two sisters and four brothers. She is the fourth amongst her brothers and sisters. Both her elder sisters have already got married. She studied upto V standard in a village school. After V standard, she got admitted in a nearby school in class VI.

She says: "There is a government primary school as well as Madrasa run by State Madrasa Board in our village. There is a Junior High School in village *Ossi* located at a distance of about half a kilometre from my village. I studied upto V standard in the village school and got admission in class VI in Junior High School, *Ossi*. I studied in Junior High

School upto VI standard. I had to leave my schooling in VII standard as there was no woman teacher in the school. Elders in the community oppose girls' education, especially in circumstances, if girls have to go to other village for schooling and more so, if women teachers are not available in schools. I wanted to study but my uncle did not allow me to go to school. So I left the school."

She further said that if she had an opportunity to receive education as per community's aspirations in her village, she might have continued her studies.

Case Study 3

Sahnaz, aged 15, resides in a village Kotwali, Block Nagina, District Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh. She belongs to *Saiyad* community. She has two sisters and four brothers. She is the youngest amongst her sisters. Both of her elder sisters did not study at all. However, they received religious education in Madrasa. She studied upto VIII standard in a school.

She says: "Till VIII standard, I studied in the government elementary school. After class VIII, I left my school because the school was upto VIII standard. I wanted to continue my studies for which I had to get enrolled afresh in the inter-college. There was an admission fees and also the need to fulfil other formalities for which I needed my parents' support. But my parents did not agree upon getting me enrolled in a new school so I discontinued my studies."

She further narrated that if she had an opportunity to receive further education in the same school, she would have continued her studies and would have completed at least her secondary level education. The fresh process of getting enrolled in another school forced her to discontinue her studies. The government should bring out some mechanisms in Muslim concentration areas that ensure continuation of admission in schools if girls have to get enrolled afresh. This is very important in Muslim areas as Muslim parents hardly pay any attention to education of children, especially to girls' education if they have to play some role in their studies.

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL BARRIERS

Poverty emerges as another contributing barrier in the secondary education of Muslim girls. Though the government claims that education is free for girls, girls were of the view that poverty forces their parents to withdraw their daughters from school. While elementary school tuition fee is abolished by the government, parents have to bear secondary school tuition fee for their children. Girls believe that their parents have to bear not only the burden of direct cost of schooling in the form of tuition fee but also for books, stationery, uniforms, contribution to school building funds and travelling costs etc. for sending children to schools at the secondary level. Parents withdraw

their daughters from schools if they have to contribute financially in girls' education. Poverty emerges another barrier in secondary education of Muslim girls in all locations that come under the purview of the study, but it was found having a most negative impact of Muslim girls' education in sample areas of the district Bahraich.

Case Study 4

Nasreen Khaton, aged 16, resides in a village *Bhowpatchownki*, Block Risia, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents are illiterate. They belong to Ansari community. Her father, Mohd. Sartaj Ahmed supports his family by working as mechanic in a private workshop. She has three sisters and two brothers. She is the second one amongst her sisters and brothers. Her elder sister has already got married at the age of 17 years. She narrates that she has completed VIII standard in the year 2010 from a school nearby their locality. She wanted to continue her studies but she did not get enrolled in school after the VIII standard.

She says: "Till VIII standard, I studied in a village school. I have really enjoyed my schooling. But there is no government or private inter-college near our village. Inter-college is located at a distance of 8 kms. from my house at *Risia* or at *Matera*, which is also about 7 to 8 kms. I cannot walk 16 km. to and fro every day. If I hire transportation (rickshaw/auto-rickshaw) to go to school and come back from school,

it costs me ₹ 20 per day. There is a school fee also. In addition to school fee, it is very difficult for my family to bear the transportation costs for my studies. My father is the only earning member in my family. In all, inflation has made it difficult for my parents to feed the family. My father told me how can I think to educate you or your sisters in such a mere income? Such circumstances forced me to discontinue my studies."

She further said that she had a great dream that she will study and become a teacher. She will serve in her state and will ensure that every girl child in her community complete at least the full cycle of schooling. But poverty had broken her dreams. She felt that they are poor people. Their parents cannot afford to spend on girls' education. If schools are available within a reasonable walking distance, many girls like her, can continue their studies and reach to a *Manzil* i.e. destination.

Socio-cultural and religious ethos of Muslim households: social biases, stereotypical attitudes, and social practices prevent Muslim girls from benefitting educational opportunities at the secondary level. The analysis of empirical evidences revealed that many Muslim households believe that girls are not required education as they will get married and go to another house. Moreover, the general perception is that education is not going to change girls' social status. Social biases perpetuate low value to girls' education, especially when

girls grow little older. Low value given to girls' lives further reinforces early marriages of girls. In Bahraich, more than 40 percent girls were found in sample areas who were already engaged in matrimonial ties at the age of 14–15. Girls' marriage is recognized as a highest priority in poor Muslim households than girls' education. The overall socio-cultural and religious ethos has a great role in low educational status of Muslim girls. For most Muslim parents, a girls' education is to prepare her for marriage, childcare and household management. A few years of education is, therefore, enough for girls that provide the necessary understanding of religious matters and a good grounding in moral education. Parents often withdraw girls from schools in the pretext of their requirement in household chores.

Case Study 5

Ruksana, aged 15, resides in Madhukar village, Shahabad block, Rampur district, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents belong to Teli community. Her father is an agriculturist. She has five sisters and four brothers. She is the youngest amongst her sisters. Her three sisters have already got married. Her brothers also help in family occupation. She studied in government village school upto VIII standard. She left her schooling after VIII standard.

She says: "I studied upto VIII standard in the village school. I discontinued my studies as my mother does not keep well. We have

large family. There is so much work at home. My mother asked me to help in household chores. Though my mother does not keep good health but more so she believes that girls are not required much education. They should learn household chores so that they can handle their married life with expertise."

She further narrated that girls are always considered as a '*paraya dhan*' in her family. Her parents always talk about marriages of their daughters. Elders in the community always object education of girls, especially after the attainment of puberty. They always say that girls should learn household chores. Education will not improve their social status. Girls are considered badchalan if go to school after the attainment of puberty.

Case Study 6

Sultana, aged 16, resides in the village Matera, Risia block, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh. She belongs to Muslim (Khan) community. Her father is illiterate and supports his family by working as a wage labourer. She has three brothers and two sisters. Her elder sister is 17 year old and she has got married at the age of 15 years. The younger one is 11 year old. One of her brothers is 18 year old and two are younger to her. She studied up to VIII standard. She wanted to continue her studies. But her parents did not allow her to continue her studies.

She says: "There is a government elementary school and also a Madrasa in our village. There is an

inter-college at a distance of one and half kms. from my place of residence. Till VIII standard, I used to go to the village school. After VIII standard, my parents asked me not to attend school any more. I wanted to continue my studies. But family pressure did not allow me to do so. I knew that my parents took this position under the influence of community members. Majority of the people in the neighbourhood believe that girls should not be sent to school after the attainment of puberty. Education does not improve girls' social status. As per Islamic customs, girls should know the correct ways of fasting and praying along with little bit knowledge about other aspects of life. For which few years of schooling is enough".

Case Study 7

Jineet Firdosh, aged 17, resides in village Bhopat chowki (भूपतचोकी), Risia, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents are illiterate and belong to Ansari community. She has five brothers and two sisters. She is the youngest among her brothers and sisters.

She says: "I studied in a private school till VII standard. After VII standard, my mother asked me not to go to school. Almost all relatives and the neighbourers raise fingers if girls go to school after a certain age."

She said that she wanted to continue her studies but there is so much backwardness in their community that girls are forced to discontinue their studies after attainment of puberty. Parents believe

girl's reputation is spoiled if she goes out of a locality. The government should open counseling centre in Muslim area that can motivate community for girls' education.

Case Study 8

Parveen Begum, aged 16, resides in Sindolhi (सिंदौली) village, Mirganj, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents have received religious education from a Madrassa. They belong to Khan community. Her father (Halwai) supports his family by running a small shop. She has four sisters and two brothers. She is the youngest amongst her sisters. Her three elder sisters have already got married. She passed class VIII from a village school. She did not get enrolled in school after the VIII standard.

She narrates: "Till VIII standard, I studied in a village school. I have received education—religious as well as modern from the school. I have enjoyed my schooling. But there is no government or private inter-college nearby our locality. Inter-college is located at a distance of 4 kms. from my house. I cannot walk 8 kms. to and fro every day. If I hire transportation (shared—auto or rickshaw) to go to school and come back from school, it costs me a minimum of ₹ 15/- per day. My father told me that he cannot afford to pay my school fee plus transportation costs. Hence, I was forced to discontinue my studies. I had a great desire to join inter college but my family circumstances did not permit me to do so."

She further said that though poverty, non-availability of schooling facilities are major obstacles in continuation of her education, social backwardness in the community is one of most important obstacles in girls' education in her village. Her father said if he spends ₹ 10/- daily in my commuting to school, what will he get by educating me? He feels that my education is not going to get him benefitted in any way. For him important is that I should get married as soon as possible so that he gets rid of his social responsibility. She further said that our community is not only educationally backward, but also socially backward. People do not understand the value of education. The government should organize advocacy campaigns to eliminate social evils that inhibit girls' and women's development.

Case Study 9

Mumtaz, aged 16, resides in Nagina town of Bijnor district, Uttar Pradesh. She belongs to *Saiyad* community. She has seven brothers. She is the only girl child in the family. Her father runs a shop. Her two brothers are elder to her and five are younger to her. Both of her elder brothers did not study at all. They went to madarssa for four years. She studied upto VIII standard in an Urdu medium school at Nagina. There are three inter-colleges in Nagina. Girls in her *Mohalla* generally do not go to school after class VII or VIII.

She says: "Till VIII standard I

studied in an Urdu medium school in Nagina. This school is nearby my residence. After class VIII, I wanted to study but my elder brothers did not allow me to go to school. So I left the school. My mother says, education is neither going to change your social status nor you are going to work outside the home. Moreover, my mother feels that "*Abhi tak jis school mein tum padhti thi usmein sabhi ladkiyan muslim parivaron se thi. Parantu abb aagey ki shiksha ke liye hamein tumhe uchtar Madhyamik Vidhyalaya mein dakhila dilwana hoga — Jis mein sabhi vargo ki ladhkiyan pravesh leti hain. Islamic reeti rivajon ke anusar ladhkiyon ko ek khas kism ke mahoul mein palna aiwam shiksha dena awashyak hai. Kyuki uchtar Madhyamik shiksha ke liye abb hamare kasbe mein is prakaar ka school nahi hain jismein kewal muslim ladhkiyan hon aur kewal muslim mahila adhyapika hon, isliye main ab tumhe aage ki shiksha ke liye dakhila nahi dilwa sakti.*" If you go to school and something happens and then it will be difficult for us to get you married in a family of repute. Marrying a daughter in a family of repute is an important task for us for which you are required to know the basic aspects of Islamic way of life, so that you can live happily in your in-law's family. You have already received education—religious as well as modern and hence I discontinued my studies under the influence of my family members and other relatives."

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The civil society, religious leaders, government and non-government organisations, among others, are playing an important role in women's education since a very long period in India. The community plays a role in various forms in promotion of education and of girls' education in particular. They mobilize resources. Even the schools, especially in rural areas, cannot exist in isolation in a village. The Education Code also provides for the formation of school development committees, comprising of persons of the local community. One of the important functions of the Janpad Panchayat,

is to seek the cooperation of the local community in getting children enrolled in school, and in ensuring their continued attendance. With this background, focus-group discussions were conducted with parents, village school teachers, heads of local religious bodies and consultation with opinion leaders of the village communities in the areas coming within the preview of the study.

An interview schedule was developed and administered to village community that include parents, village school teachers, heads of local religious bodies and opinion leaders in four districts selected for the study.

Table 1
Occupation of community members included in focus-group discussions in the four sample districts

SL. No.	Occupation	Response Percentage in Sample Districts			
		Bahraich	Bareilly	Bijnor	Rampur
1	Labourer	4	3	3	3
2	Agriculturist	5	5	5	2
3	Businessmen	2	1	2	1
4	Sarpanch/Panch	3	1	2	3
5	School teachers	1	1	2	2
6	Women	6	7	4	6
7	Heads of local religious bodies (madrassas)	1	1	1	2
9	Others (educational officials and anganwadi workers)	4	1	1	1
	Total Responses	26	20	20	20
	Total = 86				

While selecting the persons from the local community, it was ensured that the group was representative of the village. The district-wise distribution of the persons included for the interview was—Rampur 20, Bahraich 20, Bareilly 36, Bijnor 32. In all, 106 community members were included for focus-group discussion. These were drawn from four districts in this order: Bahraich 26 Bareilly 20, Bijnor 20, Rampur 20; Occupation-wise distribution of the community members is given in Table 1 (on previous page).

The group interacted were of different socio-economic status. In respect of age, everyone was older than 40 and younger than 65 years. Their children are therefore comparatively older and have a great say in children's educational decision. Only 9 percent were literate and have received formal education. 42 percent were literate but having only religious education. Four have secondary level (class eighth to tenth) education. Two are educated upto class twelfth. Only 17 owned land. The data also shows that 6 women are literate. Two were educated upto class eighth. One was educated upto college level and was teaching in a school. 12 women in the discussion came from the middle class and the others were from a poor background.

Analysis of information ascertained through focus group discussions with the Muslim community on girls' participation

in secondary education indicates a mixed reaction on the part of community regarding this. About 18 percent members believed that there are no such barriers that restrict Muslim girls' participation in secondary education. They all were in favour of educating their daughters. They cited a number of instances of people in the community who are educating their daughters. They stated:

“We want our daughters to be educated to higher levels and able to perform all sorts of housework, and we also like them to work outside the house to contribute to the family's income. But it is important that sons are more educated than our daughters. The problem is sons are not interested in studies. They are not interested because they are forced to contribute in the family's income due to inflation. They start earning at a very young age. Secondly, many Muslim households believe that children will not get any job even if they study.”

However, majority (59%) of them said that patriarchal values continue to be a major barrier in girls' education, especially after the puberty. Seeing girls as homeworkers, people object to their mobility. Girls and their families are often teased if they are sent outside their villages for schooling. As one of the respondent, Rahman from Risia, Bahraich said:

“My daughter is studying in class IX. When I go to work or sit with my

elders they tease me [saying] his daughters will become 'collector' or he will eat his daughters' income".

Another respondent, Fakir Ahmed, a school teacher said:

"The prevalent social norms and beliefs are not in favour of girls' education. Many households do not favour girls' education once they attain puberty. They think that a girl should get married as soon as she becomes older (by 16 years). If an older girl goes to school, she is seen as a loose-character girl. People in villages feel if we do not follow the norms and beliefs of the local community who will marry our daughters? In Islam, marriage is must. Marriage is a sacred activity according to *Hadith*. It should be practiced honourably. I always try to convince the people to abstain from marrying off daughters at an early age, as it is against law as well as against human rights. Girls should be educated. It is better if you send them to school and make them educated. You will reap fruits in future. But people do not listen. Moreover, they react in a very different manner. They think if they send daughters to school, somebody has to accompany them while commuting to school and back to home. More importantly, they will not find educated bridegrooms as boys generally do not study in our areas. They have to spend more money".

"Schools do not fulfill community's basic requirement as teaching of

Urdu and values of Islam (about religious understanding)", replied a majority of people, particularly in a Bijnor sample.

Najir from Nagina town area of district Bijnor whispered that "most people considered that the overall social environment is not congenial for girls. There is always fear of disgrace and danger to honour, in case girls go out of house alone".

Ruksana Begum from village Pachtaur, Shahbad, Rampur submitted that "girls do not learn anything in schools. Parents see no reason for daughters to attend school. Rather, they feel school timings are long. Girls fail to contribute in household activities if they go to school. Girls, once they attain a little maturity, they contribute a lot in household chores, especially in rural setting. Household chores not only in terms of wage-saving activities but also in wage-earning activities. For instance, many Muslim households are engaged in embroidery work. Shopkeepers from nearby towns generally come to rural areas and give work to women and some women work at home. Women get work at home. Girls too help mothers in paid work. Spending long hours in school generally does not suit Muslim households, especially poor households."

CONCLUSIONS

Overall findings of the study are positive; with wide spread enthusiasm

for educational attainment among Muslim girls. As many of the interviews/case studies showed keen interest of girls in education. A large proportion of Muslim girls are deprived from secondary education due to parental disinterest in a girls' education, especially in situations where they have to contribute either financial or physically. Though lack of schooling facilities, school ethos and poverty are used as an excuse, but it may be in some cases. Contrary to what is commonly believed, the problem of poor status of educational attainment among Muslim girls in the secondary level is not at all about schooling facilities, school ethos and poverty, but more about prejudice, patriarchal values and religious ethos. Embedded cultural and gender biases in all sample areas are found so strong that eventually hamper Muslim girls' education after a certain age (puberty). The lessons from the case studies underline a fact that Muslim households generally are more concerned for a system for a daughter's education that can provide their girls a safe learning environment that equip girls with knowledge of secular subjects as well as moral education from an Islamic perspective. Though the elders members in the sample locations are found more inclined towards shedding their responsibility by marrying of girls as early as

they get good match for them, girls and women know the value of education in their lives. Mothers are found more strong advocates of their daughters' education. But their own helplessness and lack of empowerment restrict them to play their role in decision making for their daughters' education. The efforts on the part of government for community mobilisation and gender sensitisation have not found any significant impact on girls' education in a large proportion of Muslim population, especially in rural areas. Derogatory social biases perpetuate the practice of early marriage, and girls do not know the legislation; even if they do, they are not in a position to demand their rights to be recognized. None of the organisation is found to be working closely with the Muslim community in any of the sample location to raise awareness and break down the barriers that restrict Muslim girls from achieving their rights to education. Ensuring participation of Muslim girls in secondary education is not just about ensuring school access, it is more about enabling Muslim girls to gain access. Strenuous efforts are required that could lead to better-targeted awareness programmes for making girls' education a priority for every Muslim households and making the fathers and brothers more open to safeguarding girls' right to education.

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Presence of a Global Language in India

A Case for English

MEENAKSHI KHAR*

Abstract

Societies have been losing out their native languages. As a result of vanishing of languages, many elements of traditional knowledge are also lost. The major reason of accelerated rate of the extinction of native languages is the forces of liberalisation and globalisation. Due to this English has acquired the status of language of opportunities and has endangered native languages. The paper will focus on the reasons of spread of English in our country where its growth is contrived and not organic. It is high time that educationists and linguists should develop meaningful and relevant curriculum of English so that it coexists with native languages.

In a world where socialism and communism have lost its hold capitalism along with English has emerged as a strong force. It is the 'world standard language: an intrinsic part of the global communications revolution'. (The Economist, 21 December 1996, p. 39) English has very strongly influenced the areas of commerce and trade mostly in developing countries which are aspiring

to attain global standards of development.

English is also used for more purposes than ever before. This has resulted in the evolution of English language which has given rise to new semantics and syntax. English has merged with fabric of social life attaining its momentum and vitality, reflecting local culture and influencing languages in its own way.

* Assistant Professor, English, Department of Education in Languages, NCERT, New Delhi 110016

In school education English is a second language which implies it is second to one or more than one Indian languages. And English is introduced in school Education with much studied pedagogic inputs. Under Three Language Formula enough care is taken for teaching learning of English in contrast to other Indian Languages.

The role and relationship of English vis-a-vis the Indian Languages is important. Whatever the language planning imply, in reality all Indian languages have become regional languages. Hindi has become an edge over other Indian languages because of its status as an official language of the Union. English is also another official language and its status remains undisputed. Since it cannot be identified with any region it has acquired the status of pan-Indian language that is serving the purpose of creating channels of communication among regions.

“English will continue to enjoy a high status so long as it remains the principal medium of education at the University stage, and the language of administration at the Central Government and in many of the states. Even after the regional languages became media of higher education in the Universities, a working knowledge of English will be a valuable asset for all students and a reasonable proficiency in the language will be necessary for those who proceed to the University” (Ministry of Education 1966:192).

More and more parents demand English medium instruction schools for their wards. As a result, an incredibly large number of English medium schools have sprung-up. These schools have attracted large number of children from humbler strata of society. Parents are paying heavy fees for these schools in contrast to Govt. – aided schools offering free education and other benefits. This is a pointer to people’s belief that English medium schools have a distinct advantage over others.

All the State Governments, whether they have adopted three language or two language formula have retained English as a compulsory subject at the secondary stage. The National Policy on Education adopted by the Government of India in 1968 clearly specifies that: “Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace, especially in science and technology; India must not only keep up this growth, but also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose, study of English deserves to be specially strengthened”.

LANGUAGE AND PROSPECTS OF EMPLOYMENT

The phenomenon of globalisation has overtaken caste considerations for larger issues of survival and livelihood. Globalisation has given opportunities for realising their dreams to some and shaken the

consciousness of others to dare and move ahead leaving behind their cocooned lives. Media and other forms of information technologies have played a significant role in supporting a new social paradigm which has given new dimension to economic and social life of country. Undeniably, language is playing an important role in this process of transition. The recently created job market demands cultural-mixing, common language for the execution of jobs and parlance. The common language which has emerged strongly is English; prime reason for this is probably absence of an indigenous job market as an alternative to globalisation. This has also resulted in extinction of many Indian languages. There are no linkages between language learning and prospects of employability so far as Indian languages are concerned. This scenario has promoted, though unnecessarily, the status of English and its hegemonic characteristics.

Closely linked to this issue is the absence of nurturing dignity of labour among the citizens in our country. Ironically, the most frustrated segment of society holds their lack of knowledge of English as a factor responsible for it. Parents are spending money beyond their capacities to provide education in English medium. For them 'medium' (English) is synonym of education. Their faith in English language is indomitable. For them the only way to rise vertically in the society,

which they strongly aspire, rests on knowing English. This is also delineation of their desire—though not rightly executed to be heard and seen so as to emerge from an identity crises.

LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF EXPRESSION

Language is considered a tool for fulfilling social compulsions of communication but it has more gratifying function of self-expression. Language plays an important role in knowledge acquisition and communication. Above all, language gives a concrete shape to our perceived notions of this universe. Therefore familiarity with language is the precondition. Child's first language is his most familiar known language. And the journey of child's education should begin in child's own language.

There is no denying the fact that individuals have innate desire to learn and express in many languages. There can also be a need and justification for learning a language as is the case with English. But it's possible naturally and meaningfully, if the individuals find themselves in pro-language learning situations; wherein children have already enhanced the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in their own language.

A multi-lingual education programme aims to inculcate in children the pride for their mother tongue. This definitely leads to be

relevant, enriching and a smooth journey of young learners step by step. Under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, schools should come forward to facilitate children's education in their mother tongue.

The initiatives have to come forward from the community, parents and other stakeholders in education. However the existing scenario seems to be dismal for nurturing mother tongues. The class I student is taught less of her mother tongue and more of state prescribed syllabus. Gradually the section of marginalised and first generation of school-goers tend to think that state language is a tool to move upward in class and caste hierarchy, that the local, indigenous languages are inferior. The saddest part of their journey begins when they have to struggle with another language (could be third language in class I), that is, English.

So far as the position of teaching of English in schools is concerned, it is worst than teaching-learning scenario of Indian languages because teaching of English requires proficient teachers in English, reading material appropriate for learners; in short a conducive environment for learning a foreign language.

The 'foreignness' of this language is further increased when children have to deal with a subject matter that is alien to them. There is every possibility that children in remote areas have never seen an 'apple' which is supposed to be the part of

the first lesson in English i.e. 'A for Apple'.

However, the English language carries the tag of cosmopolitanism and it's because of this it is greatly admired in societies, such as ours, where genuine diversity of reading and writing is not acknowledged; we uncritically admire English language for its monoculturism and confidence it engenders. In Indian society it may even be a more powerful marker of difference than caste. This may be considered on a positive note as an indicator of how education can overcome inherited disadvantages. However, the peculiar presence of English in India has created a situation of wasted human potential.

The global system of rewards for knowing English has resulted in massive loss of cultural memory and intellectual dimension. The brief hope offered by the Kothari Commission (1964–66), in the form of 'three language formula' has never been implemented in its spirit and has therefore withered. There certainly is no reason and logic to believe that one particular language offers the best medium for cultural and scientific creativity. We require more thoughtful policy discourse with state partners at national level.

The role of non-native English speaking teachers has grown meaningful in the teaching of English as a foreign language. This should give them empowerment, voice and identity in the profession. This also demands that they engage

in critical praxis, although it is not a linear and simple process. Therefore it is rightly felt that more research is needed. At the same time there is a need to develop a model which empowers teachers to have their voice, moments of reflection for sharing their experience of English language teaching.

FILTRATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN RURAL BASES

Migration of rural population to semi-urban or urban areas has helped filtration of English in remote urban bases. Migrated population in urban areas have two important reasons to use English: (i) it is the requirement of their jobs (ii) it is psychologically and socially satisfying experience for them. In the absence of growing indigenous job markets, Indian languages have not made their mark as languages of discourse and profession. This makes the case for English legitimate.

STATUS OF ENGLISH AS A NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

English has become a language of Indians, who have been said to be extremely proud of their own languages. Interestingly, country witnesses linguistic fights even today. But with the increase in population, particularly in the urban and semi urban areas, and with the spread of education and the increased internationalisation of English, there is a quantitative expansion and an increase in the number of Indian

users of English. The prominent functions of English in India are:

- (a) The domain specific, registral use—mostly for bureaucratic, administrative, legal, technical and scientific purpose.
- (b) The culture-translation use that shows culture-bound associative meanings and stylistic variations.
- (c) The journalistic use for print-media communication and the creative use for literary-writing.

It is in this context that we have to critically examine another concept—the concept of the ‘native speaker’. Monolingual users of English believe that a native-speaker is the centre of all decision-making in a language. In multilingual societies where different learners acquire two or three languages simultaneously and it is very difficult to say which one is the mother tongue or the first language; it is suggested that sociolinguistics must include multilingualism in its formulation of communicative competence because the social context of language use is created by dynamic social forces. There is semi-literate population in urban areas who have devised their own ways and means of learning English; it could be by coming in contact with tourists, print environment and urbanites. English for the purpose of communication is also learnt outside the classrooms and without standardized pedagogic support. Hence the social aspect of English language acquisition holds great relevance.

The term 'Indian English' has gained acceptance as a label to describe the use of English in India as it has emerged from the social context. Indian writing in English has its own market and, of late, a very flourishing one. However one should also take note of the fact that Indian writing in English is only one aspect of the use of English by Indians, and that the creative writers represent only a minority within a minority.

EMERGING NEW TRENDS

The driving forces which have made the case for 'English' are also facing opposition.

English is said to have negative influence on our regional languages. The socio-cultural fabric also does not favour its propagation. The use of English as a global lingua franca requires intelligibility and the setting and maintenance of standards in education of children. There is no way of precisely predicting the future trends regarding English. There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English.

There is a possibility of increase in economic terms, the size of the global market for the English language; but at the same time native languages are expected to stage a come back; as a result, the market share of English will probably be lowered.

An overview of existing scenario indicates the emergence of native languages though it is witnessed

in art, media and creative writing. The trends of multilingualism are gaining popularity as well as social acceptance. Code switching and mixing is a common and much to be observed phenomenon. It raises a question about the status of English in coming years. What appears realistic today is that English will be used as a vehicular language—like a tool of the trade. There is the fear that the spread of English will lead to over half of the world's languages becoming extinct. This may prove to be true but might be with some variation. There might be death of many dialects but there seems to be every possibility at strengthening of standardisation of major Indian languages. The trend would be merging of dialects and minor languages with broader major languages.

The language system of the world is gaining importance because of social mobility, new technology and rise in international communication both at the level of trade, business and academics. These changes will affect both written and spoken communication skills. It is quite possible that English may not be the dominant language of the future, and multilingual scenario will be enriched. It is sad to witness that a large number of languages are facing extinction, but at the same time, new ones are emerging in cities and extended social groups, English being the dominant among them.

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Curriculum Change in English Language Education in the State of Rajasthan

The Dilemmas and Paradoxes*

RAMANUJAM MEGANATHAN**

Abstract

This paper presents experiences from the ongoing curricular revision in English Language Education in the Indian State of Rajasthan. While attempting to provide an insider perspective of the understanding of curriculum change and innovation by various stake holders of education, it seeks to answer some questions from the point of view of a curriculum and materials developer. The questions are: (i) How is the idea of syllabus as an operational construct perceived and understood by the syllabus designers and material developers?; (ii) How do the curriculum and syllabus developers and materials designers perceive what should be the methods of teaching-learning of English language?; (iii) How is the process of curriculum change bridge the knowledge gap between and among the various participants of curriculum change? The paper consists of five sections. In the first section the context and backdrop of the initiative of curriculum change is described bringing in the need and intensions of curriculum change. The second section raises the issue of 'what' and 'how' of syllabus design and the way people involved in curriculum and syllabus development perceived and responded to the change and how the post method condition (whether it exists or not) in the present context of English language education in India impacts the development of materials. The third section raises some questions about materials development for English language education. The fourth section presents the innovations attempted in the curriculum revision exercise. In the last section the paper discusses the lessons learnt from the processes of curriculum revision and materials development.

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** Professor, Department of Education in Languages, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016.

THE STORY

The government of Rajasthan initiated the curricular revision involving practising teachers, teacher educators, academics from universities, national level institutions like the NCERT and state functionaries for curriculum implementation. This initiative was more or less similar to the one carried out the national level. At the national level, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) which has the mandate of revising the school curriculum once in five years initiated the curricular revision in the year 2005. The National Curriculum Framework-2005 (NCERT, 2005) was brought out after a nationwide debate and discussion involving all stake holders and those concerned about the education of children in school. There were many committees formed to carry out the exercise and development of textbooks in all the subjects from classes I to XII. The committees include: National Steering Committee which consisted of members from all fields and twenty-one national focus groups on the various areas of school education. The twenty one areas were categorised into: (i) Curricular Areas; (ii) National Concerns; (iii) Systemic Issues, besides the syllabus and textbook development committees. The curricular revision exercise in the state of Rajasthan has had a difference. There is a steering committee consisting of members

from various fields, including NGOs working in the field of education. The Committee is headed by former head of the department of the Curriculum Group of NCERT and he was also the Director of SCERT, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. There was no other committee like the focus groups for content or systemic areas.

It was assumed that the syllabus and materials development committees would bring in the ideas and arguments of the respective areas during the development of syllabus and materials. The first meeting for the exercise was held in May 2011 at the State Institute of Educational Research and Training (SIERT), Udaipur to discuss how to carry out the curriculum revision. The other states (neighbouring as well as comparable states in terms language, population or socio-economic indicators) which had initiated or completed the curricular revision were also consulted to understand how they undertook the curriculum revision to implement NCF-2005.

There was an urgency to revise the English language curriculum, particularly development of textbooks at the upper primary level. The reason for this was that the state had introduced the textbooks developed by NCERT for classes VI, VII and VIII, but found the materials extremely difficult and 'above the level by students'. Teachers also found it difficult to teach textbooks. The baseline study conducted at the

initial stage of this revision revealed that the proficiency level of students and teachers was very low. There were serious concerns expressed by teachers and parents that the books needed to be changed. The reason for the concern was that the state has been using the textbooks developed by the State Institute of Educational Research and Training (SIERT), Udaipur more than a decade. The books were first developed for classes III to VIII as the English language was introduced from class III. Later in the early 2000s English was introduced from class I. Some of the children who were in class VI during the 2009 or 2010 had started English from class III. The NCERT textbooks assume that the children start learning English language from class I. I (the author), being a member of faculty in language education in NCERT, New Delhi, was identified as the national level English language expert to be part of the curriculum and textbook development group in the state.

The ICICI foundation (a wing of ICICI Bank) which had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state of Rajasthan to work in the area of school and teacher education was a partner in the exercise. The collaboration between the state and the ICICI foundation emerged under the government of India's call for private public partnership (PPP) where the private sector/corporate companies are expected to spend their 10% profit for social welfare activities under

the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme.

The people involved in the English language education curriculum revision

The English language curriculum revision began with the discussion in May 2011 with the general framework on how to go about and why the state of Rajasthan should have its own textbooks in English. This was followed by the development of curricular statements and designing the syllabus for elementary stage in English language education. The group involved in this venture consisted of a national level experts from NCERT, a freelancing ELT consultant (working for ICICI foundation), members of the faculty of SIERT, practising teachers and teacher educators working in the field. Besides, the above two national level experts were consulted for the finalisation of the syllabus (one has worked as professor at the premier institution for ELT, the English and Foreign Languages University, (EFLU) (formerly known as Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages located at Hyderabad and the other was a retired member of faculty from NCERT). The senior level administrative official (an Indian Administrative Service official) who heads the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme in the state has been part of most of the discussion, particularly the first meeting and all the steering committee meetings (for which she

was the convener). The draft syllabus (developed based on the ideas of NCF – 2005, Position Paper on Teaching of English (NCERT, 2005) and the model syllabus (NCERT, 2005)) was discussed with the group and the views of teachers from various pockets of the state, and the problems and issues on English language education was deliberated upon to arrive at a consensus on the objectives, themes, processes of English language education at the elementary level (from classes I to VIII). The State Steering Committee discussed the syllabus and approved the same.

THE METHOD QUESTIONS

Major dilemmas and tensions which the members of the syllabus and textbook development groups felt were not new. What was interesting and is not clear is how the post method condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) is understood by curriculum and material developers who are mostly practising teachers and teacher educators. That is to say that the moving beyond methods or aiming at a process based methods has left the teachers and teacher educators in many a dilemma about processes/procedures of learning. So there were more apprehensions than comprehensions. Every single statement made in the draft syllabus was questioned with an intention that the children of the state would not be able to do 'this thing' or 'that thing'. People who know the context

very well (and believe(d) that was one of the reasons and merit to be in the process of curriculum revision exercise) endorsed 'labelling' learners as the ones who cannot learn English for there is no environment at home (even in school) to learn the English language. The opinions of the some of the members of the group are given below and these were said repeatedly to stress the need to make the English language course, particularly the materials 'very simple' and 'light'. This opinion made an impact both positively and negatively in the design of syllabus and materials as also in the development of training materials for teachers and the mode of training itself. Here are the opinions of most of the members.

"Most of the children who will study these textbooks are from very low economic background and they have no support from parents in learning the English language."

"Teachers themselves are not proficient in the English language. How do expect them to teach such a textbook like the one developed by NCERT?"

"Since our children do not know English even after undergoing five years of English in the primary school, our new textbooks should be very simple so that they can do everything with the support of the teacher who is not proficient in English language."

Moving beyond methods was in a way the consensus emerged during the discussions, though not clearly.

This 'eclectic way of conducting classroom activities' and developing materials to aim at eclectic method (Prabhu, 1987) as an ideal or convenient methodology, it was felt, would help the teacher use the materials (i.e. the textbook) well. The question which kept arising was how the teachers (most of them) who lack English language proficiency and are not English language graduates, and do not have the knowledge of language pedagogy can understand this. Eclecticism in English language methodology was not perceived or did not emerge as a rescue mechanism where the teacher lacks the knowledge of methodology (This I call 'deficiency point of view' for the teacher is deficient on his/her part in the knowledge of methods), but as a level where the teacher has a fair deal of knowledge about the existing methods or at least knowledge and ideas about the assumption about 'what is language? and how does learning take place?' and chooses the good ideas and strategies from the existing methods or evolving his/her method to maximise language learning. Adapting to eclecticism or teacher developed method/strategies as a convenient method has its own merits and demerits. Describing the situation that led to eclecticism as 'dissatisfaction with method', Kumaravadivelu (1993) argues that teachers who are trained in and even swear by particular method do not conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures.

Teachers who claim to follow the same method often use different classroom procedures that are not consistent with the adopted method, teachers who claim to follow different methods often use same classroom procedures, and over the time teachers develop and follow a carefully delineated task hierarchy, a weighted sequence of activities not necessarily associated with any established method. (p. 29-30)

But in the discussions during the syllabus and materials development the lack of knowledge about not only methods of language teaching and very understanding about language and learning was felt. The support for any methods or strategy suiting to the context (evolved by the teacher), though cannot be ignored as trivial or not sound, should also be seen from the point of view of the current theories or understanding of language and language learning. This was clear as some of us (in the group) were not able to come out of what is called 'wanting to teach the way one was taught'. The counter argument to this is given by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (1998) who advocate 'Refuse to teach the way you were taught'.

I need to talk a bit more about how the existing methods in English language teaching or the assumptions about methods of English language teaching have created disparities in different school systems as well as within systems. This rift or cleavage in the methods of English language

teaching could be seen as how the diverse contexts are addressed to provide quality English language education with available resources. This in a way helps in making curriculum and material developers understand that materials will not and cannot advocate one particular way of teaching or methodology.

A closer look at the existing curricula, particularly the materials and the pedagogy they expect the teacher to follow reveals some interesting scenarios in the country (even within the system itself.). We can see crudely three methods are practiced (some systems say it explicitly and some do not make a mention about it). At the national level the Central Board of Secondary Education which directly adopts NCERT's syllabus and also develops its own syllabus and materials there are three methodological/pedagogical understanding based on which the materials have been developed. The textbooks of NCERT from classes IX and X advocate learning centered approach based on the principles of constructivist paradigm of learning. The CBSE textbooks for classes IX and X follow typical communicative approach while the Board's textbooks for classes XI and XII are based on functional-notional syllabus. The textbooks of many states attempt to follow a combination of structural and communicative approaches to language teaching. Most of the state syllabi talk about the need for developing communication skills

and negotiation skills and also formal grammar teaching. Since the syllabus states the methods in terms of strategies and classroom processes, it would be difficult to say that a particular method is being advocated. Textbooks are the only means for the teacher to know about the strategies the syllabus advocates. This is stated in preface, teachers' pages or through the rubrics. The irony of the situation is that the teachers who use the materials do not or need not necessarily have the knowledge of the methods they are supposed to follow. They continue to teach 'they were doing it so' or try to ape whatever has been told to them in training programmes. Most teachers believe that the textbook should be followed religiously. That is to say the textbook advocates/provides a methodology which is ideal and good for the learners. So follow the rubrics of the textbook and you will realise language learning. One may without much research conclude that the very understanding by teachers about methods of teaching-learning of English as a second language in India is problematic. This has given rise to convenient ways of adopting to eclecticism which does not yield much fruit. We need to develop an informed eclecticism in the teacher. This requires knowledge about existing methods, current assumptions about language and learning and a critical reflection on them. This will lead to developing an understanding of what Stern calls 'enlightened

eclectic method'. Stern (1992) brings out the problems "The weakness of the eclectic position is that it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which the best theory is, nor does it provide any principles by which to include or exclude features which form part of existing theories or practices. The choice is left to the individual's intuitive judgement and its, therefore, too broad and too vague to be satisfactory as a theory in its own right." (p.11)

The kind of eclecticism or the method which the practicing teachers and teacher educators assume was since the teacher is deficient both in terms of proficiency and pedagogy let eclecticism serve as a rescue mechanism. As Widdowson (1990) puts it rightly, "It is quite common to hear teachers say that they do not subscribe to any particular approach or method in their teaching but are 'eclectic'. They thereby avoid commitment to any current fad that comes up on the whirligig of fashion... If by eclecticism is meant the random and expedient use of whatever technique comes most readily to hand, then it has no merit whatever." (p.50)

But at the same time we should recognise that post method condition has empowered teachers to explore and expand the very idea of method in language teaching and thereby liberating language teaching from the clutches of west-centric designer methods. Kumaravadivelu (2003)

and Canagarajah (2002) bring out this point well when they say, 'post method pedagogy seeks to empower practicing teachers in their attempt to develop an appropriate pedagogy based on their local knowledge and local understanding. (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:549)'

'...it (post method pedagogy) liberates teachers and makes them truly creative in integrating experience, imagination, and knowledge to devise learning strategies with/for students. (Canagarajah, 2002:149)'

This dilemma of what should be the processes through which English language learning should be realised continued till the end of materials development. Once the materials were developed and the discussion on how to guide the teacher to use the materials to the maximum provided scope for looking at individual skills and tasks as opportunities for working with language and language use, the question of processes became clear.

Another interesting argument that came up many a times was how much theory (assumptions about language and learning) the syllabus should have in order to make material developers, trainers of teachers and the cutting edge teacher understand the 'what' should be taught (content) and 'how' should it be taught (the methods). There was a consensus that there was no need to state any theory in the syllabus directly. It

would not help the teachers or anyone who uses the syllabus for materials development and teaching purpose. This has made syllabus development much more difficult as to bring in the pedagogical understanding the new approach advocates. The ideas of NCF-2005 and emerging language pedagogies had to be brought into the new syllabus. In a way say it and not to say it. In other words the demand was not to quote from ELT pedagogues and theorists but tell the idea in what was described as 'simple' and 'common man's language' which any one can understand. So we had to summarise most of the ideas and give them as pointers.

THE MATERIALS QUESTIONS

With the above understanding on materials and processes of language learning-teaching, the materials development team plunged into developing materials. This group consists of teachers from government run schools at various stages of the state and teacher educators from District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE). Since materials development is not a regular exercise most of the members of the group were new to materials development. Some of them have been part of materials development during the last curricular revision which took place seven years ago. The major task of the group was to develop expertise in materials

development (enable the novice or not so experienced teachers to develop expertise). This experience of 'learning to develop materials by developing materials' based on the understanding of new syllabus and the pedagogical shift from conventional methods to process based or learning centered approaches to language teaching-learning equipped material developers (with experience and without experience) to develop an understanding about (i) text, (ii) tasks, (iii) coherence, (iv) integrating assessment into materials itself, (v) guiding the teacher to use/exploit the materials to the maximum and moving beyond it. Materials have been developed through workshop mode where the group brought in their ideas along with texts of different types. Draft materials were finalised in six workshops. Two senior academics from universities were identified as reviewers. Here are some of the problems which the materials development team encountered and discussed to arrive at a consensus over a period of time.

A. The texts

The question of what should be a text in an English language textbook at the upper primary stage was addressed very differently by everyone in the group. Text from varied genres and varied lengths were pooled together. However, it was difficult for some of us to come out the conventional thinking of text i.e. a good piece of literary, descriptive or discursive text

which could be exploited well and has a moral in it. But majority believed that a text should interest learners and provide opportunity for learners to work with. Tomlinson's (1998:7-21) ideas on 'What should materials do?' would be very appropriate (please see appendix 1) While this argument went on, another question on the selection of the text which came up was the question of 'authentic text'. Everyone agreed and believed that authentic text should be chosen for materials but the difference was authentic texts are not simple in terms of vocabulary, language structure, etc. How far we can simplify the language and whether the author of the authentic text would agree for the gradation or modification. Most of members of the group believed that text should be simple because the existing textbooks (developed by NCERT) is very difficult for children as well as teachers and the texts in the books are all authentic texts. The dilemma was how far we can have authentic or simplified/graded texts. As a compromise we went for texts from varied genres and sources and are slightly modified or translations from Indian languages in simple language. This 'the text has to be in very simple language' argument was to stress the need for learners to know and understand every word of the text. It took some time for many in the group to recognise that the texts serve as language 'input text' through which the learner is familiarised with or

exposed to new language. Krashen's (1985) idea of 'input hypothesis' and how creating a print rich environment in the classroom makes children gradually learn from the exposure. The concepts like 'input hypothesis and $i+1$ ' (Krashen, 1985), 'interaction hypothesis (Long, 1985) and 'output hypothesis (Swain 1985) were actually introduced to material developers in order to develop a perspective on what purpose the texts serve in a textbook. This also clarified how reading has to be dealt with at this stage.

B. Authentic Tasks and Route

Initially the group was reluctant to recognise the importance of making it the tasks authentic as it was difficult to perceive 'authentic tasks' as tools for engagement with language and language use. As we progressed the group was able to develop an understanding of what a task is and how a task should provide opportunity for language use. This was well taken as some of us in the group with some expertise were able to develop one complete unit with all the components of language teaching-learning included. The language components are: Pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading, listening and speaking, grammar, writing, punctuations (not in all) and study skills. All these were to be connected and most of which are either rooted from the reading text or had coherence in terms of ideas and actions. This 'route', in a

way, helped the developers to design authentic tasks and understand the difference between an authentic and a shallow or trivial task. The shallow and trivial task, I mean, tasks which directly 'teach' one or some language item or very conventional way of developing exercises. The teacher and the learner should be able to feel that this route (through rubrics) takes them gradually, not in a structured manner from one tasks/activity to another. The group as material developers were able to understand the purpose of 'route' and that made the tasks authentic because the main/root text provides the language aspect to be exploited through tasks for the unit.

C. Listening and Speaking

Most of the existing textbooks do not find space for the two skills, listening and speaking. Even if they have some activities or tasks for promoting these two areas, they are few and not authentic. The new textbook series titled as Sunbeam (SIERT, 2012) have listening and speaking activities as integrated and authentic tasks. The texts for listening tasks are given at the end which the teacher will read out loud or as required. This is because most (almost all) of the schools will not have any facilities like tape record player or CD player. Integration of listening and speaking activities, it was found in the pilot trialling, was well taken both by

teachers and learners because it did not pose any problem or threat to both the teacher and the learner as it does not warrant any special effort or arrangement. But we need to recognise the problem that the dependence of teacher's voice and pronunciation for listening activities may not be very fruitful as the teachers, as mentioned above, lack English language proficiency.

INNOVATIONS

The textbook was able to accommodate the demands of the teachers and other actors involved in the curricula and syllabus design, materials development and also the popular demand that the textbooks should provide scope for developing communication skills in English. It is not fair to claim that the books have achieved everything as they are introduced. It would take at least one year to understand the effect of the book and teachers are the best source to know about the usefulness of the book. The base line survey conducted on students as well as teachers in English language proficiency and perception about materials revealed many things. They were related to the type of texts, tasks, proficiency level of both teachers and learners, assessment strategies and so on. Here are some of the innovations the materials attempted to do and realised in making it happen.

- **Coherence within one unit and**

among the units (the whole textbook). Coherence within a unit was created by providing a 'route' as discussed above; Coherence among the units i.e. the whole book was made possible in terms of themes, coverage of language items (vocabulary, grammatical items, etc.) not in structured manner, but following the principle of 'familiar to unfamiliar'.

- **Bringing in the aspects of language learning which have been neglected so far.** This has been discussed in the previous section. The book has found space for listening and speaking.
- **Connecting the life of children outside school with the classroom.** This is one of the guiding principles of National Curriculum Framework-2005. The text and activities in the book draw real life contexts, situations and events so that children can connect with their day-to-day life. The pre-reading activities and tasks have been designed in such a way that children use their previous knowledge to work with ideas and language and then move forward. The Vygotskyian view of social construction of knowledge (1985) is aimed through linking the life and practices with children and also the popular festivals, places and

folktales and stories of the state.

- **Teachers' Page.** One major concern expressed by almost everyone during the process of syllabus and textbook development was how to guide the teacher to use the textbook effectively. Most teachers will have only the textbook, nothing else. Though one training programme has been organised for every teacher following the cascade model, teacher will be left alone when they start teaching the textbooks. It was suggested that the each textbook will have some pages allotted to teacher as guidelines. If the class six textbook has ten lessons, there will be six to eight pages have been allocated as 'Teacher's Page' for each three units. The teachers' pages tell the teacher the purpose of the unit and how to go about and also how to do Comprehensive and Continuous Assessment. During the pilot trialling it was found to be very welcoming by teachers.
- **Emphasis on reading** is supported through not only selection of texts that interest children and varied forms like cartoons stories, authentic translation from Indian language, but also through tasks which pave way for reading and re-reading of texts.

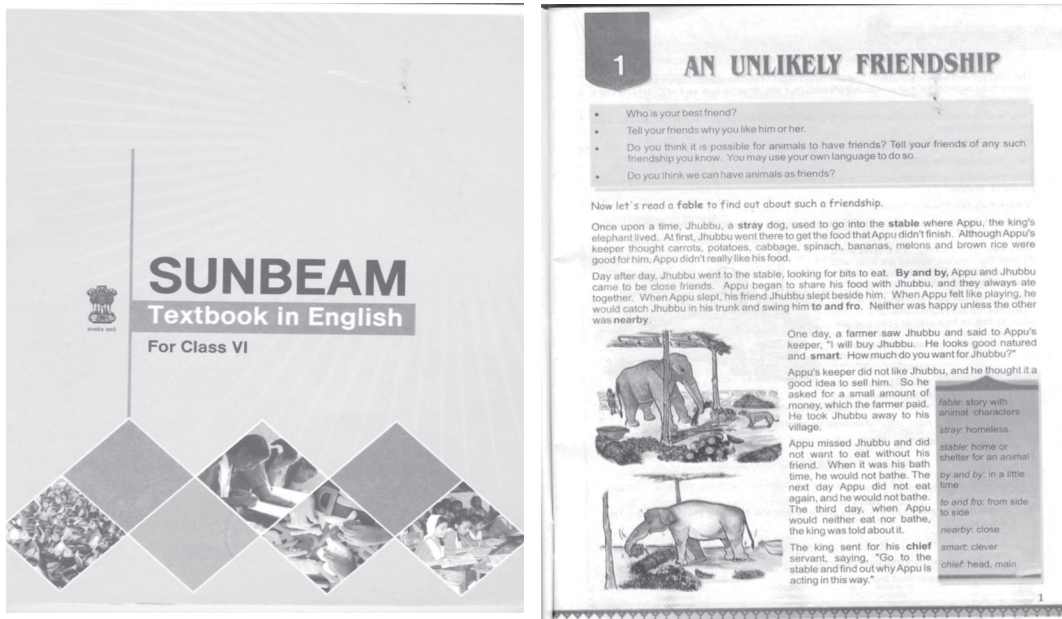


Figure 1 Textbook in English Class VI

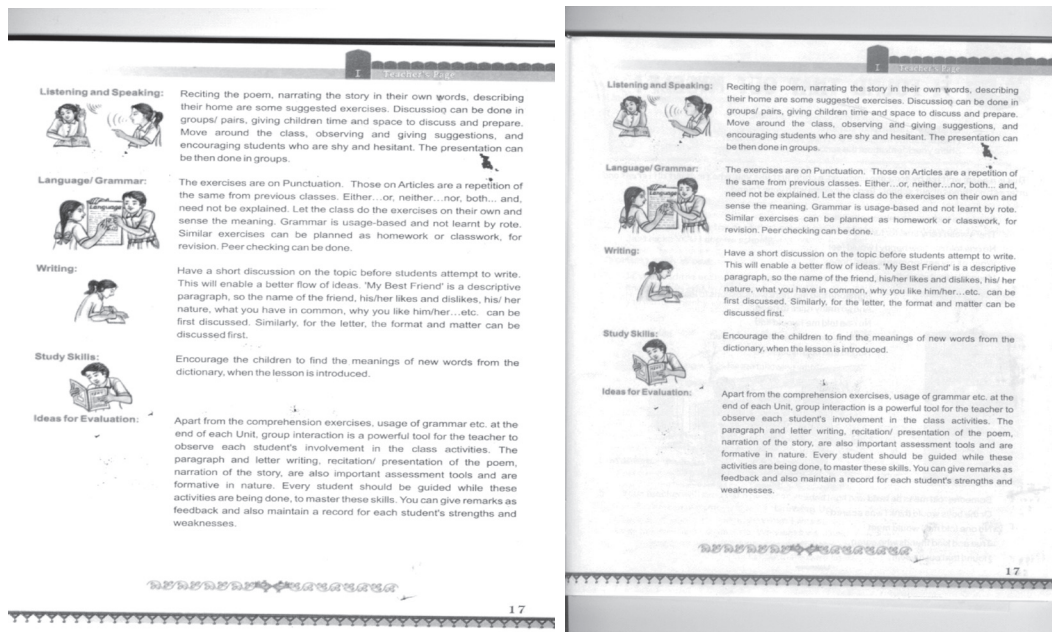


Figure 2 Teacher's Page of Class VI Textbook

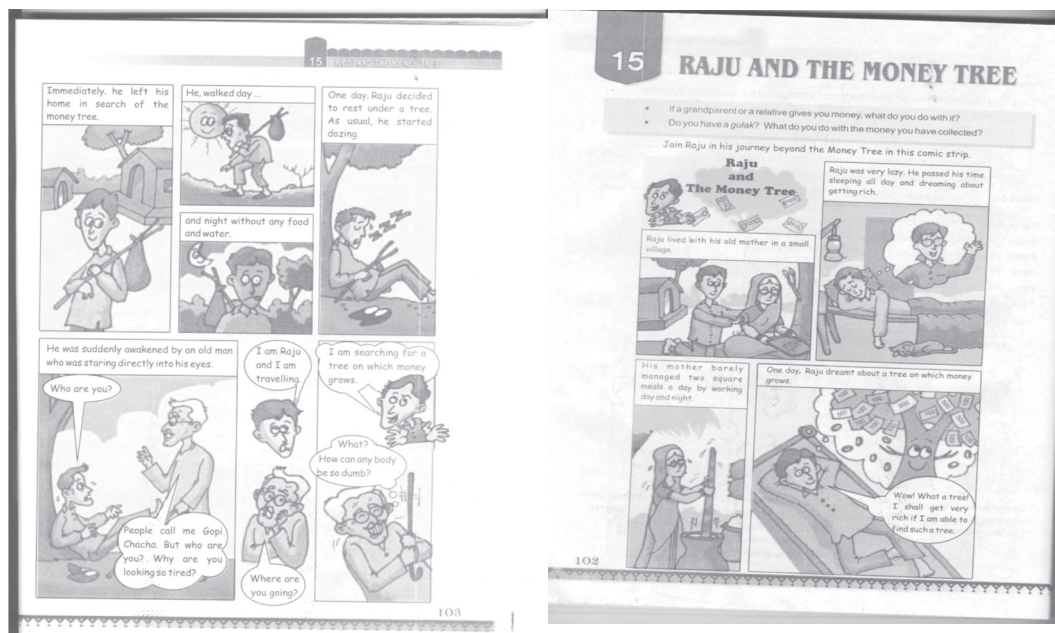


Figure 3 Variety of Texts: Cartoon as Reading Input

- Pedagogical Grammar.** It was difficult to convince everyone that explicit teaching of grammar would not help much in supporting the learner acquire the language. It was agreed one or two language item(s) found in the reading text would be taken to familiarise and draw the attention of learner to the grammatical aspect/function of the language. The identified grammatical item is familiarised through further tasks in contexts and the 'why' and 'how' are inferred through grammar in action followed by 'consciousness raising' strategy.
- Development of expertise in materials development through the exercise of developing**

materials. The group was able to see that they gained expertise in materials development during the course of the exercise. This is because the group consisted of practising teachers to university academics. The coming together of people with particular interest and working together with a clear goal helps in learning about and producing materials which would serve a purpose. Brian Tomlinson's (1995) point to develop effective materials is of much relevance in today's context. We need to find ways of bringing together researchers, teachers, writers and publishers so as to pool resources and to take advantage of different areas

What materials should do? (Tomlinson, B. 1998:7-21)

1. Materials should achieve impact.
2. Materials should help learners to feel at ease.
3. Materials should help learner to develop confidence.
4. What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful?
5. Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment.
6. Learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught.
7. Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use.
8. The learners' attention should be drawn to linguistics features of the input.
9. Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes.
10. Materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed.
11. Materials should take into account that learners differ in learning styles.
12. Materials should take into account that learners differ in effective attitudes.
13. Materials should permit a silent period at the beginning of instruction.
14. Materials should maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left brain activities.
15. Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice.
16. Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

of expertise in order to produce materials of greater value to learners of languages. (p15)

One major challenge was to integrate assessment into the classroom processes. The new scheme of continuous and comprehensive evaluation is being implemented in the state as envisaged by NCF- 2005. Teachers' pages guide the teacher for ways and means of assessing learning as it happens in the classroom.

LESSONS LEARNT

- (i) **Knowledge Gap in understanding 'What is language and learning?'** 'How language learning takes place?' 'Learner as constructor of knowledge' in the participants at every level was felt in the exercise of curriculum and syllabus design, and materials development. This is not to say people should not have their own understanding on

the above questions or aspects of language and learning and that will lead to uniformity. The whole exercise was attempted to have an informed understanding suiting to local context of what best should work in the state of Rajasthan. This informed understanding was supported by critical reflections taking objective views while the understanding was also questioned by just assumptions and beliefs not sound, not evidence based. This 'knowledge gap' within the material developers led to difference from selection of texts to devising assessment strategies in the textbook. One another problem was because of the knowledge gap in the basic assumptions about language and learning by non-language educators, pedagogues and experts in other subject experts (who were there as members of steering committee or syllabus committee) the selection of texts were questioned from the point of view of language difficulty (as assumed by them), themes, gender and other perspectives. This helped in being sensitive to issues related to gender, caste and special needs of the group. This goes on to say that material developers need to be very sensitive to other issues keeping the constitutional values in mind. This knowledge gap could be bridged by developing a clear

guideline (through a workshop) for materials development. This exercise should involve the prospective material developers and others (curriculum planners, implementers, other subject material developers to make them understand the role of language and trainers).

- (ii) **Materials development as a professional activity:** Materials development has not been recognised as a continuous professional activity for which a teacher has to have training and develop expertise as every teacher is a material developer for his/her classroom and/or for other purposes. One group of 15–20 teachers and teacher educators developing material for one occasion and take it up again when the system demands is not going to support much materials development as an area of knowledge. This has also an impact on making the teachers understand the role of materials in language teaching. We felt that the group should have been exposed to the recent ideas and developments in materials development in English as a second language. There is a need to promote materials development as an area of knowledge or theory through short term or long term courses for pre-service as well as in-service teachers, and others interested in the area.

(iii) **Selection of Material developers.**

Now the practice is anyone can develop materials and those known as good teachers or teacher educators and present their perspective well in meetings and workshops is considered as good in material development. In the absence of any mechanism or professional activity as material development at any level (except some courses in master in a few universities in India), it would be difficult to create professional material developers. So selection of material developers needs to be through well thought of mechanism. This is not the practice. We need to find ways to select material developers based on their experience and work in material development.

(iv) **Dominance of Textbook in English Language Teaching.**

While textbook remains the sole source of English language teaching-learning in majority of school/classroom settings, teachers depend completely on the prescribed textbooks and learners have no other choice to follow their teachers. Material developers have a compulsion to understand this reality and develop the textbook as all comprehensive and less burdening instruments for language learning. This makes the very exercise much demanding and problem solving like. Textbook is only

a launching pad for providing language learning opportunities, i.e. it is the beginning, not an end. Material development exercises in countries like India need to understand and strike a balance. In other words we need to think of how open the minds of teachers are to move beyond the textbook for creating opportunities for language use.

(v) **Diffusion of Curriculum.**

Curricular statements and syllabus remains in the realm of only experts, the members of steering committee, material developers, and to some extent with researchers. Teachers and even teacher educators do not have much opportunity to see the syllabus. The very intention of the syllabus gets diluted when the teachers do not have access to the material itself. Though first key resource persons training discussed the ideas of the syllabus and stage wise objectives of language learning and the processes, the transmission loss makes the outreach of the syllabus as an operational document is limited. It is necessary to create awareness about the curriculum revision among all stake holders of school education, including parents and very importantly teachers. The print and other media could be used for the purpose by asking opinions and suggestions from anyone

interested in and concerned about education of children in school and by holding debates on various aspects on education.

- (vi) **Curriculum Shedding.** Loss of ideas during the process of curriculum, syllabus and materials development from the national level to the state and within the state from syllabus and materials development to the cutting edge teacher has been noticed. This phenomenon could be stated as 'curriculum shedding' from the top to bottom or from centre to periphery. This loss during the process of curriculum diffusion makes the intentions of the curriculum, particularly the materials, lose the perspectives and understanding based on which they have been developed. Thus 'top down' approach to curriculum development and implementation even with a relatively bigger state like Rajasthan involving cutting edge teachers and practitioners also has 'outreach' and 'curriculum spread' problems. This creates gap from 'intended curriculum' through 'implemented curriculum' to 'evaluated curriculum' as people involved in the first stage or those trained on the new curriculum and materials will not be there in each stage to follow the curriculum implementation by the classroom teacher. Mere training to teach the materials

reduces the broader perspective of curriculum.

- (vii) **Alignment of various participating institutions and systems.** There is a need to bring in organisations and people working in the field of language education and curriculum development work together with an over arching agenda. This needs institutional mechanism that would bind together for the purpose the curriculum revision and change, putting aside the differences of all sorts and realise the agenda of curriculum change. This needs contribution and sacrifice from each institution (like the NCERT, SCERT, SSA and RMSA, NGOs involved and school systems) working to realise the curriculum revision as a professional activity.

CONCLUSION

Curriculum change is an activity aimed at social change through schooling. The responsibility of institutions and individuals involved is immense that the synergy between and among them contributes in achieving the maximum in terms of development of curricular guidelines, syllabus and more importantly materials development. There is an urgent necessity to pay attention to the area of materials development as a professional activity and the integrating materials development as part of professional development. Materials in English language

education in India play a very vital role because textbooks remain the only source of language teaching-learning. The curriculum revision exercise in the state of Rajasthan recognises the above issues and has attempted to follow a professional

approach by adopting a mechanism involving people and institutions from national level to the cutting-edge teacher. However, it may have its own impact as the processes of development and implementation still requires introspection.

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Each Child Can Construct Knowledge

S.K. MISHRA* AND AJIT SINGH**

Abstract

It was assumed earlier that teachers impart information to their students who process the information with the help of their cognitive structure and learn. Learning therefore, moves from outside to inside the learners. Learners cannot construct knowledge on their own. Students were considered as blank slate upon which the teacher etches information. Over the years brain research has provided more light on how learners learn. Constructivism on the other hand, highlights that each learner can construct knowledge on her/his own. Constructivism has brought about a dramatic change in the role of teachers and learners. The main task of the teacher in the constructivist classroom is to pose problem(s) to her/his learners and to support them in solving the problem thereby helping them to construct knowledge. Similarly, the role of learner is to create knowledge rather than to ingest mechanically transmitted communicated by the teacher. Though constructivism is the theory of learning but certain pedagogical implications have been derived from the theory. Teachers need to use the instructional approaches such as dialogue, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, cognitive dissonance and problem-based learning to support their learners in constructing knowledge on their own and to develop creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and independent thinking skills essential for a true citizen of 21st century. However, there are issues in the constructivist pedagogy which need to be addressed to popularise the pedagogy. Teachers experience difficulty in transforming the content to be learnt by their students into problem(s) to be solved by them. Secondly the use of the said instructional approaches is a time consuming process. Teachers report that they cannot transact the syllabus of a subject within the prescribed time frame if they follow said instructional approaches.

* Principal, Delhi Teachers Training College, 340-Deenpur, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110 043

** Director, All India Primary Teachers Federation, Shikshak Bhawan, 41 Institutional Area, D-Block, Janakpuri, New Delhi 110 058

BACKDROP**Learning moves from outside to inside the learner**

Teaching process is predominantly didactic in Indian classrooms. The classroom is a place where the teacher pours information into her/his passive students as if they are empty vessels to be filled up. Students mechanically ingest information transmitted by the teacher in the classroom. Students are considered as blank slate upon which the teacher etches information related to different subjects transacted by him/her in the class.

When information is transmitted to the students by the teacher in the classroom, they perceive the information and process the same with the help of knowledge in their cognitive structure. The students then integrate it with the existing knowledge in their cognitive structure. It is assumed that students gain knowledge either from the teacher or reading on their own from the textbook. It is therefore assumed that the learning moves from the outside to inside the learner.

CONCEPT OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism is a theory of learning. It does not agree with the notion that learning moves from outside the learner to inside the learner. It specifies that a learner constructs knowledge on his/her own by interacting with the environment in which he/she is

placed. Further it highlights that the knowledge so constructed is deeper, richer and more sustainable. Teachers should therefore, use constructivist approach in teaching learning process in their classroom. It facilitates the process of developing among learners the skill of learning to learn. Therefore, there is a paradigm shift in designing instruction.

Constructivists believe that meaningful learning is possible in an environment in which students are required to solve a problem which they experience in their context and are helped by the teachers in the process. Further when they are provided opportunities to solve the problem collaboratively.

CHANGING ROLE OF BOTH THE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Constructivism modifies the role of both of teachers and learners in the teaching-learning process.

Teachers' Role in Constructivist Classroom

The teachers instead of pouring information into passive students help them to construct knowledge. The constructivist teacher develops in his/her learners' problem-solving and inquiry based learning skills. He/she triggers students' innate curiosity about the world and how things work. Constructivist teacher poses questions and problems to students and helps them to solve the problem/find their own answers to the questions.

The constructivist teachers lay a great deal of emphasis on reflection and collaboration in the process of helping students to construct knowledge on their own. The teacher creates situation(s) in the classroom where students feel comfortable to ask questions and they reflect on their learning processes either alone or in groups. Students talk about what they learned and how they learnt. This is invaluable for developing the skill of learning to learn. The teachers also rely heavily on collaboration among students in the learning process. Students study together, discuss and exchange their ideas. Students learn not from themselves, but also from their peers.

Students' Role in the Constructivist Classroom

In the constructivist classroom, the role of students is altogether different from that of a traditional classroom. Instead of students being passive recipients of information communicated by the teacher, they are active participants in the teaching learning process.

Students Role in the Constructivist Classroom

Students' role too is different in the constructivist classroom from that in a traditional classroom. In the latter classroom, S/He is required to perceive and receive information transmitted by the teacher. S/He is not a passive listener. In the constructivist classroom,

she/he is an active participant in the learning process. Rather s/he is constructing knowledge on her/his own by solving problem(s) posed by the teacher by interacting with peers and the teacher. S/He seeks the help of the teacher when s/he is fronted with a difficulty in solving the problem.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Through constructivism is a theory of learning, a few pedagogical implications have been derived from this theory to improve the teaching-learning process in the classroom thereby developing among learners the requisite knowledge and skills essential for a 21st century citizen. These are:

Dialogue

The dialogue provides an opportunity to learners to discuss and exchange ideas with their peers as well as with the teacher. The dialogue acts as a catalyst for creation of knowledge. It facilitates comprehension of concepts/principles through exchange of ideas. The dialogue provides an opportunity to students to become active in their learning. This allows the students to ask questions. The class in which there is a dialogue is a lively class.

Cooperative Learning

Constructivism lays a great deal of stress on extensive use of cooperative learning tasks to help learners to construct knowledge. This is because

learning is basically a collaborative process. Cooperative tasks have two types of goals – academic and social. Social goals refer to development among learners' social skills such as criticizing ideas and not people, controlling anger, disagreeing in non-hurtful ways, and listening to others with rapt attention.

The teacher normally forms groups of two to four learners depending upon the complexity of the learning task. There are a number of cooperative learning structures such as think-pair-share, say and switch, graffiti, corner, and jigsaw. Of all these structures, jigsaw strategy is the most popular and is widely used in cooperative learning tasks.

Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is a form of cooperative learning. Peer tutoring means students helping other students to learn on an one to one basis. Generally students are paired for mutual learning. At other times, more able students' help less able students of the same age or older students help younger students. When a student is to teach another student, s/he needs to learn the material better in the first place. This contributes to her/his learning on how to learn. In this process, both the students learn better. The use of peer tutoring results in a number of advantages such as enhancement of learners' self-esteem, self-confidence in their abilities and higher academic achievement.

There is a wealth of empirical evidence that peer tutoring/teaching is extremely effective for a wide range of content and students of different levels. Peer teaching increases learning, both of the students being helped as well as those giving the help as a result of their collaborative learning. Students' teaching other students is considered as one of the effective methods of teaching.

Those who teach others, teach themselves, is very true, not only because constant repetition impresses a fact indelibly on the mind, but because the process of teaching in itself gives a deeper insight into the subject taught.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is another instructional approach which teachers need to use in the constructivist classroom.

Cognitive dissonance or cognitive conflict arises when the information transmitted by the teacher in the classroom is contradictory to what s/he already knows i.e. the knowledge already in the cognitive structure of the learner. This cognitive conflict stimulates thinking on the part of learners.

Problem-based Learning

The constructivist approach of problem-based learning invaluable in helping learners to reach their highest potential was first implemented in medical education in the early 1970s. The students were

presented a problem in the form of patient entering with symptoms. Students' task was to diagnose the disease from which the patient was suffering. They were required to provide a rationale for their diagnosis. The use of problem-based learning is now widely used in schools, colleges, business schools, architecture and so on etc.

In a school, the teacher transforms the content to be transacted into a problem and presents the same to her/his students to solve. Students discuss the problem in groups, generate hypotheses, try to solve the problem with the help of knowledge and experiences they have. Teacher supports them in solving the problem. Later the groups of students discuss their solutions of the problems in the whole class.

Enduring Issues in the Implementation of Constructivist Pedagogy

There are some important issues with regard to the use of constructivist pedagogy while transacting the curriculum. These

need to be addressed to popularise constructivist approaches to transact the curriculum.

The main activity in a constructivist classroom is solving problems. For this, teachers are required to transform the content to be transacted into a problem to be solved by her/his students. Teachers find it difficult to visualize problems to transact the given content of a subject. Further, it results in extra work on the part of teachers. As a consequence, teachers find it difficult to use constructivist pedagogy to transact the syllabi of different subjects.

Constructivist pedagogy has been largely used by Science and Mathematics teachers. This is because it is based on problem solving and inquiry approach. Therefore it has limited use in transacting other subjects such as Social Science.

Teachers often report that the use of constructivist pedagogy such as problem solving is a time consuming process. As a consequence, it is not possible to transact the syllabus of a subject within the limited time frame.

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Situating Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together' within Pedagogic Practices A Social-Constructivist Perspective*

RISHABH KUMAR MISHRA**

Abstract

'Learning to live together' has emerged as a major theme of educational practices when Delors Commission (1996) report, considered it as one of the four pillars of learning. Delors Commission has considered education as an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. Against this backdrop, this paper reports a study conducted under the theoretical backdrop of social-constructivism. In the first section, it explores 'essentials' necessary for 'learning to live together'. The paper explains that as one of the significant agency of socialisation (basically secondary socialisation) education should unfold the internal 'humanity'. This goal can be achieved only if the sense of 'togetherness' and 'belongingness' becomes intra-psychic from inter-psychic. The second section of the paper deals with empirical data and analysed pedagogic practices of social science aimed at integrating the essentials of 'learning to live together'. It was found that pedagogic practices based on social constructivism help to raise social issues, clarify social values and enable learners to develop a sense of 'living together'. It is argued in the paper that generating a community of learners engaged in discussing social issues is fundamental to social cohesiveness. Differences need to be highlighted in order to appreciate diversity. Crucial social issues need to be discussed in classroom rather than being brushed under the carpet. It is through conflict and discomfort that resolutions are arrived at.

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** Assistant Professor, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrastriya Vishwavidyalaya Wardha, Maharashtra

Delors Commission has considered education as an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice (Delors Commission 1996, p.13). As one of the significant agency of socialisation, education can direct us in a positive direction to achieve these goals by inculcating qualities in children such as: knowledge and understanding of self and others, appreciation of the diversity, awareness and sensitivity towards differences and similarities; interdependence of all humans, empathy and cooperative social behavior in caring and sharing respect for other people; capability of encountering others and resolving conflicts through dialogue and competency in working towards common objectives. In short, education should cherish the individual's basic nature of 'humanity'. This goal can be achieved only if the sense of 'togetherness' and 'belongingness' becomes intrapsychic from inter-psychic.

Education should contribute in creating a learned society; a society where every aspect of life at both individual and social level, offers opportunities for learning and doing, to every individual irrespective of his social background. Given the pluralistic social order marked by aggressive global forces, communal conflicts and vested political interests, it is essential that education produces a critical thinker who can take informed

decisions and act with courage and conviction. '...it is vital to prevent social conflict through an education that foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity as well as communication and cooperation between persons of different origins (Dasen 1992, cited in Baveja 2009)'. Our educational processes ought to create a better understanding of other people, mutual understanding among us, and peaceful ways of living. Further, education cannot be satisfied with bringing individuals together by getting them to accept common values shaped in the past. It must also enable the individual to reflect on the question of 'what for' and 'why' to live together. While envisioning the above mentioned role of education, it should be kept in mind that education itself is accused of being the cause of many different forms of social exclusion, and creating knowledge barriers among people. The role of education can only be fulfilled when the educational processes move from learning to know and learning to do, to learning to live together and learning to be. With same spirit UNESCO-APNIEVE (1998), summarised the essential of 'learning to live together' as follows—

"Learning to live together in peace and harmony is a dynamic, holistic and lifelong process through which mutual respect, understanding, caring and sharing, compassion, social responsibility, solidarity, acceptance and tolerance of diversity among individuals and

groups (ethnic, social, cultural, religious, national and regional) are internalised and practiced together to solve problems and to work towards a just and free, peaceful and democratic society.” (UNESCO–APNIEVE 1998, pp.4)

SPACE FOR HOPE: SITUATING ESSENTIALS OF ‘LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER’ WITHIN THE PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES

What are the possible ways of nurturing the above mentioned essentials of ‘learning to live together’? In the present paper, it is proposed that if we situate the essentials of ‘learning to live together’ in pedagogic practices, we can nurture and sustain them. There is a need to explore the possible ways of such innovation within school’s social science pedagogic practices. We are taking stance that essentials of ‘learning to live together’ can become essential part of our everyday cognition only if it is seen as essential part of ‘pedagogy’. Here, we are looking for such integration in the pedagogic practices of social sciences.

The concept of pedagogy itself provides us the scope of such an integration and inclusion. At times, pedagogy is narrowly equated with ‘ways of teaching’ but it is a wider and much deeper process. As Davies (1994) puts it— ‘It involves a vision (theory, set of beliefs) about society, human nature, knowledge and production, in relation to educational ends’. The term pedagogy is a form

of social practice which has the potential to shape the cognitive, affective and moral development of individuals (Daniels 2001). It also specifies relations between its elements; the teacher, the classroom or other context, content, the view of learning and learning about learning (Watkins and Mortimore 1999). For Vygotsky (1987), pedagogy arises and takes shape in particular social circumstances. Pedagogy is not concerned with skills and techniques; instead, it is related to communication, interaction and practices which takes place in a socially organised space in time. Following the socio-cultural perspective of learning, Leach and Moon (1999), used the term ‘pedagogic setting’ to denote the practice that a teacher creates, enacts and experiences, together with particular groups of learners (p. 267). A theory of pedagogy must encompass all the complex factors that influence the process of teaching and learning. In a pedagogic setting learner is viewed as an active and reflective being. Along with developing teaching-learning processes, pedagogic setting builds self esteem and identity of learners as well as teachers. Seen from this standpoint, pedagogic practices need to take into account a wide range of concerns, such as, a learner situated in socio-cultural setting; learning tasks that engender motivation and understanding; and classroom discourse; and an appreciation of the affective dimensions of learning (p. 269).

AN OVERVIEW OF PREVAILING PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Against this theoretical backdrop, the paper attempts to situate the essentials of 'learning to live together' within pedagogic practices of social science. Before developing such pedagogic setting, an overview of prevailing pedagogic practices in social science is essential. For this purpose, informal interviews with social science teachers along with classroom observations were conducted in various schools (government as well as private). It emerged that the social science teachers in schools were practicing two kinds of teaching approaches. In the first approach, pedagogic practices are based on the transmission approach, where teacher acts as an authority, provides information to learners, students are supposed to store these pieces of information in their minds and present it whenever asked. In the second approach, the teachers were practicing so called 'constructivist teaching practices' in their classrooms. They were conducting some robust activities but these activities failed to serve the constructivist goals. It seemed that the activities were conducted only for the 'sake of conducting activity' and did not serve the actual purpose in the real sense. It was seen during the classroom observation that these activities were focusing only on fun, by conducting

some games in the class. Although, 'activity-method' was practiced in the classrooms, but activities were mostly done individually, not in groups. Both kinds of teachers believe that learners were not able to comprehend social processes as they were too young to think about these issues. Whether teachers practice traditional or constructivist approaches, their major concern was to transmit knowledge given in books and somehow enable their learners to score 'good' marks.

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES: PRACTICING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY FOR TEACHING OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

It is evident from the above analysis that prevailing pedagogic practices of social science are limited to teaching course content for securing success in examination or for further career achievement. The prime issue is how to achieve social goals. We decided to establish a pedagogic setting in the school, adopting a socio-cultural approach to learning. Socio-cultural approach to learning explains learning and knowing as a social process, situated in physical as well as socio-cultural context and distributed across person and tools (Vygotsky 1987, Rogoff 1990, Lave and Wenger 1991, Bruner 1996, Brophy 2002). Learning also involves negotiating understanding through dialogue or discourse shared by two or more members of the community who are pursuing shared goals (Brophy 2002). After reviewing the

related literature written on social constructivism, Applefield, Huber and Moallem (2001) summarised the basic tenets of social constructivist perspective as follows— (a) learners construct their own knowledge, participating in authentic activities and internalizing the tools of practices, (b) learners are reflective beings, they can think and reflect on their lived experiences, (c) social interaction/dialogue play a crucial role in learning (cited in Brophy, 2002). A social constructivist perspective focuses on learning as co-construction of knowledge rather than on the acquisition of rote knowledge that exists somewhere outside the learner. It expands the horizons of teaching-learning process and stretches it beyond content and curriculum transaction to establish a sense of community belongingness and togetherness and thus help in

sustaining the essentials of 'learning to live together.'

PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

Against this theoretical backdrop, activities were designed for setting up community of learners engaged in the process of knowledge construction. It was kept in mind while designing these activities that the knowledge and understanding about society that learners bring to the classroom must be acknowledged. This aspect of activity makes it authentic, similar to real world problems. Learners' engagement in such activities would enable them to reflect critically on social realities and thus enable them to revisit their beliefs which influence social cohesion. The following section presents the analysis of some of the activities that were carried out in social science classes with the above mentioned perspective:

Activity 1

This activity is aimed at discussing the concept of 'Diversity' and 'Discrimination'. The overview of activity is as follows:

- A handout was distributed to the class. In the space provided in the handout, students were asked to mention their name, state, religion, language, food, festivals, dress and some specific cultural practices of their family. Some blank space was also provided so that they could fill any other relevant information about themselves. Once they finished working on their own handout, they were asked to share and discuss the details filled with their neighbours. This helped them to highlight and appreciate the similarities and differences in the content which they had mentioned.
- They were then divided into groups of five and asked to talk for three to five minutes on major forms of diversity.
- The forms of diversity that came up after discussion were written on the blackboard.
- Further discussion was generated around the issues that emerged.

The following forms of diversity came out during classroom discussion—physical appearance (colour, height etc), region, religion, caste, intelligence, social class, gender and language. Keeping in mind these forms of differences, it was discussed whether these forms of differences would enrich our feeling of living together or would create hindrance to it. They had classified these forms in two major categories. In first category, they mentioned region, language, food and dress, which they said contribute to enriching their routine experiences. They said that name, attire, food habits and language help to identify other peoples region, religion and caste. It enriches their experiences by introducing them to the diverse ways of dressing, eating habits and language. Although they said that this is their culture and it does not work as constraint in their interaction with others, yet, during discussion, many stereotypes and prejudices of learners came up. For example:

“*Biharies* eat rice only.”

“He eats beef.”

These kinds of stereotypes and prejudices are challenges for social cohesion. These points were taken into account and included in the classroom discussion. It is noteworthy, that issues/stereotypes would not have come to the fore if learners' personal social experiences were not discussed in the class.

L (Learner): Sir, he is a *Bihari*.

T (Teacher): Okay. So your friend is from Bihar?

L (laughs): Yes sir. He speaks '*Bihari*' and eats rice.

T: But he is your friend. Are you not accepting him as a friend because he is a *Bihari*?

L: No Sir, he is my friend.

T: If that doesn't influence your relation with him, then where he comes from and what he eats should not make a difference.

In the second category they had put religion, class, caste, intelligence and had told that these forms of differences separate each other. A person from one religion and caste does not want to interact with a person of other religion and caste. A person who belongs to high class and caste hates people of lower class. After discussion, students came to the point that this is not 'diversity' but something else. If this is not diversity then we can not live together. To live together, these are some challenges.

Significant findings that emerged during the discussion that caste and class were significant dimensions of differentiation. This was evident in the fact that most of the learners mentioned their caste and class in the untitled boxes. All the girls of the class mentioned their gender in the same box, along with caste and class, while none of the boys mentioned his gender.

During the class activity, it was observed that a significant category of discrimination i.e., differently-

Activity 2

Rural Economy

In order to understand whether the everyday classroom transactions and pedagogy provide any scope to integrate the essentials of learning to live together with the concepts taught in the classroom. The following set of hypothetical problems were given to the class and their responses on the same were sought.

The students were divided in groups of four. They were given a reflective exercise where they were supposed to plan economic activities for farmers who had already sown their crops for the season and had finished all tasks related to farming. The students were told that until harvesting, the villagers were facing the problem of seasonal unemployment. While planning the activities, they were guided to keep the following points in mind—

- The task should generate monetary benefits for the farmers.
- All the villagers who are capable and willing to work should be included/ employed in these activities in some way or the other.
- Through these activities some social cause or purpose should also be served. Along with this, the task should provide scope for people to nurture and develop—care, brotherhood and cooperation among each of them.

abled was missing. Therefore they were given a case that if a person who is 'visually challenged' is admitted to their class, how would he/she feel? How would they behave with them? As soon as this case was put before them their quick response was 'what would he do in our school?'. This response showed that such mindset is a challenge for inclusion. Taking this statement as a vantage point, a further discussion was encouraged. At the end of the discussion, learners themselves started empathising with their imaginary classmate. This activity not only brought out their understanding about social diversity and discrimination but also reflected their stereotypes and prejudice.

The activity made them revisit their stereotype and reflect on their prejudice.

In Activity 2, the students were asked to present their individual ideas about the possible solutions and plan to the problems and suggested plan for farmers. Within the group, learners got the opportunity to not only present their ideas but also to debate whether the plans suggested were feasible and would generate optimum monetary returns. They tried to find the possible solutions to alleviate the problems of seasonal unemployment of farmers.

Students seemed keen and excited to work on the task as this activity provided them with the scope

to work in small groups. Further, they felt that the planning they were doing would be instrumental in providing employment to the unemployed villagers. They seemed to be driven by a sense of positive 'purpose' and saw themselves as thinking-contributing members of the society. They were also expected to present this to the entire class.

The solutions they shared clearly showed the clarity and insightfulness they had in understanding the problem. It is evident that the variety of suggestions and proposed economic activities thought out by the children were not restricted to the examples stated in their textbooks. This shows that while working in groups they go beyond the given information and put their ideas in a constructive way. During the observations, it was found that every group took time to arrive at a consensus. It is significant to note that none of the student showed a tendency to dominate the others while working in groups. Each one gave space to other members of the group to express their ideas. When one child shared his idea, everyone else in the group listened to the idea and commented on it and finally all the group members arrived at consensus regarding the most appropriate activity that they are going to present in the class. It was observed that while planning, they were also focusing on how their activity fulfilled the criteria of social cohesion ('love, goodwill and cooperation).

It is important to note that the children kept in mind the gender, the educational background and social status of people while allocating them work. It can be inferred from this tendency that for them these factors decide the occupational trajectory of an individual. While conducting the discussions it was further probed as to why only women should make toys? Or why only the rich people should finance? Or why only the educated villagers should manage finances and accounts? What are the implications of these for long term planning? This gave them a chance to come out of their comfort zones and think of a possible world that is free of biases and based on the principles of equality, fraternity and brotherhood.

It emerged during the discussion that learners knew that the Panchayat implements the government's plans, such as preparing and repairing roads etc. Along with it, Panchayat also deals with people's personal matters such as land and property disputes, division of property and so forth. The focus of vignette and course content was to provide them with an idea that the Panchayat works as a local government. During the process, the learners raised these significant aspects of Panchayat themselves, showing that they observe and are aware of what goes around them. They may not be direct participants in the process but are aware of these. Taking into account these points, they were asked to

Activity 3**Outline of Activity**

- At the beginning of the class, a case vignette (from the book) was given to the class and the learners were asked to read it.
- When they had read it, the following questions were posed to them to generate discussion—
 1. What are the major issues discussed in the Panchayat meeting?
 2. What could be the other issues that can be discussed in the Panchayat?
 3. How does Panchayat arrive at any decision?

These were only guiding questions for the discussion.

give some examples from their own lives where they had heard or seen any matter being addressed by the Panchayat. One student narrated his own experience to the class, which is as follows—

“Last year I went to my village. My uncle fought with my father and separated my family. My father went to the sarpanch and requested him to intervene and divide the property in a fair manner. Then they brought some of their other people along with them and fairly divided the property.”

When a learner was narrating the whole experience, he was not just describing a ‘case’ but also a personal life experience. This made the other learners in the class aware about the functioning and role of the Panchayat. Along with this, they were also able to understand the turmoil a family goes through when people fight and separate. The entire class also learnt as to how his family no more includes his cousins; they have become ‘other’ for him and his family. This process

of separation made his uncle’s family ‘other’ from his family.

It also emerged during the discussion that Panchayat takes decisions in consensus with all the members of the Panchayat and after listening to the arguments of both the sides. To elaborate it further and make the process of decision-making more explicit, they were asked to highlight/hypothesise how the process of decision-making would take place in a group? The learners came up with the following responses—

“Every person will express his/her view. While he/she is expressing his/her views, everyone else would listen to her. They may agree or disagree. In case of a disagreement, they will argue it out within the group. Gradually, this process will move further and the group will eventually arrive at a final decision, possibly which suits all or most. In this process everyone’s voice(s) will be heard. Each idea is important.

This whole decision making process looks at the welfare of the community as a whole. It is kept in mind that the decision should not harm anyone.

Through this process of reflection, the learners came up with very relevant ideas. They were also made aware of social cohesion and solidarity.

In the case vignette it was shown that all the villagers are present in the Panchayat meeting but during the classroom discussion many students argued as followed—

'But everyone does not go in the Panchayat meeting, only 'big shots' are called and only they discuss during the meetings.'

When probed as to whom do they consider 'influential'? One of the learners said:

L1: Those who have lots of money, land and belong to upper caste.

T: But according to Constitution everyone can participate in a Panchayat meeting.

L2: No Sir, only influential people attend Panchayat, I have seen it.

T: Ok tell me, who puts forth the views of the people who do not attend the Panchayat. ;

(This was followed by a silence in the class)

T: Don't you think that if we have been given a right, then we should go and put forward our point.

The discussion was carried forward by probing further. During the discussion an effort was made that students reflect on these issues critically.

In this activity, it emerged that learners are aware of what is going on in the society. They knew the gaps between what is 'actually' happening and what 'ought to' be happening. They were also open to revisit and challenge their existing notions and construct fresh notions that seemed more appropriate and progressive. It was hoped that in the light of their lived experiences and reality, they would be enabled to think in a positive and critical manner.

What also emerged through the classroom interaction was that the teachers can assume a key role in facilitating the goal of 'learning to live together'. Teachers' role is not only restricted to presenting the concepts but developing an understanding and the skills of critically reflecting on those concepts and connecting them with the real issues; providing space for meaningful engagement and dialogue on social issues. While discussing those concepts she should help students understand the realities of societies by discussing the 'difference' and 'diversity'; there is a possibility to make them responsive human beings who accept multiple perspectives and the people who are seen as 'others'.

DISCUSSION

It is very clear from the above analysis that in such teaching-learning processes, the whole pedagogic practice begins with learners' understanding of society; moves further with critical reflection by problem-posing and

providing space for reconstruction of prior assumptions, beliefs and ideas. Learner's engagement and ownership in classroom pedagogic processes, teachers modeling the culture of inquiry in classroom and importance of communication within the group can be easily seen as the crux of these activities. Rather than relying on teacher's unquestionable authority, students in such pedagogic settings propose and defend their own views. They also respond thoughtfully to views of others. This process leads them to be a member of the 'community of inquiry' (Goss 2004). The whole class benefits from 'sum of cognition' as when the class is divided into groups, a new social context is created, in which students get the opportunity to share individual cognition with their peers and arrive at conclusions based on the sum of those cognitions (Slavin, 1995). Multiple voices are heard within these pedagogic settings which properly address the interpersonal tension of learners. These interpersonal tensions are due to conflicting personal experiences and loyalties. They can be revealed and resolved only if multiple voices in the community are identified and heard

(Werthsch, 1998). A new participant structure emerges in the classroom where power and authority shift from teacher to the students. It has the potential to change the relationship between teacher and learner, between learner and learner and learner and subject matter studied (Wertsch, 1998). Students had developed ways of communicating, reasoning, and providing arguments to defend their ideas as they participate and contribute to the norms and practices of their learning communities. It was found that learners were able to see themselves as question 'posers', decision-makers and participants of democratic discussion where their views and ideas were heard. Evidently, teachers play an important role in clarifying and developing values conducive to 'learning to live together'. It is appropriate to conclude that generating a community of learners' engaged in discussing social issues is fundamental to social cohesiveness. The differences need to be highlighted in order to appreciate diversity. Crucial social issues need to be discussed in classroom rather than being brushed under the carpet. It is through conflict and discomfort that resolutions are arrived at.

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A Study of Stress Level among Adolescents in Government and Public Schools of Delhi

RANJANA BHATIA*, SANDHYA VIJ** AND DEEPTI MADHURA***

Abstract

Stress has been observed as the major cause of problem for all of us. This problem has also been observed in adolescents as a result of which, behavioural problems have been on an increase amongst them. The stress also affects adolescents in terms of their academic performance as it is a major cause of anxiety within this age group. The cause of stress can be attributed to the type of school, conditions at home, peer pressure and the mental state. In the following study it has been found that the major reasons for increase in stress level and subsequent increase in anxiety are examinations, leisure time activities, home environment vis-à-vis school environment, sleep pattern and even consumption of junk food. Gender also plays a significant role in the increased/decreased level of anxiety. A significant role can be played by the teachers to reduce the stress level in adolescents. Compassion, understanding, love, care and a strong bond between the teacher and the taught can play an important role in reducing the stress level among the adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is one of the most important aspects of an individual's personality on which one's productivity depends. An unhealthy, poorly balanced mind will not lead to achievement, happiness or efficiency. It

is generally agreed that it is the person with a healthy mind who is most productive. True happiness comes from within from our own mental attitude rather than from external conditions.

Mental health can be a cause of concern for all age groups, special

* Professor and Principal, Amity Institute of Education, M. Block, Saket, New Delhi-110 017

** Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, M. Block, Saket, New Delhi-110 017

*** Lecturer, Amity Institute of Education, M. Block, Saket, New Delhi-110 017

focus is being laid on the mental health of the adolescents, as the adolescents or the youth as we may call them, form nearly one fifth of the world's population (as per the report card prepared by UNICEF on Adolescents in 2012). The UNICEF in its work on adolescents or youth has categorically called this age as the age of opportunity. According to them, young people are resourceful and courageous. As adolescents flourish, so do their communities. All of us have a collective responsibility in ensuring that adolescence does in fact become an age of opportunity. (Adolescence and Youth, UNICEF).

The United Nations define adolescents as individuals between 10–19 years of age.

According to an online study on the Adolescent's mental health: An urgent challenge for investigation and investment – UNICEF, 2011, it is estimated that around 20 per cent of the world's adolescents have a mental health or behavioural problem.

Among the leading causes of mental health problems in adolescents, depression and suicide are the two most commonly found problems. Nearly 70,000 adolescents commit suicide every year around the globe. This figure of 70,000 takes an alarming proportion as almost 40 times more of this stated figure of adolescents makes an attempt to commit suicide. Most of the mental health problems have been reported between the age group of 14–24 years. There has been a disturbing

trend of an increase in the mental health problems of the adolescents due to various causes which include problems related to the sudden spurt in growth, lack of emotional support, guidance and peer influence etc.

There is a serious concern about the mental health of adolescents in our country as well. Adolescents, the future of our nation form around 30% of our total population. Serious behavioural or mental health difficulties have been found in a survey conducted by National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 2004. They have observed that on an average 1 in 10 adolescents falling in the age group of 12-17 years have serious problems related to behaviour and mental health. They have further observed that this trend of the mental health difficulties has been more in male adolescents as compared to the female adolescents.

The state having made a note of this problem launched an exclusive programme for adolescents titled 'YUVA' to look into the reasons/causes for various mental health problems and ways to overcome them by providing support and guidelines to the youth of the nation. The Department of Education and State Council of Education and Training, Govt. of NCT of Delhi has launched this programme YUVA.

Showing concern about the adolescents and their problems, Ms Rina Ray, I.A.S. Secretary, Department of Education, has aptly quoted the feelings of adolescents as:

Is Anyone Listening? Does Anyone Care?

Adolescence is being regarded as the period of stress and strain, storm and strike. This is the time when an individual undergoes tremendous changes both physically, emotionally and psychologically. A profound and abrupt change is clearly perceptible into the development of the child who is neither too young nor too old. This sudden growth and development in the child is the unique characteristic of adolescence, an age which requires lots of care, affection, guidance, proper monitoring and motivation. It is because of these changes that the child undergoes stress and strain.

A high priority has recently been placed on addressing the mental health needs of adolescents because of

- Difficulties causing distress and affecting adolescents' emotional development.
- Disruptive behaviour leading to exclusion from schools.
- Violence in schools and juvenile crime.
- Suicides and incidents of self-harm.
- Depression due to examination stress.
- Increase in the number of substance abuse cases.
- Adolescents subjected to abuse or neglect.

In the last few years there have been a number of teenage suicides where examination pressure has played a

part. Fear of failure and pressure to succeed is immense as adolescents don't want to let their parents, teachers and themselves down. They are pressurized from teachers who are themselves under lot of pressure to achieve impressive results. Increasing competition among peers forces these adolescents to strive for higher grades to enter various university courses. This mental stress among adolescents due to examination calls for immediate attention, preventive and remedial measures from the teachers, parents and the society as a whole.

NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT

Stress is a complex phenomenon. It is a very subjective experience. A challenge for one might give stress to another. It depends largely on the background experiences, temperament and environmental conditions. Stress is a part of life and is generated by constantly changing situations that a person must face. The term 'stress' refers to an internal state, which results from frustrating or unsatisfying conditions. A certain level of stress is unavoidable. Because of its complex nature, stress has been studied for many years by researchers in psychology, sociology and medicine. It is important because we want to understand how it affects the body, yet each person reacts and handles stresses differently. The

worse we handle stress, the more it affects the body.

In order to find out the stress level among students of govt. and public schools of Delhi, a study was conducted. The main aim of the study was to assist the adolescents of the subjective group to increase their awareness about the importance of mental health and hygiene with emphasis on ways of managing the stress.

The study is intended to provide a broad understanding of the mental hygiene and stress response. The focus is to implicate the importance and to maintain the balance of one's mental health and on providing a practical application of relaxation techniques. Perhaps the demands of their environments make them more resilient to the effects of stress. The findings of this study are unique and show that stress reaction is quite different in adolescents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Measure and compare the mental health of adolescents of government and public schools.
2. Determine the stress levels amongst the adolescent students.
3. Measure the examination stress among adolescent students.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There will be no significant difference between the mental health of government and public school students.
2. There will be no significant

difference in the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys.

3. There will be no significant difference in the stress levels of adolescents before and during examination.

SAMPLE

For the present study, the sample was drawn from government and public secondary schools of Delhi. A sample of 400 students between the age group of 11 to 16 years was drawn from government and public schools on the basis of gender.

PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

A total of eight schools (four each from government and public schools) were chosen to administer the standardised tools. From these identified schools, a total of 400 students were selected based on random stratified sampling on the basis of gender. After the selection of the sample, the tools were administered. The data collected was analysed to derive the outcomes.

TOOLS

1. Manual for Mental Health Battery by Prof. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta, 2010

This scale consists of six parts containing one hundred and thirty items, covering areas as follows—emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, security-insecurity, self concept and intelligence.

2. Manual for Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) of age 13 to 16 years by Dr. A.K. Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta, Department of Psychology, Patna University, 1984.

This test has been developed for the use of school students of class VIII, IX and X between the age group 13 to 16 years. This test consists of 20 items.

3. Indian Adaptation of Sarason's General Anxiety Scale for School-Going Children (GASC) by Dr. A. Kumar.

This anxiety scale consists of 45 items, related to varied life situations. These items contain an element of anticipation of dangerous and painful consequences.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

The following statistical techniques

were used to analyse the data obtained:

1. Central Tendency and Dispersion Measures like Mean and Standard Deviation
2. T-Test

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between the mental health of government and public school students.

The data was collected from eight schools (four each from government and public schools) and a test was administered on the sample. The test adopted to administer the mental health of the students was –

Manual for Mental Health Battery by Prof. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta, 2010

Table 1 shows the interpretation of the data collected from the schools:

Table 1

Dimensions	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	6.11	11.19
Variance	3.94	30.20
Observations	398	400
Pooled Variance	17.10	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	796	
t Stat	-17.35	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.78E-58	
t Critical one-tail	1.65	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.96E-57	
t Critical two-tail	1.962949*	

* Significant at the 0.5 level

It can be interpreted from the above table that the t-value is significant at the 0.5 level of significance and thus, it can be analyzed that there is significant difference between the mental health of the students studying in the government school and the students studying in the private schools. The mental health of the students studying in government school is more affected or is poorer as compared to the students studying in the private schools.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys.

The data was collected from eight schools (four each from government and public schools) and a test was administered on the sample. The tests adopted to administer the stress level among adolescent girls and boys were –

1. Manual for Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) of age 13 to 16 years by Dr. A.K.

Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta, Department of Psychology, Patna University, 1984

2. Indian Adaptation of Sarason's General Anxiety Scale for School Going Children (GASC) by Dr. A. Kumar.

The following Table 2 shows the interpretation of the data collected from the schools:

It can be interpreted from the table 2 that the t-value is significant at the 0.5 level of significance and thus, it can be analysed that there is significant difference between the stress levels among adolescent girls and boys. The stress level of boys is higher than the stress levels of the girls, irrespective of the schools they are studying in.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant difference in the stress levels of adolescents before and during examination.

An informal interview of the students was taken to collect more

Table 2

Dimensions	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	15.09	17.56
Variance	83.47	87.72
Observations	400	400
Pooled Variance	85.59	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	798	
t Stat	-3.77	
P(T<=t) one-tail	8.57511E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.64	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00017	
t Critical two-tail	1.96*	

*Significant at the 0.5 level

information regarding their feelings, anxiety and stress levels before and during examinations. The questions asked in the interview are as follows:

Questions for the Informal Interview Before The Examination

1	What is your name?
2	How old are you?
3	What is your stream of study?
4	Do you enjoy being at school?
5	Do you allocate time for leisure activities?
6	What do your parents want you to become?
7	Do you feel stressed during your exams?
8	You suffer from stress at home or at school?
9	How often do you have peaceful sleep?
10	What do you think is more stressful—preparation for exams, writing exams or waiting for results?
11	Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?
12	Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?
13	How often do you eat junk food?
14	Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?
15	Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?
16	Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations during exams?
17	Do you share your problems with your parents?

During the Examination

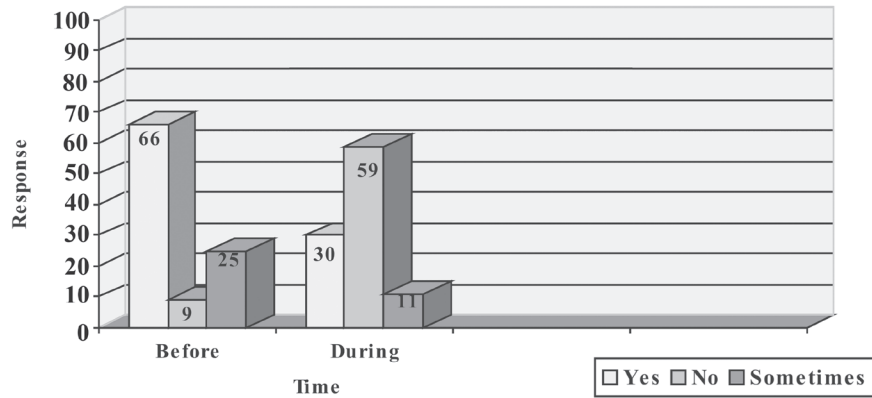
1	Do you enjoy being at school?
2	Do you allocate time for leisure activities?
3	What do your parents want you to become?
4	Do you feel stressed during your exams?
5	You suffer from stress at home or at school?
6	How often do you have peaceful sleep?
7	What do you think is more stressful – preparation of exams, writing exams or waiting for results?
8	Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?
9	Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?
10	How often do you eat junk food?

11	Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?
12	Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?
13	Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations during exams?
14	Do you share your problems with your parents?

The questions were further interpreted and analysed and the interpretation is as follows:

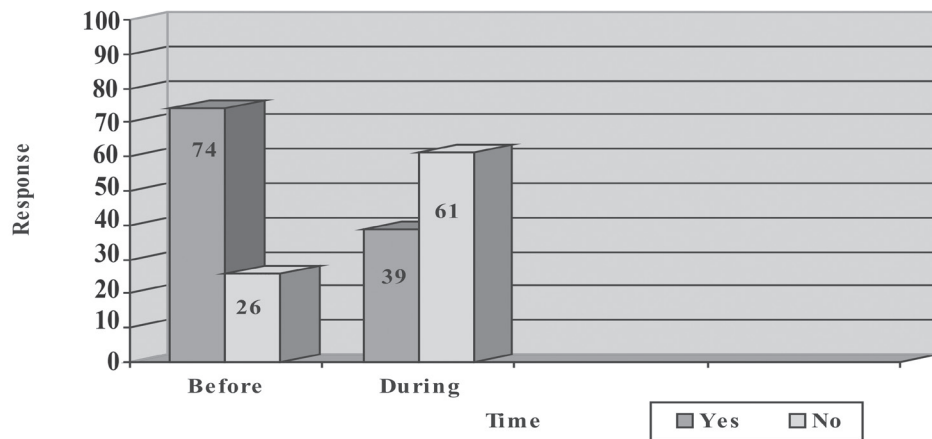
Before and During the Examinations

Q1. Do you enjoy being at school?



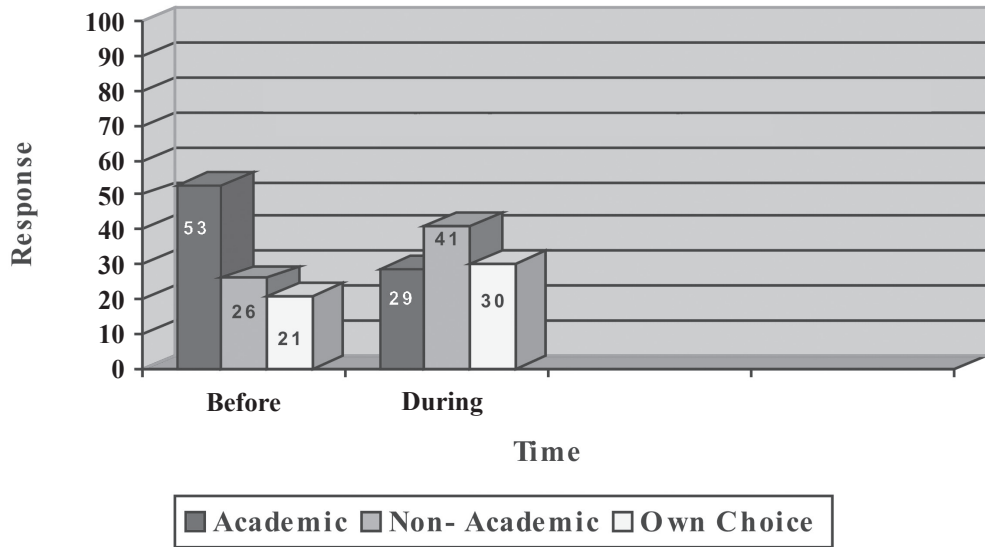
Graph 1: Graphical Representations of the Data

Q2. Do you allocate time for leisure activities?



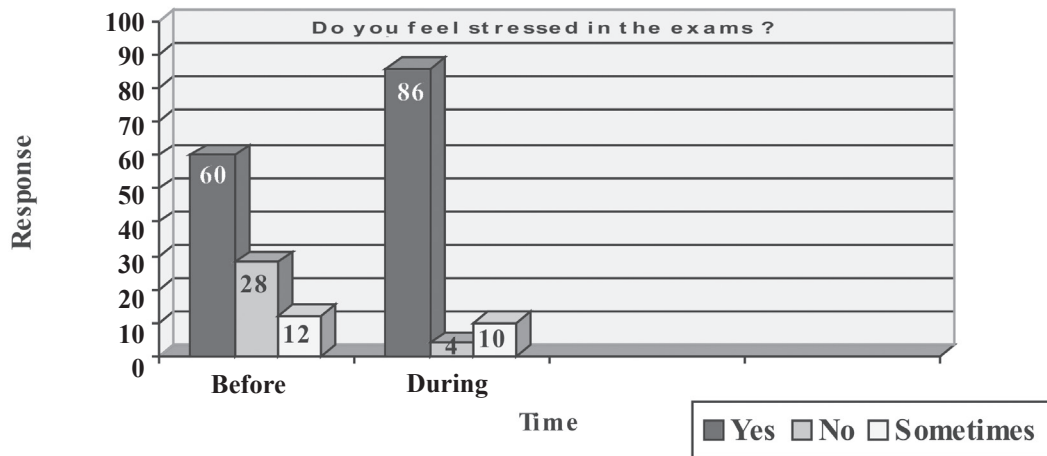
Graph 2: Graphical Representation of Data

Q.3 What do your parents want you to become?



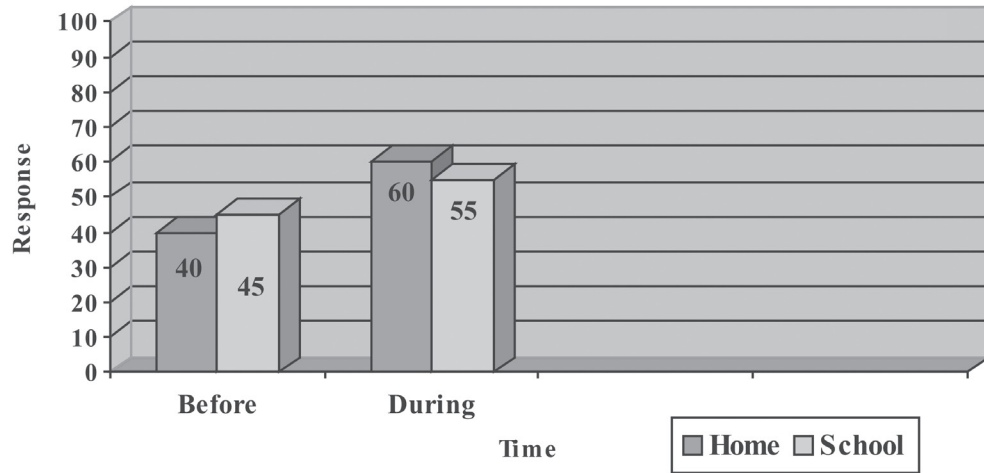
Graph 3: Graphical Representation of Data

Q4. Do you feel stressed before the exams?



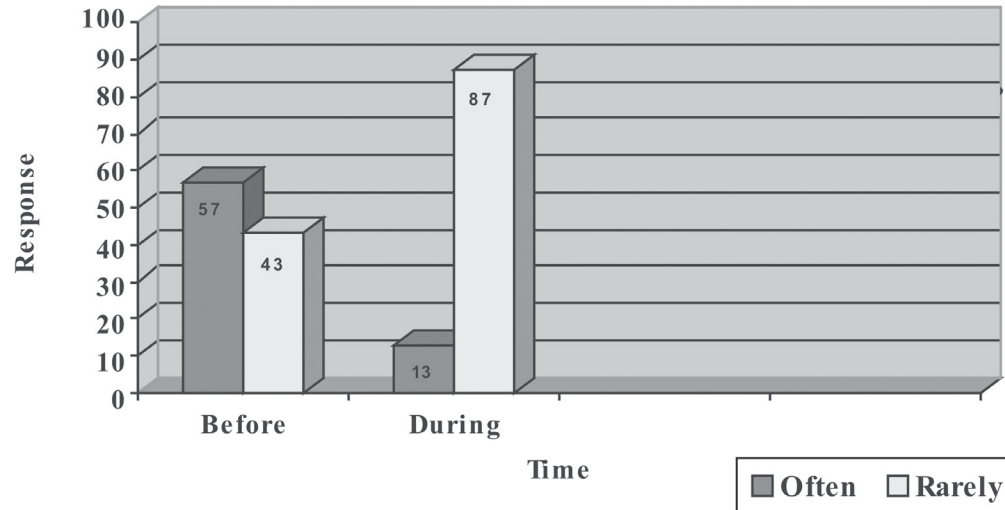
Graph 4: Graphical Representation of Data

Q5. At which place do you suffer more from stress—at home or at school?



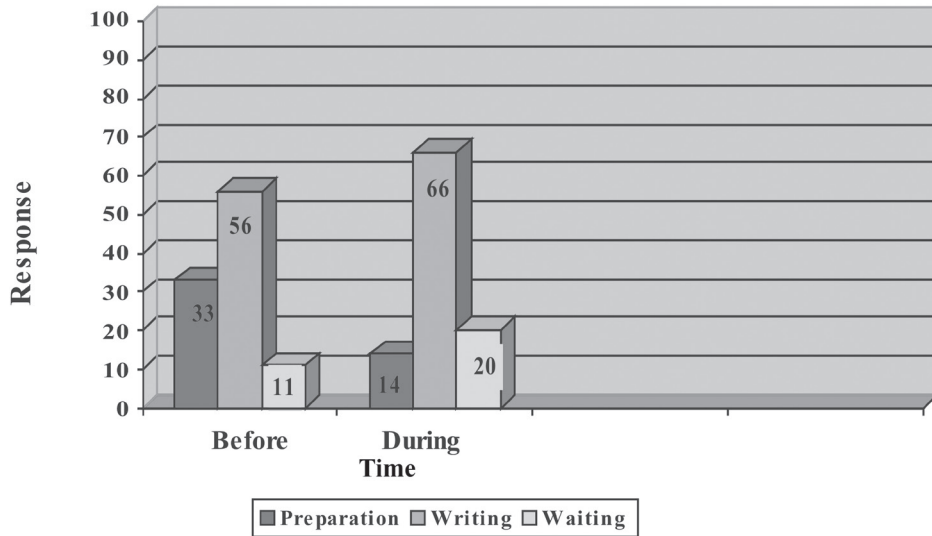
Graph 5: Graphical Representation of Data

Q6. How often do you get peaceful sleep?



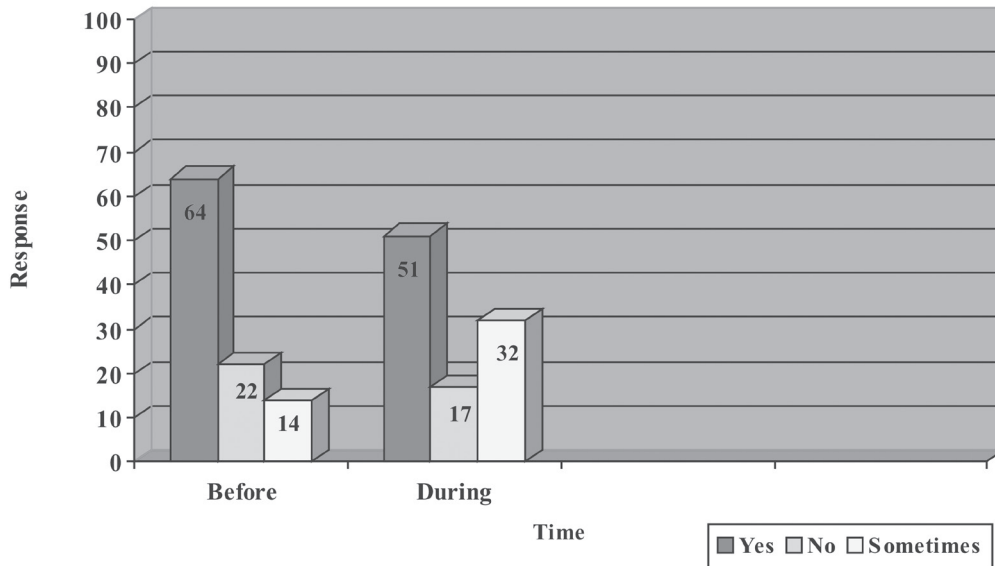
Graph 6: Graphical Representation of Data

Q7. What do you think is more stressful—preparation of exams, writing exams or waiting for results?



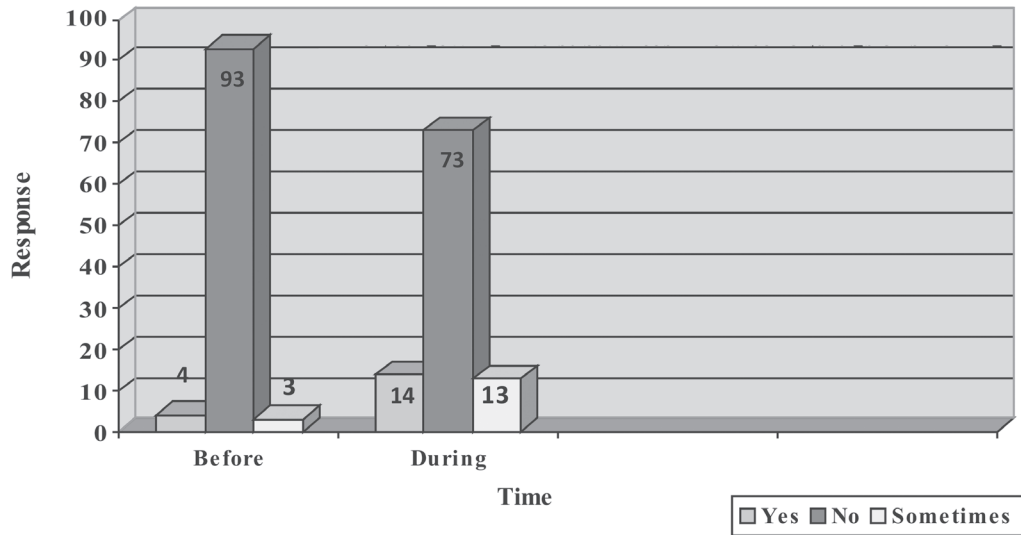
Graph 7: Graphical Representation of Data

Q8. Are your friends supportive and helpful during stressful times?



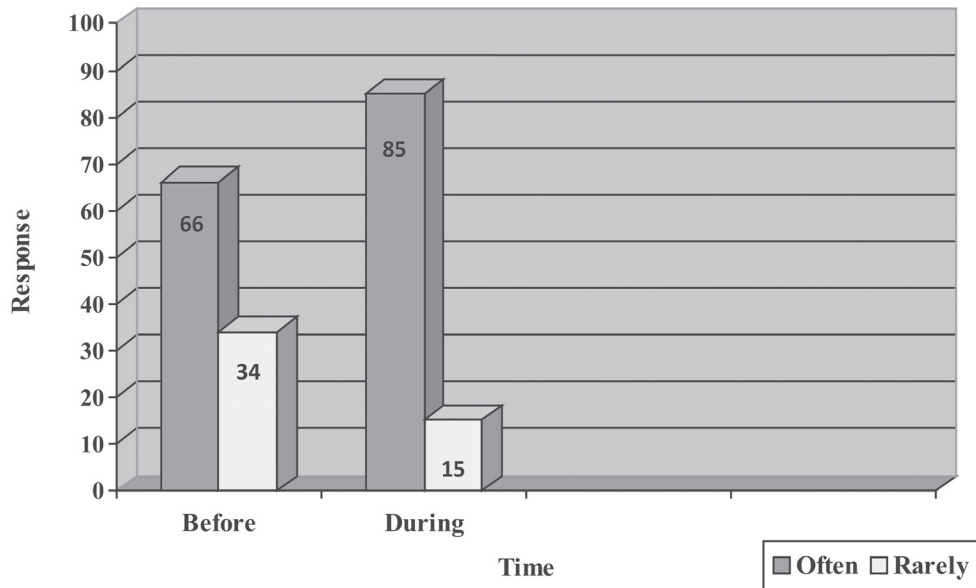
Graph 8: Graphical Representation of Data

Q9. Are you getting into substances like alcohol, drugs or smoking for mitigating stress?



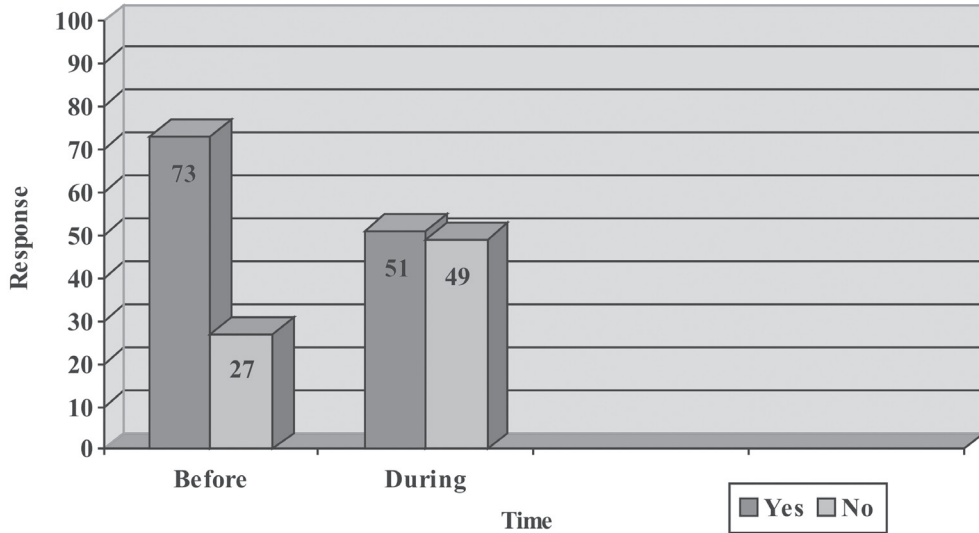
Graph 9: Graphical Representation of Data

Q10. How often do you eat junk food?



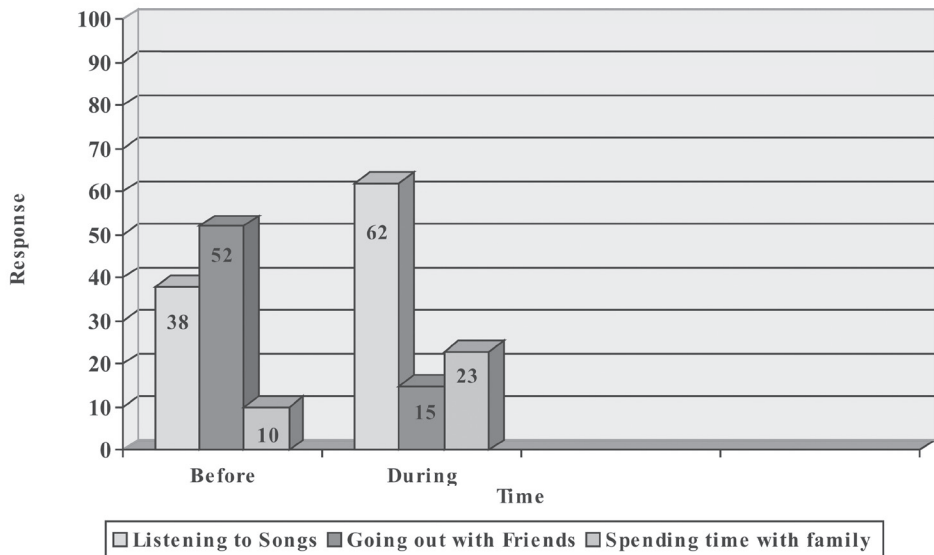
Graph 10: Graphical Representation of Data

Q11. Do you think the amount of syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate?



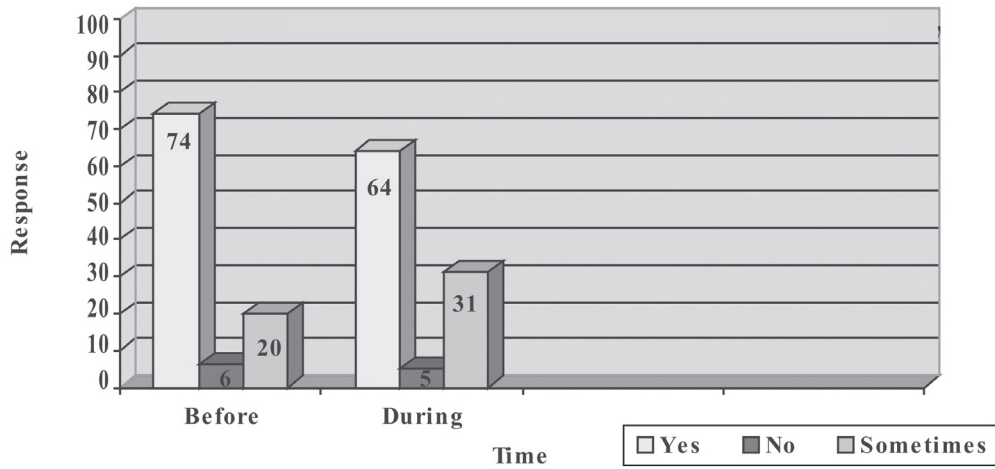
Graph 11: Graphical Representation of Data

Q12. Which of the following techniques do you follow to overcome stress—listening to songs, going out with friends, spending time with family and eating your favourite cuisine?



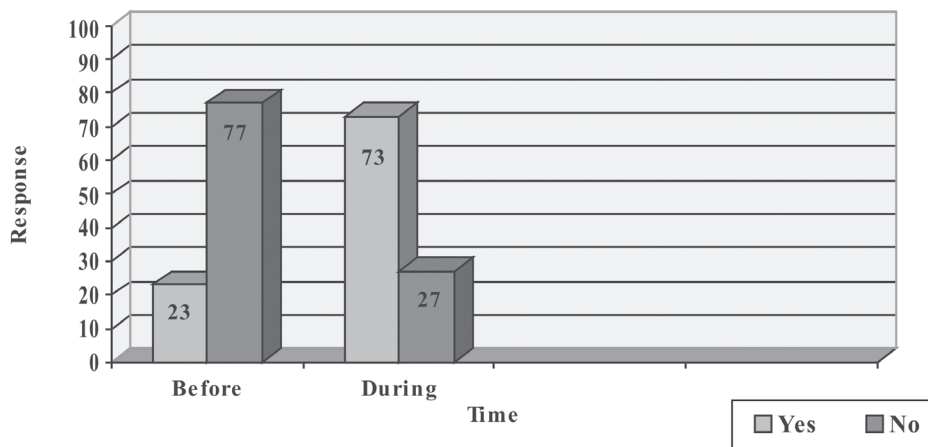
Graph 12: Graphical Representation of Data

Q13. Are you confident of coming out of stressful situations before exams?



Graph 13: Graphical Representation of Data

Q14. Do you share your problems with your parents?



Graph 14: Graphical Representation of Data

DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

On the basis of analysis of the above interview with the students of government and public schools, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the stress levels of the adolescents before and during the examinations. This was concluded from the following inferences:

- The percentage of the students that enjoyed being at school before the examination was 66% and during the examination, only 30% of the students enjoyed being at school because there was an increase in the stress level amongst the students.
- The percentage of the students that allocated time for leisure activities before the examination was 74% and during the examination, only 39% of the students allocated time for leisure activities because there was an increase in the stress level amongst the students.
- The percentage of the students that wanted to join an academic profession before the examination was 53% because of the pressure from their parents but during the examination, only 29% of the students were pressurized to join an academic profession, as the parents also understood the amount of stress the students took during the examination.
- There was an increase in the amount of stress taken by the students, before and during the examination. The percentage of the students that took stress before the examination was 60% and during the examination it was increased to 86%. Hence there was an increase by 26% in the number of students that took stress during the examination.
- The percentage of the students who feel stressed at home before the examination was 40% and during the examination, 60% of the students feel stressed at home because of the pressure from their parents. Similarly, students who feel stressed at school before the examination was 45% and during the examination, it was 55%.
- The percentage of the students who get peaceful sleep before the examination was 57% and during the examination only 13% of the students get peaceful sleep because there was an increase in the stress level and hence they could not get peaceful sleep.
- The percentage of the students who get stressed before writing the examination was 56% and during the examination, 66% of the students get stressed while writing their examination.
- The percentage of the students who get support from their friends before the examination was 64% and during the examination, 51% of the students get support from their friends.
- There was an increase in the number of students who

get involved in the intake of substances like alcohol, drugs and smoking before and after the examination. Before the examination it was 4% and during the examination it was 14%. This increase was due to the increase in the stress level amongst the students.

- There was an increase in the intake of junk food during the examination. The percentage of students who take junk food before the examination was 66% and during the examinations it was increased to 85%. This increase was due to an increase in the stress level. The students stated that whenever they get stressed during the exams, the food helps in relieving the stress.
- The students felt before the examination, the amount of that syllabus to be studied for exams is appropriate but there is a relative decrease in this point of view during the examination. The percentage of students decreases from 73% to 51%. The students feel stressed with the amount of syllabus that they have to cover for the examination.
- The students choose different techniques to overcome stress—before and during the examination. There is a difference in the percentage of their choice for the techniques employed to overcome stress, before and during the examination. Before the examination, 38% of the

students overcame stress by listening to songs but during the examination the percentage is increased to 62%. Similarly, before the examination, 52% of the students overcame stress by going out with friends but during the examination, this number is reduced to 15% due to lack of support from the friends. Lastly, 10% of students overcame stress before the examination by spending time with parents and during the examination, they depend upon the parents more for their support, so as to overcome stress.

- The percentage of the students who were confident to overcome stress before the examination was 74% but this percentage was decreased to 64% when the students had to try to overcome stress during the examination.
- Before the examination, only 23% of students shared the problems with their parents but during the examination, due to an increase in the stress level, this number got increased and 73% of the students shared their problems with the parents.

CONCLUSION

- (a) The mental health of the adolescents studying in private schools has been found to be significantly better than the adolescents studying in the government schools.
- (b) The score with respect to the

stress level in boys has been observed to be significantly higher than the stress level in the girls, irrespective of the schools they are studying in.

- (c) It was observed from the findings of the study that a larger number of adolescents enjoyed being at school before the examinations as compared to the time when the examinations are in progress.
- (d) The findings of the study indicate that adolescents devote more time for leisure activities before the examinations but the leisure activities take a back seat from their schedule during the examinations.
- (e) A significantly higher number of adolescents expressed a desire to join an academic profession before the examination. This number was comparatively less during the examination as indicated by the findings of the study.
- (f) It has been brought out by the findings of the study that the stress taken by the adolescents during the examination was found to be significantly higher as compared to the stress taken by adolescents before the examination.
- (g) An increase in the stress level of adolescents staying at home during the examination has been observed by the findings of the study. The stress level of the adolescents was however, found to be less at home before the examination.
- (h) The number of adolescents who get peaceful sleep before the examination was found to be significantly higher, vis-a-vis the number of adolescents who get peaceful sleep during the examination
 - (i) The findings of the study have indicated that the stress level of adolescents increases while writing the examination whereas before the examination it is significantly low.
 - (j) It has been brought out by the study that the adolescents when in stress, by and large, do get help from their friends before as well as during the examinations.
 - (k) The findings of the study revealed that the intake of substance abuse by the adolescents increases significantly during the examinations to overcome stress. Before the examination, the intake of substance abuse is comparatively less.
 - (l) It was observed through the findings of the study that the consumption of junk food is significantly higher in adolescents during the examinations as compared to other times, indicating the increase in stress level which they presumably combat by food that helps them to overcome the anxiety during the examinations.
 - (m) As far as the perception of adolescents with regard to the appropriate nature of the syllabus during the examination

is concerned, there was not much difference as observed by the findings. By and large, the adolescents under study found the syllabus appropriate before and during the examinations.

- (n) Out of the options given for relieving stress before and during the examinations, the study reveals that majority of the adolescents find listening to music as a great stress buster.
- (o) The number of adolescents who were confident to overcome stress before the examination was found to be significantly higher than the number of adolescents who were not confident to cope with stress during the examination.
- (p) The number of adolescents who shared their problems with their parents during the examination was found to be significantly

higher than the number of adolescents who shared their problems with the parents before the examination.

It is apparent from these findings that stress plays havoc on the body and mind of all individuals including adolescents. All efforts must be made by teachers, parents and schools to adopt measures to minimize stress level of adolescents. Encouraging them to speak, share their problems and conflicts will help in reducing their stress levels. Persuading them to channelise their energies in outdoor activities like sports and games can be great stress busters. Yoga has also been found to be a great stress reliever and a stress buster. It contributes effectively in calming the mind which in turn helps in reducing the stress and subsequently improving the learning capabilities.

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What Every Teacher should Know to Reduce Examination Stress

Some Intervention Strategies

VEER PAL SINGH*

Abstract

This paper is intended to explore the intervention strategies which can be carried out at school for reducing the examination stress among school students. The gravity of this issue of examination stress reduction has been addressed in the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 which has suggested various reforms in the examination system like enhancement of time for answering the question paper, examination of shorter duration, making class X public examination optional, reporting of students' performance in terms of grades, flexibility in opting the subjects of choice for study and examinations, on-demand examination, introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) etc. Consequently, Boards of School Education have initiated various reforms to address this issue. But the role of school and teachers' can not be ignored as the child spends about six to eight hours every day in school. It is the highest duration next to the time spent at home by the child. Therefore, the interventional strategies like creating congenial physical environment at school, cognitive and academic assistance, social-emotional support and stress busting mechanisms at school are suggested. Each strategy is discussed in the light of teachers' and students' roles in a number of situations which may arise in a child's school life.

INTRODUCTION

It is an accepted fact that the success of an individual can be predicted on the basis of his/her performance. The performance is valued through examinations. Therefore,

examination becomes a powerful instrument of certifying the quality or potential of an individual, which is why, at school stage the worth of a student is considered on the basis of getting admission in desirable

* Associate Professor, Educational Survey Division, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi 110 016.

courses having employment potential. But due to limited employment opportunities and less number of lucrative jobs, competition has enhanced up to undesirable extent resulting into stressful situation globally. India is no exception rather has its insurmountable problems.

In Indian context, the examination system has been considered as a bane since independence due to its numerous shortcomings. Recently, a new dimension has been added to it, which is related to stress. Stress has compounded the problems stirring whole socio-political system of the country. In fact it has become such a menace for the students that some of them appearing in the Board examination have been resorting to extreme steps like suicides. This is happening through a vicious cycle of anxiety-stress-depression. Further, it has been observed that students appearing in public and competitive examinations feel more stressed as compared to internal school examinations. Besides, the expectations of school, teachers, parents, family members and the self, are having a multiplying effect on it. Addressing this issue, National Curriculum Framework-2005 has categorically mentioned that there is a need to reduce stress, make examination non-threatening and enhance the success rate in the examination especially in public examinations. Hence, it has been considered as one of the major focal points of examination reform.

Further, suicides are taking place during or after the examination or during or after the declaration of Board/school results which have attracted the attention of the society as a whole. Not only this, it has gone to the extent that the government is forced to address this issue and plans to take necessary measures to wipe it out recently. MHRD convened a meeting of educational experts from NCERT, CBSE, IITs, IIMs and NGOs. They unanimously agreed that the present functioning of School Education Boards and their role in conducting examinations is untenable and need to be replaced with a system considered friendly for students. They further emphasised that something needs to be done to lessen the huge load of examination stress on students but without lowering the quality of education. Hence, role of examination Boards, educational institutions, principals, teachers, parents and social workers becomes important not only in explaining the stress but also in finding out certain intervention strategies to reduce it. In this paper, various interventional strategies are discussed which can be undertaken at school by the teacher or the school principal.

STRESS: ITS MEANING

In general, stress is perceived as 'the body's response to anything we perceive as dangerous, demanding or demoralising'. According to Selye (1977) stress may be considered 'as

a generalised response of body to demands placed on it, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant'. However, there are different viewpoints with respect to stress. Some defines it in terms of external demands or stimuli i.e. the thing present in environment causing stress while others take stress as a person's reaction or response to such external things or stimuli. On the other hand, a third definition brings both aspects of stimuli and response together. Thus, three types of definitions are prevalent in the academic field.

The stimulus definition clarifies that the stress is inherent in stimuli. Those who accept this definition, stimuli are the stressors. It is just like defining stress in Physics. Stress is defined in Physics as subjecting an object by exerting pressure from external forces. Psychologically, it is also thought that if a lot of pressure is put on an individual, it will strain him/her immensely and cause stress.

The second definition is response definition, which emphasises psychological and physiological responses to the environmental situations. Selye was of the opinion that a body's reaction to stressors is a complex one and that it involves a cluster of responses (Landy 1987). The third definition of stress is considered as an interactional definition. This explains that stress is neither stimuli-specific nor response to stimuli-specific. It is rather an outcome of an interaction of the

two factors such as the perception of events and internal changes in body and psyche. This definition lays emphasis on both external and internal variables.

EXAMINATION STRESS: ITS GENESIS

In the school system, the examination emerges as one of the major stressors for students, particularly for those students appearing for the Board exams. Examination, by and large, is perceived by students as dangerous and demanding. It appears as a challenging stimulus to create stress. Generally, the examination stress occurs at three stages viz. school-examination/pre-board examination, public examination conducted by the education Boards and entrance examinations for admission to professional courses conducted by IITs, Engineering and Medical Colleges etc. These examinations cause anxiety which leads to stress. Further, it is coupled with the pressure from the parents, peers and the society which creates stress and exam-fever.

Moreover, nowadays high profile performance of the student is an indicator of status for the family and instrument of enhancing reputation of the school as well. This is revealed through the fact that the public schools have intense competition; therefore, they subject even the academically weak students for test after test so that they will do well in pre-board and Board exams and do not spoil the name of the school. Not

only this, even some of the schools decide about the admissions for class XI on the basis of the result of pre-board examinations. In these circumstances, parents also try to put more pressure on students to achieve the highest percentage in pre-board examinations for taking admission in the same school. Moreover, parents also make them feel that lot of money has been spent on their studies by way of school expenses combined with expenditure on coaching. Therefore the student is under constant pressure to the extent that she develops a sense of guilt in her and tries to cope up with the situation. Consequently, a feeling is developed that if he/she fails in exams it is the end of life for him/her. In addition to this, pupils coming from affluent families have never heard 'no' for anything they demanded, therefore, they are not prepared at all to accept any kind of failure in any field of life. It shows that how demanding the examination becomes for them.

Further, there are other situations as well. For example, sometimes parents do not try to estimate the child's capabilities before setting their goals. The education system also does not prepare the students well to face the situations in which they are placed. The relating situation—either how to write in examinations and score good marks or how to cope up with stress of work load, time management etc.—are also not taken care of properly in schools.

Undue emphasis is laid, only on achievement in scholastic areas rather than co-scholastic aspects of their growth and development which are almost neglected. As a result they do not learn the values like tolerance, discipline, cooperation, emotional stability, diligence etc., which are helpful in performing well in the examination as well as coping with stress.

Another important dimension of the whole problem is the crucial age of the students. These students are undergoing the age of adolescence. The characteristic of this age is reflected in their energetic, semi-mature and ambitious behaviour. However, as far as their self-esteem is concerned, they get easily hurt even with a slight or trivial matter because they feel that they have matured. Therefore thinking of failure in their pursuit makes them more anxious as compared to the small children studying at primary stage or adults studying in universities. As far as these adolescents are concerned, they perceive examination as a challenge which adds to their miseries.

EXAMINATION STRESS: ITS NATURE

Due to the interchangeable use of the terms 'stress' and 'anxiety' in researches on stress, a confusion is there. In order to remove the confusion, Spielberger's (1979), Lazarus's (1966) analysis made it clear that stress is a complex psychological process. The word 'stressor' explains situations or stimuli

that are objectively characterised by some degree of physical or psychological danger while 'threat' refers to the individual's perception or appraisal of that situation or stimulus as potentially dangerous or harmful. An individual who sees a stressful situation as threatening, will experience an anxiety-reaction. In case of subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry, and heightened activity of the autonomic nervous system, an individual will show emotional reaction which is known as 'state anxiety'. The overall process is indicative of the stress.

The theoretical distinction between stress, threat and anxiety is now increasingly recognised in research on anxiety. Keeping in view this convention, 'examination stress' may be defined 'in terms of objective stimulus properties of the test situations' and the concept of test anxiety in terms of 'individual differences in anxiety proneness in examination situations' (Spielberger, (Spielberger *et.al.* 1978) Gonzalez, Taylor, Algase, and Anton, 1978). After a review and evaluation of the major theories of test anxiety, Spielberger et al. (1978) concluded that most test anxiety theorists seem to agree that test-anxious people are more likely: (a) to perceive examination situation as more dangerous or threatening than do people who are low in test anxiety, and (b) to experience worry cognitions and intense elevations in state anxiety in situations in which

they are evaluated. Test anxiety, thus can be seen as a reaction-bound stress phenomenon on one hand, and a situation-bound stress reaction on the other. This reaction is evoked when a student's intellectual, motivational and social capabilities are taxed or exceeded by demands stemming from the individual himself, or from the school environment (Rost and Schermer, 1989). As such, examination stress and test anxiety are two related but non-identical variables.

Further, exam stress refers to the emotional reactions that some students have towards exams (Mc Donald, 2001). The fear of exam is not an irrational fear—after all, how you perform in exams will shape the course of your academic career. However, excessive fear of exams may interfere with the student's ability to be successful in the examination (Musch and Broder 1999). In view of Lay and Schouwenburg (1993), exam stress has three components, viz., physical, cognitional and emotional. The cognitive component is the mental activity that revolves around the testing situation and its potential implications on the individual and constituent elements, such as, thinking about consequences of failure, worrying a great deal about examinations, and lack of confidence in one's ability. The emotionality component is the physiological component of test anxiety leading to tension, apprehension, and nervousness towards examinations

while the physical component involves typical bodily reactions to anxiety such as a knot in the stomach, palpitation, nausea, and perspiration. Demographic variables, such as, age, gender, ethnicity, and study habits also affect test anxiety levels. Perceived course load could be one of the factors leading to test anxiety. Moreover, students' perceptions of the teaching and the learning environment, such as, assessment methods, relevance of the course, and their course load also influence students' approaches to learning (Weerakon 2005).

Finally, it may be concluded that examination stress denotes the conditions that arouse anxiety or fear. Anxiety can be defined as an emotion characterised by feelings of anticipated danger, tension and distress and by tendencies to avoid or escape. As per Morris, Davis and Hutchings (1981) anxiety is no more a unitary concept. It has two components Worry (W) and Emotionality (E). Worry is described primarily as a cognitive concern about one's performance, about consequences of failure, or about poor evaluation in comparison to others. Emotionality refers to self-perceived arousal or autonomic reactions (e.g. muscular tension, sweaty palms) evoked by stress. Here, examination stress is considered as the mental state of worry, concern and uncertainty due to encountering of testing situations (oral or written) which act as a constant source of uneasiness for the individual.

RESEARCHES: AN OVERVIEW

Researches reveal that most of the work is done on test anxiety or examination anxiety or academic stress rather than examination stress. Beck (1976) states that appraisal of an event effects the performance of a person. If a student is highly anxious about result or his annual exam, he/she may appraise his future performance negatively and the negative appraisal induces anxiety which in turn creates other problems. Physiologically, body's immune system functions less well under stress (Stone et al. 1987) and level of Secretary Immunoglobulin A (IgA) drops during final examinations and returns to normal when exams are over (Jemmot and Maglorie: 1988). Monroe and Simons (1991) made an observation that people experience stress in wider ways. Some individuals experience modest increases in physiological arousal while others may exhibit significant physical symptoms. In extreme cases, people become so aroused, anxious and disorganised, that their behaviour becomes maladaptive or maladjusted. Maes, Van der Plankin, Van Gastel. et al. (1998) in their physiological studies found that stress (from any source) can influence on the endocrine, hernopoietic and immune systems while Fayaz Qureshi et.al (2002) observed that stress can alter the blood cells parameters in healthy individuals. They tried to determine whether exams in medical schools

are stressful enough to produce such changes. A randomised selection of female students from Women Medical School, Abbottabad, Pakistan was carried out. It was concluded that examinations in medical schools are stressful enough to produce changes in blood cells (neutrophils and platelets increased while eosinophils, monocytes, basophils and lymphocytes decreased).

Test frequency wise, Koul and Bhadwal (1989) found that if the learner is subjected to frequent testing situations, as in the case of unit testing, it may help in decreasing the level of test anxiety in him. Sharma and Sud (1990) drew samples from four Asian cultures and found that the female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males, irrespective of their cultural background. The generalisation made from these findings was that—a major causal factor involved in the gender-related differences in test anxiety among students was—a 'greater role expectation conflict' among females than among males.

Campbell and Severson (1992) observed that there are different factors which contribute to the development of high level of stress among school, college and university students. These stressors include—self-concept, unrealistic expectation, inappropriate time management skills, financial pressures, social pressures and academic pressures at predictable times in each academic year. When stress is perceived

negatively or becomes excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance. Extensive course-load and comprehensive information in academic curricula, necessitates use of proper time management and effective study-strategies. Time management can be defined as a cluster of behavioural skills that are important in the organisation of study and course load (Lay and Schouwenburg 1993). Hence, one of the aspects of time management is to develop effective study habits that essentially help in managing the study-load. Time management skills typically include—planning in advance, prioritising the work, and adhering to the pre-set schedules. Students' perceptions of their learning environment are important determinants of the quality of their learning outcomes. The course load may also affect the manner in which students learn and can be useful in the design and evaluation of curricula (Walker and Siebert 1990).

Singh (2005) in his article 'Managing Examination Stress to attain success' dealt with the concept of stress, stressors, and remedies to reduce stress; and stressed the need to carry out empirical studies to address this issue in a more intensive way. While Ahmad and Bano (2008) in their study on 'Academic Stress among Post-Graduate Students Before and After Announcement of Result' concluded that examination result causes stress among students. In another

study, Singh et al. (2008) identified nine factors of examination stress on the basis of factorial analysis. These were: (1) Psychological factors which include—nervousness, tension, feelings of minds' unfunctioning, poor concentration, fear psychosis for marks/division, pass/fail and wrong responses, poor expression of ideas, worry about consequences of failing, pre-occupation of mind with examination, experience of shortage of time, occurrence of silly mistakes etc.; (2) Unrealistic expectations related to self and comparison for marks and exam preparation with friends/classmates, parental expectations for marks/performance and comparison with others, pressure for getting admission in a good school or course, occurrence of expected questions in the question paper, ridiculed by the friends/classmates for poor performance etc.; (3) Socio-economic conditions of the family, including financial constraints for getting the required guidance, poor economic conditions of the family, inadequate family income for getting desired facilities etc.; (4) Inappropriate time management skills; (5) Unsupportive school and home conditions including improper distribution of time for different chapters or units by the teachers, lack of guidance for examination—preparation by the teacher, irregularity in studies due to organisation of co-curricular activities in the school close to the examination, and disturbance in and around the home leading to disruption

of preparation for examinations; (6) Physiological factors like sweating, dryness of throat, shortness of breath and experiencing of headache while taking examination; (7) Behavioural factors like feeling of discomfort just before getting the question paper, trembling of hands and/or legs, frequent urge to urinate and upsetting of stomach; (8) Physical conditions in and around examination hall like inadequate ventilation and lighting in the examination hall, noise in an around the examination hall and least physical space between the invigilator and examinees; and (9) Diverse concentration on the tasks like answering the questions, performing the experiments/activities etc. in an examination-setting.

Literature reviewed so far shows that most of the researches are related to test anxiety and examination stress, explaining the occurrence and causes of stress. However, there is scarcity of researches suggesting 'coping or interventional strategies' to come out from the stressed situations, particularly the examination stress in Indian context. Hence, a need was felt to suggest effective interventional strategies at school level to cope with the examination stress.

INTERVENTIONAL STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH EXAMINATION STRESS

Existing system of school education, including the declaration of examination results, particularly the public examinations, exerts

pressure on students to excel in the examination. It might be due to parental and school expectations; apart from the environment at home and school. In reducing the pressure of examinations, the school can play a crucial role because the child spends more than six hours per day in the school. Therefore, it becomes necessary to look into the environment of school complex where some help or intervention can be provided to students to reduce their pressure of examinations. Hence, keeping in view, the major contribution of school environment, some interventional strategies are suggested as under:

I. CREATING CONGENIAL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT SCHOOL

Environment of a school plays an important role in stress reduction of the child. Hence, the school administrator should take care of the school environment by putting efforts to improve the physical, social, academic and organisational facilities in the school. Some of the suggestions for making school environment congenial are as under:

(a) Making the colour of classrooms in the school pleasant.

Every colour has a psychological and an emotional impact on the individual. The colour reflects the personality, emotions and moods of an individual. Light green is considered the most restful colour for the eyes and has

a calming effect. Blue colour gives calm and positive effect. White is associated with cool and cleanliness because it is the colour of snow. The red colour gives a sophisticated look to a monochromatic colour scheme while off-white is the most suited colour for a classroom. Hence, the colouration of the classroom has an impact on individual's personality and behaviour.

(b) Making the classrooms adequately lighted up with proper ventilation.

Classrooms should be adequately lighted up because a dark room creates some visual difficulties in students. The head of the institution should make sure that the school and classrooms have proper ventilation because clean and fresh air is much needed for proper working of the brain. The provision of natural lighting and ventilation keeps the children and staff healthy and vibrant.

(c) Managing proper sanitary condition in the school.

It is the duty of school management to take care about the sanitary condition in the school. They should ensure that the sweepers are doing their duties wisely; because if the school sanitary conditions are not hygienic, then not only the students but also the staff would be prone to infection easily. Cleanliness of the school indirectly affects both health and academic performance of the students.

(d) Pasting encouraging posters on the wall of school and classroom.

Some encouraging slogans may be crafted in the classroom to create positive effect among the students. Motivational posters encourage students to fight against the tough times and to go ahead in life. It not only boosts the morale of the students and teachers, but also helps in changing their attitude in a positive way. Hence, the efforts should be made to break the monotonous outlook of the walls, pillars, corridors and stairways. Students'-made posters have more impact in enhancing the beauty of the surrounding walls of the school. Sticking or hanging motivational posters on the walls of classroom or school may be inspiring and filled with positive vibes, that in turn will make children motivated to do their best for getting better results.

(e) Motivating students to establish eco-clubs for the betterment of the environment.

To have a soothing effect, schools should encourage the students to take part in activities like *Van Mahotsav*, preparation of flowering beds etc. by providing facilities in the school premises. In recent years, global warming effects can be seen, in terms of, melting of glaciers which unexpectedly is affecting the whole world's weather conditions and creating many problems like land

slide, drought, flood, volcano eruption etc. In school, it is important to make the students environmentally aware. For that eco-clubs may be established in the school where participation of every student should be ensured.

(f) Organising get-together activities in school by involving students.

Schools should organise some get-together activities on different occasions like teacher's day, children's day, school foundation day etc. In such activities, even senior students and alumni may be invited to share their experiences and views. These activities not only enhance the interaction among the students but also help in clarifying their doubts related to academic and non-academic problems, career choices, etc.

(g) Provision of encouraging books, magazines, articles etc. in school library or reading room.

School library or reading room exists to provide a range of learning opportunities to students with a focus on intellectual content, information and literacy, where they could get more information regarding their academics problems, examination, career guidance etc. Now, digital libraries are being established, through which one can search the information about books, journals, magazines, articles etc. online. Moreover, online public access

catalogs have replaced the traditional cards catalogs and provide an index and listing. If school provides more facilities like e-learning, then students will take more interest in studies.

(h) Organising the lecture series to develop self-confidence and morality among students.

A number of lectures may be organised by the school from time to time. These lectures may be delivered by teachers, principal and invited scholars to share their learning experiences and the way they tackled difficulties in their life. This would encourage the students to face the problems boldly and to find out amicable solutions in different situations of life. It will broaden the horizon of students to meet out various demands in life and would be helpful in developing self-confidence among the students.

II. COGNITIVE AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Cognitive and academic supports play a crucial role in reduction of stress of the children. It can be provided in terms of the following:

(a) Management of stress by the teacher in the class and school.

Future of all students is indirectly dependent on teaching skills and cooperative behavior of the teacher. Teacher can provide timely suggestions to students about

learning strategies, time management and solving their problems. A good teacher not only completes syllabus as per academic schedule but also adjusts time for revision of each and every aspect of subject individually. Further, she moulds the students to develop their skills or improvise them; and teaches good habits/attitudes which help them to become good citizens of the nation. There are many students who feel shy and may have some personal problems. It becomes quite important for teacher to attend these students personally and encourage them to overcome their problems. Moreover, monotonous subject(s) can be made interesting by the motivated teacher. She/he can overcome all these issues by keeping himself updated with new concepts, teaching methodologies, and technological advancements.

(b) Developing the study-habit among students from the very beginning of the course.

Teacher can provide timely suggestions to students about learning strategies and timetable for studies. It will help them to learn how to focus on studies with respect to time. Further, weak areas may be pinpointed by the subject teacher to the students so that they know where they need to put more efforts to get success. It is better on the part of the teacher to encourage students to prepare for exams daily because it will save time in exam days and be helpful in reducing the pressure of

study during examinations.

(c) Remembering all deadlines and test dates.

Even in senior classes, the school can provide annual activities calendar and daily diary to each and every student of school. It will help them to remember all important events and dates of tests which will be organised by the school. The teacher should motivate the students to write a daily diary which will reflect the work done by them and improvement made by them over the period of time.

(d) Freedom to ask teacher about all queries regarding examination or syllabus.

Students should feel freeness to ask the teacher as many questions as they wish like—what types of questions will come in an exam? How many questions will be in the question paper? What would be the options in the question paper? etc. They need not hesitate in clarifying any query related to examination or syllabus, even their personal problem, if any. On the other hand, teachers may guide students on how to divide the time in proportion to the questions asked in the question paper, what should be the criteria for time allotment to each question? How nature of a question affects the time distribution? etc. This sort of exercise will nurture the skill of time management in students while answering the different types

of questions asked in the question paper.

(e) Making use of visual representation and preferred learning style by the teacher.

Students' preferred learning style—read, re-read, and revision makes learning perfect. Techniques like rhyming, singing the study material, linking it with previous information, writing it down and then checking for accuracy and completeness etc. helps in learning the contents. The teacher may use visual representations like web diagram, venn diagram etc. or make notes for students. This makes the learning of difficult tasks easier and interesting.

(f) Making complimentary remarks on students' achievement rather than blaming their failure on any task.

Teachers are the well-wishers of the students. Good teachers always make complementary remarks on students' achievements rather than blaming their failure on a task. If students have poor academic performance, teachers should not blame those students for their failure. It is the duty of a teacher to make them clear that it is the part of life and things can be learnt, more from failure. Compliments/remarks on students' achievements develop self-confidence in them.

III. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Socio-emotional support plays a crucial role in stress-reduction of the children. It can be provided in terms of the followings:

(a) Encouraging students' participation in sports and co-curricular activities for refreshing their minds and regaining of energy.

Sports and co-curricular activities in daily routine keep students away from stress and divert their attention from the studies for sometime, which leads to maintaining balance by refreshing their minds. In fact, sports and co-curricular activities need physical involvement, which is a much needed aspect nowadays, because of the changed lifestyle. Most of the time, students work in a sitting posture and don't have active involvement of body during class activities or during self study. They involve themselves mentally rather than physically. Hence, to regain the energy and freshness, it is much needed to participate in some physical activities like walking, running, playing etc. Further, involvement in sports and co-curricular activities provides an opportunity to the students to improve their interpersonal skills required for success in life.

(b) Encouraging students' participation in cultural programme, debate, recitation, singing, dancing, quiz competition etc.

The school should encourage students to participate in various activities like drawing, drama, essay-writing competitions, debate, recitation, singing, dancing, quiz competition etc. by organising these activities in the school. These activities not only help in enhancing participation of students but also facilitate in enhancing their confidence level. In fact, these activities help the students in releasing their pressure and enhancing creativity by diverting attention from studies for the time-being.

(c) Forming students' study groups for better understanding of the subject matter.

Forming certain groups in class is a useful way to revise their notes and subject matter in a free and fair atmosphere. When students work in a group, each one of them has opportunities to share his/her views, which helps them to learn from each other. If any student is having problem in their studies, he or she gets help from other members of that group to learn more through their peers.

(d) Sharing of tales of moral lesson to students.

Sharing of tales in the class may prove a useful strategy to reduce stress among students on one hand and imparting moral lesson on the other. During listening of tales, students get a chance to relate themselves in certain situations

where they can get clarity and make their own mind to deal with the situation. The realisation of different situations and roles of various actors in the tale help them to learn morals. It is an effective strategy for children, specially the younger ones.

(e) Making students understand that one exam can't measure failure or success.

The teacher should explain students that education is more than just marks and grades. Exams are a part of life and Board exam is not different from their school's exam. It could not be the sole deciding factor of life. There are many other options or alternatives, if one ends up getting less marks in Board exam. They should not lose their hope that future always stores success for them, if they continue working hard. Further, Xth standard board exam is no more a deciding factor of their careers nowadays.

(f) Feeling of every student must be honored and nobody in class should hurt others in any sense.

Teachers are the mentor of the future of their students. Good teacher always take care about the feeling of each student and never be partial to any one in any sense. Hence teacher should be courteous as well as intelligent in handling others' feelings. He/she should behave in a

way that students feel comfortable during interaction. Further, students should not be exploited by the teacher for personal interests.

IV. STRESS BURSTING MECHANISMS AT SCHOOL

To reduce the stress among students, a number of stress bursting mechanisms may be adopted by the school. Some of the stress bursting mechanisms are suggested as under:

(a) Teaching students how to associate with people whom they enjoy and who support them.

For achieving this, arrange the students roll numberwise in the classroom and divide the class in groups having 6 to 8 students in each group. Then, distribute the drawing sheets to all students in each group and ask them to write the name according to roll number provided to each groupmates. Now, instruct them to write down the strength and weakness, with respect to their name and roll number of groupmates in the given sheets. Then ask every student to write on what changes he/she wants in him/her. Further, each student will write his/her name and roll number at the back side of the paper, along with his/her own strength and weakness as they think. Now, the teacher will initiate an open discussion, based on the comments shared and consolidate comments as strength and weakness.

(b) Practicing muscle-relaxation techniques in school assembly or recess.

To deal with the stress, muscles-relaxation techniques like Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) developed by Jacobson (1939) may be practised. It teaches students to relax their muscles deliberately, by applying tension to certain muscle groups and stopping the tension for a while, and then relaxing the muscles with the feeling that the tension is flowing away. The place of practising should be quiet and calm. It is advised that the exercise should be done bare-footed and by wearing loose clothing. Moreover, the exercise should be carried out before meal rather than after meal. Some of the techniques of relaxation are: facial relaxation, arms, shoulders and neck relaxation, back and lower limbs relaxation.

(c) Practicing yoga and asanas regularly in morning assembly or in evening time.

Yoga and asanas help the individuals in reducing stress. If it is done regularly, then one can have feelings of freshness and vigour. Some *yogic kriyas*, *vyayamas*, *asanas* and *pranayams* are given under:

(i) Yogic Kriya

There are number of yogic kriyas which can be carried out for *sudhi*, hence these are also known as *suddi kriyas*. For example—*jalneti kriya*.

It is done for cleansing the nasal path known as *neti*. The purpose of this *shuddhi Kriya* is to facilitate breathing, right from the nostrils to the throat. It cures ailments related to nose, eyes and throat.

(ii) Suksham Vyayam

Suksham Vyayam may be practised daily in the morning for refreshing the body. It includes three components namely—(1) breathing (2) concentration point and (3) actual exercise. Breathing may be very light or very fast and very deep. Mostly it should be done through the nose but sometimes may be through the mouth. *Sukshma Vyayama* improves breathing, reduces stress, controls blood pressure, improves posture, minimises allergies, lowers cholesterol, controls indigestion, decreases weight, reduces insomnia, increases immunity, slows ageing and improves concentration.

(iii) Asanas

In broader terms, an ‘asana’ is a posture of body which is adopted by the person during yogic exercises. As per the Indian philosophy of yoga, it is a immobile bodily posture that a person assumes in an attempt to isolate the mind, by freeing it from attention to be given to bodily functions. Different types of asanas, such as *Tadasana*, *Padamasana*, *Vjarasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Surya*, *Namaskar* or Sun-Salutation etc. are believed to provide not only physical, but mental benefits as well.

(iv) Pranayam

Pranayam is made up of two words taken from Sanskrit. 'Prana' is the life force, or vital energy called 'breath' and 'ayama' is to extend, draw out, restraint, or control. Doing different types of pranayam, such as, *bhastrika*, *anulom vilom*, *kapalbhati*, *bhramari* etc. are helpful in increasing appetite, releasing of toxins produced from the excess of air, bile and phlegm, purification of the *nadis*, maintaining of body temperature, eradication of asthma, oxygen- deficiency disorders and muscular dystrophy, elevating mood and relieving anxiety and depression, regulating circulation of blood etc.

(d) Meditating for reducing the stress level.

Meditation in daily life may really help in reducing stress level of an individual. One can practice it in a comfortable chair or in carpet on the floor for 5-10 minutes. It can be done in the examination hall just before or after getting the question paper. Two-three minutes meditation can do miracles during the examination. The steps of meditation in examination hall are given as under.

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Close eyes and relax your mind.
- Breathe deeply and slowly through nostrils to fill the lungs up to the brim.
- Hold the breath for a second or two.
- Exhale slowly, deeply and

steadily, until the lungs are completely empty.

- Repeat the cycles for five to seven times.

Meditation and yoga strengthen body and mind, provide mental peace and physical power and help the individual to fight against diseases and stay healthy. Therefore, these should be compulsory in schools.

(e) Teaching students how to prioritise activities by allocating time.

For developing the skill of prioritising activities, divide the class in groups of 6 to 8 students and distribute drawing sheet, pencil, compass and colour pencil to all students. Now, instruct each student to write his/her name and class in the upper right side of the drawing sheet. Then ask them to draw big circle (of say, 8cm radius) and divide this circle into 24 hours. Further, each student will write how much time he/she spends in various activities in 24 hours and represent each activity in pie chart by different colours. Then, the teacher would ask the students to reflect their pie chart and discuss in his/her group. After having a discussion about time spent in various activities, changes in time-allocation in the pie chart may be made. Lastly, each one has to reflect again that she/he is satisfied with the changes made by her/him or not. Then, the teacher will consolidate the information presented by all the groups by drawing a reference pie-chart on board. Thus, through this

exercise, students will learn the skill of time management by prioritising their activities.

In a nutshell, it may be concluded that examination stress is an unavoidable phenomena in students' lives but it can be reduced up to a considerable extent if proper steps are taken at the appropriate time by the school principals, teachers, parents, students themselves and well-wishers of the society. However, the role of school principals and teachers is very crucial at the adolescent stage. At this stage, students need specific guidance in a number of situations at a particular point of time. A positive and constructive approach of dealing with

the students' needs might make the future of students. Hence, the teachers should be aware about the age-specific requirements of the students and intricacies involved in dealing with the students' problems so as to provide need-specific interventions. In this way, the teacher's job is to identify the best suited intervention strategies as per the student's requirement, keeping in view the gravity of the situation without making any harm to the child. The interventional strategies discussed so far are suggestive; however, head of the institution or the principal and teachers can devise their own strategies to deal with the specific problems of the children.

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Causes of Scholastic Dishonesty among the Examinees

RAVI PRAKASH RAI*

Abstract

The present study was an attempt to explore the causes of scholastic dishonesty among the examinees. Random sampling procedure was used to select 100 teachers and 300 students of graduate class. A self-constructed checklist was administered to collect the data. Simple percentage and ranks were calculated. The obtained results indicate that teachers and students differ with regard to the causes of scholastic dishonesty among the examinees.

INTRODUCTION

Our examination system is in shambles and almost every level has reached its nadir. In fact, there has been a virtual collapse of this system. Due to its cumulative effects, it is rightly regarded as a bundle of evils and its fall out encompasses the entire fabric of our educational system. It is due to the pernicious effects of the examination that the whole fabric of education is crumbling fast. In this context, someone has rightly said that the system of examination was originated by Chinese, who are said to have invented gunpowder; and in our country, it is the examination that have played more havoc than the gunpowder.

Today leakage of question papers, mass copying and approaching the examiners for extorting high marks have become the norm. A visit to various examination centres presents a horrifying sight. The examinees are not only armed with slips of papers, with answers scribed on them but they are also helped by scores of friends, lurking in the vicinity of centres. These helpers hurl paper-missiles, with answers scribed on them, through the windows of the examination room. It is also heard that answer sheets of some influential candidates are smuggled out of the hall and are written in the hostel room by their friends who have textbooks and guides handy.

* Aamghat New Colony, Ghazipur 233001 (U.P.)

Any attempt by the invigilators to check these “going-ons” are met with violence. In a nutshell, scholastic dishonesty reigns supreme in the conduct of examination, right from the elementary level to the university level.

Many studies (Lalithamma 1975), (Mathew 1976), (Prakash 1975) and (Sharma 1975) have been conducted with regard to correlates of achievement. A few studies have been undertaken by researchers to investigate the causes of scholastic dishonesty, which the students generally resort to fetch high scores. Meagre (1965) and Sharma (1965) conducted their studies to this effect but in the present atmosphere when this epidemic is spreading at a sputnik speed and thereby vitiating the atmosphere of education, there is a crying need to diagnose and identify its causes. To fulfil this purpose, the present study was undertaken.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the causes of scholastic dishonesty among the students;
2. To find out sex differences, if any, concerning the causes of scholastic dishonesty;
3. To study the views of teachers with regard to the causes of scholastic dishonesty.

In the present study the term ‘scholastic dishonesty’ includes copying, recommendations and approaching the examiners for

getting better awards in the examinations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was conducted on three hundred graduates of Azamgarh district in Uttar Pradesh only.
2. The teachers included in the sample were of degree stage only.
3. The size of the sample was small for broad generalisation.

PROCEDURE

SAMPLE

The sample for this study consisted of three hundred graduates, of which, 150 were boys and 150 were girls. Two hundred students were from urban area and the remaining were from rural area.

TOOL

For the collection of data, a checklist was developed by the investigator. It was constructed after following the normal procedure of checklist construction. The final form of the checklist contained ten items.

In order to avoid non-response, the tool was distributed among the respondents personally and they were asked to tick mark only one of the reasons, they think, to be the most important. The responses were collected on the same day.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

For the analysis and interpretation of data, frequency distribution, percentages and ranks were calculated.

Table 1
Causes of Scholastic Dishonesty in view of the Students as whole

S.No.	Causes	Frequency	Percentages	Rank
1	Foundation of students are poor	30	10	
2	Services and admission to higher classes are linked with degrees	73	24	I
3	Students do not work hard	20	7	
4	Students take failure as a matter of shame	35	12	III
5	Students imitate each other	50	17	II
6	Guardians induce their wards	12	4	
7	Atmosphere of our society is corrupt	28	9	
8	Moral degeneration of teachers	19	6	
9	Security persons and police are helpful	3	1	
10	College being the self-centre of the examination	30	10	

Table 1 indicates that seventy three students (24%) are of the view that resorting to scholastic dishonesty is due to the reason that services and admission to higher classes are linked with degrees. This reason has been accorded first rank. This is natural because in our society, too much premium is placed on marks and degrees. Admission to higher classes and services are directly linked with marks and degrees obtained in various examinations. This is the reason that no hold is now barred for scoring maximum possible marks on the part of students as a whole and it has become an ordeal for the examinees and examiners alike.

Fifty students (17%) think that malpractices in examination occur due to the reason that students

imitate each other. This reason gets second rank. It is really true that due to malpractices prevalent in our examination, the whole atmosphere has been vitiated. Even the studious and conscientious students are tempted to take leave of their studies. They think that like their fellow students, they will come up with flying colours by resorting to dishonest means in the examination.

The third rank goes to the reason: 'Students take failure as a matter of shame.' This reason has been endorsed by thirty five (12%) students. This is inevitable for students who have been driven to the conclusion that in our society everything is forgotten and forgiven except failure. The ordeal of examination is really trying enough. Everybody notices that as the time approaches for

announcement of the results, tempers are frayed, expectations are roused and disillusionment grips many, when failure stares them in the face. The announcement of the result is in the nature of a curtain raiser.

Table 2 shows that fifty boys (33%) view that scholastic dishonesty breeds because, appointment and admission to any higher class depends upon the marks and degrees. While this reason has been given the

first rank by the boys, the girls do the same to the reason 'students take failure as a matter of shame.' Girls have opted for this reason because in this part of the country, girls study mainly not for getting service but for self-satisfaction and enhancing their marriage prospects.

Thirty boys (20%) think that there is a tendency among the students to follow and imitate each other.

Table 2
Comparison between Responses of Boys and Girls

S. No.	Causes	Boys			Girls		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	Foundation of students are poor	10	7		20	13	III
2	Services and admission to higher classes are linked with degrees	50	33	I	23	15	II
3	Students do not work hard	10	7		10	7	
4	Students take failure as a matter of shame	9	6		26	17	I
5	Students imitate each other	30	20	II	20	13	
6	Guardians induce their wards	12	8	III	00	00	
7	Atmosphere of our society is corrupt	8	5		20	13	
8	Moral degeneration of teachers	8	5		11	7	
9	Security persons like PAC and police are helpful	3	2		0	0	
10	College being the self-centre of the examination	10	7		20	13	

While the boys consider the reason “students imitate each other” in the second place and “guardians induce their wards” in the third place; the girls give second place to the reason “services and admission to the higher classes are linked with degrees”. The girls accord the third rank to the three reasons standing at serial number 1, 5 and 10.

It is clear from Table 3 that the teachers (34%) consider the reason “foundations of the students are poor” in the first place. This may be because students from the very primary stage want to pass the examination by hook or by crook. Consequently, they are found, in general, to be mediocre and they find it very difficult to adjust to the higher classes.

The reason “employment and admission to higher classes are linked with degrees” get the second rank. This is the reason that many people feel that employment should be delinked with degrees.

The third rank goes to the reason “guardians induce their wards”. A visit to any examination centre reveals that many guardians go and exercise their influence upon the invigilators to do favour for their wards. Hence, the guardians cannot be exonerated from the charge that they also play a dubious role in this abominable racket.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results suggest that scholastic dishonesty is a complex problem and several causes are responsible for it.

Table 3
Causes of Scholastic Dishonesty in view of Teachers

S.No.	Causes	Frequency	Rank
1	Foundation of students are poor	34	I
2	Services and admission to higher classes are linked with degrees	27	II
3	Students do not work hard	6	
4	Students take failure as a matter of shame	6	
5	Students imitate each other	3	
6	Guardians induce their wards	10	III
7	Atmosphere of our society is corrupt	1	
8	Moral degeneration of teachers	2	
9	Security persons like PAC and police are helpful	1	
10	College being the self-centre of the examination	10	

The students and the teachers differ among themselves with regard to causes that give rise to the malaise. Majority of the students think that linking degrees with employment and admission to higher classes is the most potent cause for compelling the students to resort to scholastic dishonesty. Majority of the girls opine that our society has set so much in store by the so-called academic qualifications that failure cannot be countenanced. In our society, everything can be forgotten except failure. Teachers hold different views in this regard. Majority of them think that the background of the students is very poor. As a result, the students fail to adjust to the higher classes and ultimately resort to unfair means for getting success in the examination of which hinges their future life.

Keeping these views in mind, one can safely reach the conclusion that there are multiple causes responsible for this malady. Teachers, students, guardians and administrators are collectively responsible for it. For overcoming this evil, the following suggestions may be given:

- Degree should be delinked with employment and job should be properly classified on the basis of

skills needed for their competent performance.

- Admission to higher classes should not be done on the basis of academic scores only.
- Academic session should be maintained and the prescribed course should be completed.
- Habit of hard work should be developed among the students so that, they become sincere to their studies.
- Teachers should be conscientious and true to their profession, so that they may not become a party to this evil.
- Strong public opinion should be built against this evil.
- Parents should discourage and desist their wards from adopting under-hand means in the examination.
- The practice of colleges being the self-centre should be abolished.

The above mentioned nostrums can go a long way to stem the rot. If this problem goes unheeded and unsolved, the country will be plugged into chaos by millions of half-baked unemployable young men, who are being spewed out in increasing numbers by our degree manufacturing factories to spell ruin all round.

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B.Ed. Students' Ability of Identifying Focal Points and Command Words in a Question to Develop Appropriate Answer — A Study

NIKITA RATHOD* AND A. RAMACHARY**

Abstract

Questions set for B.Ed students' evaluation process contain few focal points as well as some command words to be addressed in offering appropriate answers to the questions asked in the examinations. Noting poor performance of prospective teachers in their own ability of identifying focal points and command words in the question papers, an effort was made to test the same. In the present study, with a quality concern in the evaluation dimension, the diagnostic observations were done from the performance of 69 B.Ed. students in their internal tests. An attempt was made to develop material for due orientation to improve their ability to understand the true meaning and role of focal points and ability to address the command words in the questions asked in the examinations. Besides, this study reveals the improvement in the final exam performance, after the remedial orientation, confirming the positive influence of the treatment for both the vernacular and English medium students at B.Ed level.

INTRODUCTION

Education of teachers in the country has been considered crucial, not only for ensuring greater professionalism in teachers but also for facilitating school improvement

and effectiveness. The Education Commission (1964–66) accepted this influence of teachers in powerful words, “No system can rise above the status of its teacher...” as it has direct impact on the generations to come.

*Lecturer, Oxford B.Ed College, Mumbai, 400 067

**Principal, Oxford B.Ed College, Mumbai, 400 067

It is universally accepted that teachers should possess some knowledge, skills and values, meeting the needs of the profession from time to time (UNESCO Report 2006).

According to Srivastava (1997), “teachers to be taught and trained” is a relatively growing concept. Thus, for the quality professional preparation, we need to focus on various aspects of the teacher-training programme like pedagogical knowledge, mastery of the content, practical skills related to classroom-teaching, theoretical foundations related to the skills, conducting assessment and so on. It is generally expected that B.Ed. students should have various abilities like raising appropriate questions at every stage, developing a question paper (which is the part of their B.Ed. programme—where they prepare year plan, unit plan and unit test along with blueprint and all weightage tables required) and the ability of developing appropriate answers for each given question. But to our dismay, we ask them something and get answer of something else, especially in application-based questions. This defocused reflection in answering a question is found to be significant and more common with the students having vernacular background. It is a most common observation of many evaluators that students are writing much of irrelevant material in their answers. Mostly they are writing what they know or remember, than what they were asked to reply, for a given question.

Right information given in an answer can become inappropriate when it is not question-focused. Questions are not just dreamed up and written down. They are assessed, scrutinised, re-worded, re-worked and re-written to get it right. This raises a few natural research questions, such as, does the question asked in the exam contain any Focal Point (FP)? Are there any Command Words (CW) in the question which deserve greater attention of the student to answer the question asked appropriately? Whether, it is essential to identify Focal Points in any given question to present an appropriate answer? In its absence, the answer will go astray and likely to become defocused and even irrelevant answer.

FOCAL POINTS AND COMMAND WORDS

Developing an ability of Focal Point identification in a given question is strongly required for offering relevant answer to the question asked. When B.Ed. students acquire this ability, not only their own performance in examination will improve, but also their skill of designing better question paper for evaluating their own students will enhance. This also ensures more improved and accurate evaluation process of the student in their examination. This ability will help him or her in framing better questions and preparing appropriate answer keys which eventually lead to accuracy of assessment.

Along with Focal Points, there are other controllers or directors in any question asked in the examination, which a student needs to carefully look at. These can be known as Command Words. Command Words are the navigating guides in a question which direct as to what assessment objective is being targeted by the question asked (Bized 2004). They are used very carefully and each question has a certain order of words that try to give the maximum help to the student about what the examiner is looking for. It is important to read the whole question and to understand what the question is asking. This is because the Command Word, on its own, cannot serve the purpose. Therefore the Focal Points together with the Command Words complete the form of the question and it succeeds in eliciting the appropriate answer for the given question. Consider the following example:

- Q1. Explain the interdependence of measurement and evaluation.
 Q2. Illustrate the procedure of team-teaching.

Q3. Discuss the important aspects of the definition of educational evaluation.

Q4. Distinguish between Inductive and Deductive methods of teaching with examples.

Question 1 is asking to explain; which requires to give details and clarify all dimensions/aspects/parts/elements of the topic.

Question 2 is asking to illustrate; which comprises to clarify/explain with the help of examples or to provide with explanatory or decorative features for the point given.

Question 3 is asking to discuss; which involves noting down points in an effort to reach an agreement; it involves close examination of a subject/topic/point with interchange of opinions.

Question 4 is asking to distinguish; that requires showing the difference between two methods/points/parts with the help of a few examples.

In the above mentioned examples the Focal Points and Command Words are:

Focal point and command words

Q.No.	Focal Points (FP)	Command Words (CW)
Q.1	Interdependence, measurement, and evaluation	Explain
Q.2	Team teaching, Procedure	Illustrate
Q.3	Educational evaluation, important aspects definition	Discuss
Q.4	Inductive and Deductive methods, Examples.	Distinguish

Therefore, summarily speaking, Focal Points and Command Words are the key guiding elements to develop effective, relevant and appropriate answer for any given question.

Keeping in view, the scope of the present study, the following operational definitions are formulated to define the key words:

1. FOCAL POINT IDENTIFICATION

These are the words used in any question for eliciting the relevant and appropriate content-based answers for the question asked in the examination. Focal Point identification is the ability of making a judgment about what are the points a student identifies as the most significant, in a given question. Scores obtained on the test paper administered on the B.Ed students to identify the Focal Points indicate the ability of students in identifying the focal points.

2. COMMAND WORDS

These are the directing words used in any question for guiding the relevant and appropriate content-based answers for the question asked in the examination. Scores obtained on the test paper administered on the B.Ed students to identify the Command Words indicate the ability of students in identifying the command words.

This leads to the emergence of the following research questions which needs to be addressed:

1. Do the prospective teachers identify Focal Points and Command words in the question asked?
2. How is the performance of the B.Ed students in terms of their ability to identify the Focal Points and Command Words?
3. Is there any difference in the ability of identifying Focal Points and Command Words in the question asked by the vernacular medium students and the students from English medium?
4. Is it possible to develop some remedial measures to improve the ability of prospective teachers to understand the meaning and power of Focal Points and Command Words in the questions asked in the examination?
5. How are the Focal Points, Command Words, and scores obtained in the examination correlated?

Keeping in view the research questions raised above, an attempt is made to “study the B.Ed. students’ ability of identifying Focal Points and Command Words in a question to develop appropriate answer.” With a view to answer research questions raised above the following objectives are formulated:

1. To find out the ability of understanding examination questions of B.Ed. students.
2. To study their ability of developing appropriate answers.
3. To investigate the effect of remedial treatment given to B.Ed. students.

4. To ascertain the importance of Focal Point and Command Word identification ability for developing appropriate answers.
5. To study the difference, if any, between the vernacular and English medium students in their understanding of the meaning and the use of Focal Points and Command Words.
6. To find the correlation between Focal Points, Command Words and the scores obtained in the examination.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As per the requirement of the problem and objectives of the study, one of the quasi-experimental designs, namely Time Series Design is used. With a Time Series Design, observations were taken to establish a baseline; after which a treatment was offered to the sample under consideration. Following this additional observations were made. From this, an estimate of the impact of the treatment was computed (Gribbons and Herman 1997, Morgan, et al 2000, Gliner and Harmon, 2000). Research methodology used the internal test data as the basis for diagnosis of the problem. Here internal test data consists of the scores of 4 essay tests of half an hour duration carrying 10 marks each (total 40) and the scores of 4 class tests of one hour carrying 25 marks each (total 100). The topic for the essay test was informed in advance to the students, each time. Similarly, the portion for class test

remains very limited and made known to the students in advance. Thus it is clear that the internal test consisting of essay tests and class tests cannot be laterally compared with scores of prelim and the final semester 1 examinations. However, the scores on essay tests and class tests, together termed as internal tests, at best, served the basis for diagnostic observations, prior to the launch of intervention and further study. The post-test scores involve the scores of the prelim exams for all the four courses and semester-end university exams of four courses of semester 1 based on the B.Ed. syllabus. Keeping in view the objectives of the study and the nature of the problem under study, research design can be figuratively depicted in figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted for the present study includes the following steps:

1. Diagnostic observation of B.Ed. students' performance on the basis of internal tests, which includes essay tests and class tests of four courses.
2. Orientation on focal point identification for B.Ed. students.
3. Power point presentation on Command Words for B.Ed. students.
4. Developing test paper for the identification of FP and CW.
5. Scoring the above test paper on FP and CW.

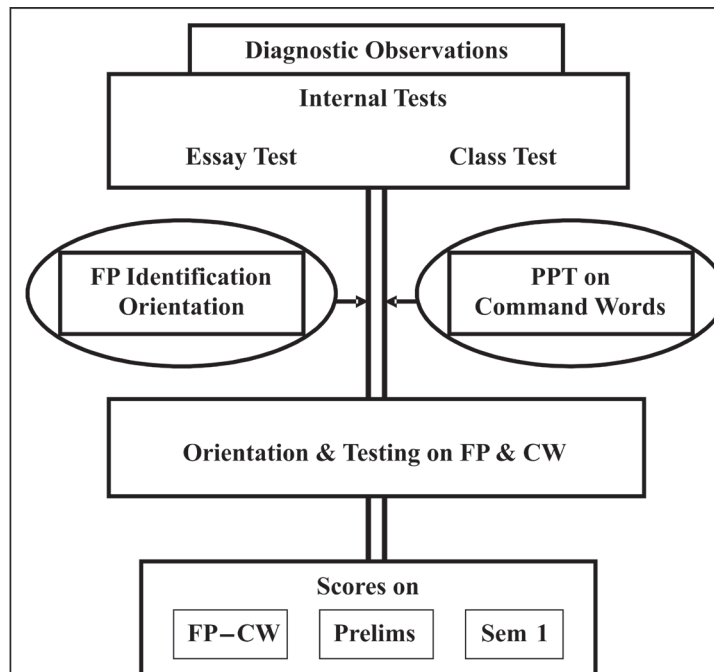


Figure 1: Research Design

6. Data collection on prelims and semester 1 B.Ed. examination scores.
7. Statistical treatment of scores on FP, CW, prelims and semester 1 examination.
8. Listing findings and drawing inferences based on the study of mean scores and correlations between FP, CW, prelims and semester 1 examination.

Keeping in view the above methodology, sample identification and tool development and its administration, together with data collection procedure, are explained on the next page:

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Essentially population comprises of B.Ed students. As the researcher has an idea and experience of the B.Ed. students' evaluation process, they are chosen as the sample for the present study. This study includes 69 students of the Oxford B.Ed. College, Kandivli (W) Mumbai, who were selected purposively. The selected sample includes 23 vernacular students of B.Ed, coming from Hindi (19) and Marathi (4) backgrounds and 46 English-medium background B.Ed students.

INTERVENTION

Based on the diagnostic observations from internal test information some

remedial treatment was provided to the B.Ed students. Following are the two aspects included in the remedial treatment:

- An orientation on focal point identification. What, how and why about focal point identification.
- A power point presentation on command words showing their usage and guidelines for the command words commonly used in B.Ed. Examinations.

The treatment was followed by testing using a self-made tool, as explained below. This helped to check the impact of the intervention.

Tool

For the purpose of the present study a specific test paper, namely; FPCWI i.e. Focal Point and Command Word Identification was developed. The objective of developing the tool FPCWI was: to test the ability of B.Ed. students in identifying the Focal Points and Command Words, from the given set of course content-based questions. FPCWI contains 25 questions from previous years' University question papers. This includes all the four courses of their B.Ed syllabus. Sample under study was asked to identify both Focal Points and Command Words from the given test paper. Response sheets were scored, basing on the number of right answers out of the maximum possible correct answers i.e. 35 Focal Points and 25 Command Words respectively in the Test paper provided. Necessary instructions

about the treatment were given to them. Sufficient time was provided to the students to respond on it properly. Researcher had quantified the data by giving score to their marking of the Focal Points and Command Words. Scores were separately obtained on the percentage basis for both Focal Points and Command Words.

DATA SOURCE AND DATA COLLECTION

Data was obtained from the test paper developed to find out the ability of B.Ed students to identify the Focal Points and Command Words. Percentage scores were computed for both the FPs and CWs. Besides, performance of B.Ed students on their Internal Tests (IT) in all the four courses was observed with a view to provide a base for the diagnostic observation. Similarly, scores on Prelims Test of all the four courses, as well as, the scores on the same four papers of the final Semester examination of the Mumbai University were collected for the present study.

RESULTS

Data was processed choosing the percentage scores of all the parameters, like scores on Focal Points, Command Words, scores on Prelims, and finally, scores on Mumbai University final Semester 1 examination. These scores were used to compute the mean values for comparison. Mean value was found for both the vernacular and English

medium students, and their total value. Also the scores from all these parameters were statistically treated for finding the Pearson's Product

Moment Coefficient of Correlation. Data was tabulated and is presented below, together with their graphical representation.

Table 1
Mean scores on different tests in percentage

Sample	FP	CW	FP+CW	Prelim	Sem1
Vernacular	65.34	26.78	46.06	38	47.11
English	76.65	59.83	68.24	49.95	57.1
Total	72.88	48.81	60.84	45.96	53.77

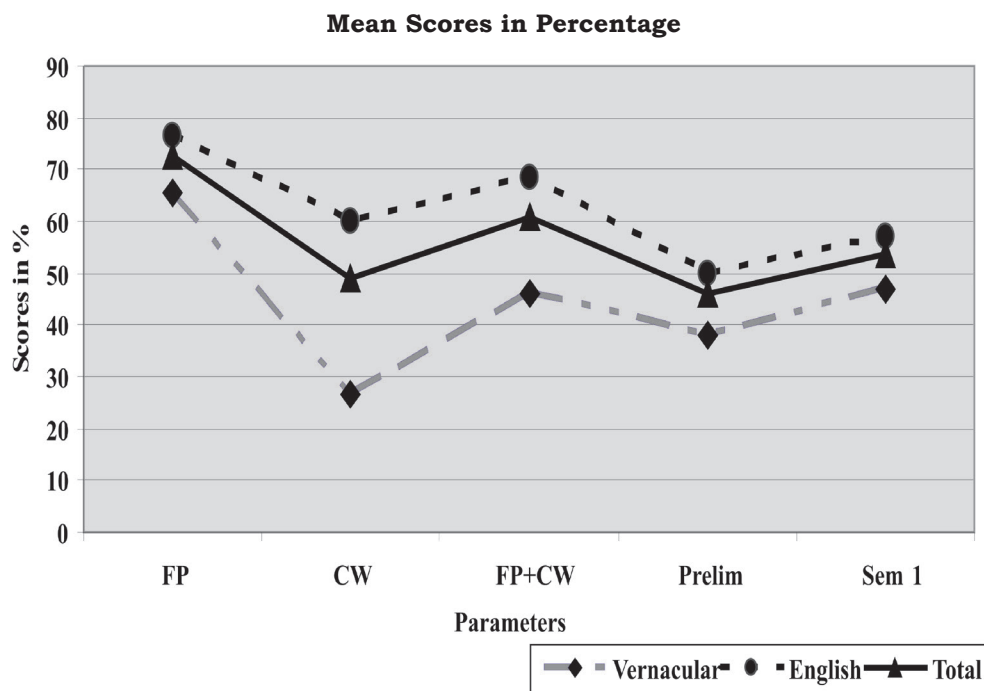


Figure 2: Mean scores in % of Vernacular, English and Total Sample on Different Tests

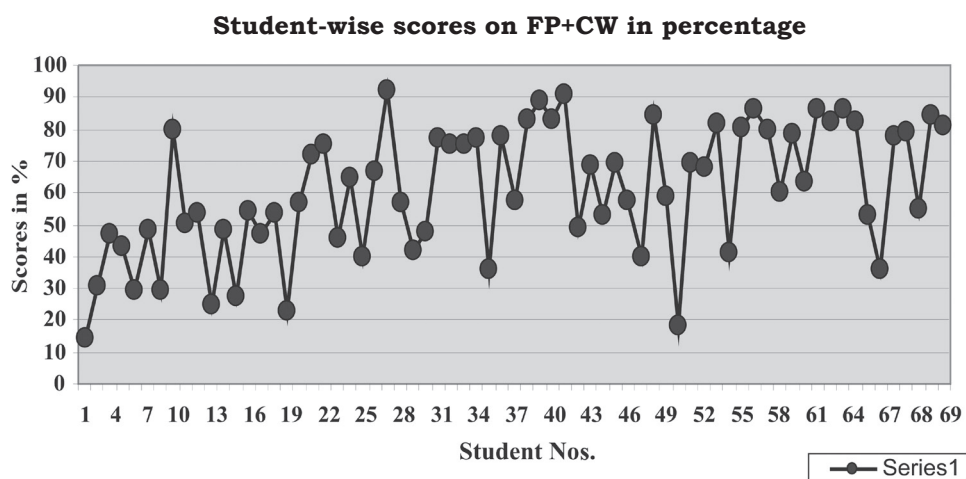


Figure 3: Student-wise score in % on the sum of Focal Points and Command Words

Table 2
Correlations Matrix

Parameters	FP	CW	FP+CW	Prelim	Sem 1
FP	1	0.2105**		0.208*	0.1093**
CW	0.2105**	1		0.2632*	0.2472*
FP+CW			1	0.3059*	0.2411*
Prelim	0.208*	0.2632*	0.3059*	1	0.7049*
Sem1	0.1093**	0.2472*	0.2411*	0.7049*	1

* Significant at 0.05 level, ** Not significant

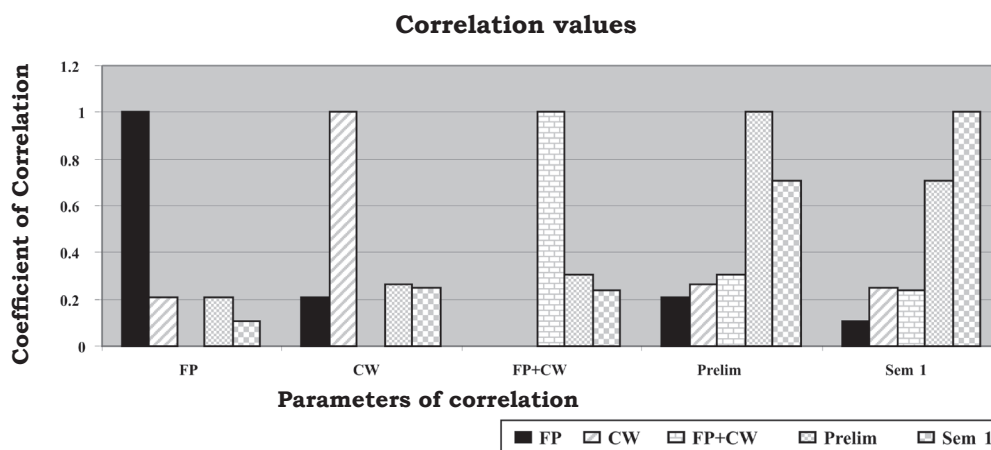


Figure 4: Correlation Values on Different Parameters

FINDINGS

1. Mean scores on the identification of Focal Points (FP) in the question paper by B.Ed students remains good enough with 72.88% score, with little difference between the vernacular and English medium groups. However, mean score on the identification of Command Words (CW) was less than 50%, with vernacular group scoring 33% less than the English medium group. Sum of FP and CW scores could reach up to 61% for the total sample, maintaining vernacular group at less than 50% level.
2. Mean scores on prelims for the total sample showed the vernacular group at 11% below the English medium group. An identical trend was observed for the scores on semester exam results. Significantly, there appeared a clear growth in the attainment levels of both vernacular and English medium students, in respect of their scores on prelims to final Semester exam scores. This growth showed 7% increase on the total sample.
3. Inter-Correlation values between the scores on Focal Points (FP), Command Words (CW), and their combination, Prelims (Prelim) scores and the final Semester (Sem 1) remained positive and significant at 0.05 levels, with an exception to the correlation between FP–Sem 1 and FP–CW.
4. Correlation between Semester 1 and FP, CW and their sum

remained low, while correlation between Prelims and Sem 1 showed strong positive correlation scores.

5. Scores on FP+CW of B.Ed students from vernacular background ranged from 12% to 90%, but, the same for English medium background ranged from 35% to 90%; with one outlier at 20%. This shows good amount of heterogeneity in the class.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Understanding of Focal Points and Command Words by the vernacular students remained low, as compared to the students from English medium.
2. Vernacular students could show improvement after making an effort in understanding the Focal Points and Command Words. This improvement is about 10% from Prelims to final Semester 1 examination scores. However, the same is 10% less than the improvement shown by the English medium students in their final semester examinations.
3. Scores on the sum of FP and CW showed good amount of variation confirming the heterogeneity in the group of students considered as sample for the study.
4. Positive correlation is observed between different parameters, like FP, CW, and their sum, Prelims and final Semester 1 examination scores.
5. High correlation between the Prelims and Semester 1 scores was

evident, confirming the positive contribution of orientation on FP and CW to the students under study.

The results of the present study lead to the conclusion that development of focal point and command word identification ability plays a significant role in enhancing students' ability of developing appropriate answers. Further, the students have shown a significant growth in their academic performance, especially in answering exam questions. This has its bearing in enhancing the answering ability to the given question; promoting better quality in performance by these students, is evident from the study. The development of the ability will

enhance their ability of conducting effective assessment of their own students, subsequently. This aspect also helps the prospective teachers in guiding, evaluating their own students for quality performance in examinations.

Teacher education like any other educational intervention, can only work on those professional commitments or dispositions that are susceptible to modification. We can reshape attitudes towards testing and evaluation process and develop their skills in framing better questions, understanding them and answering them appropriately. This process can help in promoting better quality in evaluation process.

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Crossing the Barbed Gate

Experiences of Accessing the Research Participants for their Informed Consents through the Gatekeepers in an Indian School

DIPANKAR TRIPATHY*

Abstract

Gaining access to the research sites, participants and their informed consents is not always an easy process. It involves negotiations and compromises with the gatekeepers. Hence, researchers spend considerable amount of time since inability in negotiation and access, results into unsuccessful research. Yet, researchers, particularly engaged in qualitative research, often neglect this process and face dilemmas due to the ethical obligations. When university ethics committees demand voluntary participation of the participants, power relations between the gatekeepers and the participants underpin the co-production of the research data. Therefore, researchers must continually reflect upon the decision-making processes, around the routes of access, that might influence the research data collected. In this paper, how the access, re-access and informed consents of the participants were gained in a school for a qualitative study in India has been reflected, and this includes addressing the ethical underpinnings involved therein. As such, these experiences were gained as a beginning researcher and it is hoped that sharing these will benefit other beginners conducting their qualitative studies, particularly in India.

INTRODUCTION

Gaining access to the research sites, participants and their informed consents is not always easy. It is “not simply a matter of banging on a door

and getting it to open” (Feldman et al. in Feldman et al. 2003, p. ix). Rather it is “sometimes an easy process and sometimes fraught with difficulty” (Susan et al. 2006, p. 74). Moreover,

*Research Fellow, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong.

it is not just one time dealing, but a continuous relationship-building process, as it involves multiple entries to the research sites and accessing the participants, by means of negotiations and compromises with the gatekeepers (Burgess 1993, Feldman et al. in Feldman et al. 2003). Hence, researchers spend considerable time in rapport-building, because inability in it, results into unsuccessful research (Johl and Renganathan 2010). However, researchers particularly engaged in qualitative research often neglect this process as well as encounter dilemmas due to ethical obligations (Jorgensen 1989, Daymon and Holloway 2002). When participants' voluntary participation is obligatory, as per the ethical guidelines of the university ethics committees, power relations between the gatekeepers and participants underpin the co-production of the research data (Miller and Bell, in Miller et al. 2002).

University ethics committees in their guidelines mandate voluntary participation and informed consents of research participants for their aim to maintain high ethical standards in research, by ensuring validity and accuracy of the research data (Iphofen 2009). Hence, researchers provide prior information of their studies to the participants, such as, known or anticipated risks involved, and get their informed consent in writing (Seidman 2006). But, the ethical obligation of voluntary participation

also implies the assumption of no physical or psychological coercion. Therefore, ethical considerations do not end by getting ethical forms duly filled up from the participants in the purview of their power relations with the gatekeepers. The "researcher must continually reflect on the ways in which decisions around routes of access can affect the data collected" (Miller and Bell, in Miller et al. 2002, p. 56). In the following paper, I argue that an opportunistic approach was most appropriate in order to gain access, re-access and informed consents of the participants in a school in India, for a qualitative study on teachers' understanding and teaching of environment and environmental values in the context of globalisation.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A study was conducted to investigate: (1) the secondary school teachers' understanding of environment and environmental values in the context of globalisation, (2) the environmental values these teachers and secondary environmental education curriculum intend to teach, (3) how the environmental values are being taught, and (4) how the teachers resolve values, conflict in controversial environmental issues. In fact, the research questions of this study surfaced from the prevailing scholarly contentions and contradictory research findings in various areas of environmental education, such

as, the possibility of deriving and imparting universal values by critical thinking and teaching globalisation through secondary school curricula, environmental educators' value-neutrality, importance of science and technological education in environmental education, etc. However, discussing a number of substantial reasons for which the study was conducted in India, and also how the schools in India were categorised into three categories following India's culture and values orientations in globalisation, is not the primary focus of this paper.

The study was conducted in three schools that represented traditional, modern and 'traditional yet modern' schools of India. For instance, schools like Delhi Public School facilitating modern education, and gurukul schools—the ancient, traditional education (see Pathak 2006, Dogra and Gulati 2006). The methodological approach was qualitative, since the nature of inquiry was contextual and the research questions primarily sought to explore the research areas due to the prevailing scholarly contradictions and research findings. In addition, a case study approach was adopted for its particular suitability in exploring new research areas by holistically understanding the uniqueness and complexity of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the selection of location and schools for the study was purposeful and as per convenience. As New Delhi and Haridwar were

locations, easy to access, schools were selected as per the opportunity forwarded by their respective head offices. Further, teaching of the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) curriculum by all three schools was one of the school selection criteria.

Two schools—the modern and 'traditional yet modern' were located in New Delhi, and the third, the traditional, was in Haridwar. The data collection methods involved—guided interviewing of the research participant, non-participant classroom observations and document analysis. The choice of participants and their numbers were not only based on the teachers' availability, interests and their potentiality to contribute valuable information to the study, but also their profiles, i.e. the subjects they were teaching in the schools. Moreover, apart from the secondary teachers, curriculum planners were also interviewed. However, simply identifying the sampling criteria does not, at all, assure actuality of access to the participants in qualitative research (Susan et al. 2006). Therefore, given the limited scope of this paper, how the access, re-access and the consents of the research participants were gained through the gatekeepers in one of the schools, i.e., 'traditional yet modern' in New Delhi, during the pilot and final study has been reflected. And, it includes addressing the ethical issues and dilemmas faced during the study.

**INITIAL ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL
AND THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
THROUGH A HIERARCHY OF CONSENTS**

Obtaining ethical approval is the most primary concern for accessing research site or participants, because ethical considerations are a major component in research design. Any academic research is first reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for ethical violations and/or procedural errors, and then the permission is given or the required revision of the proposal is called for (Weseley and McEntarffer 2010). The Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Faculties (HREC/NF) of the University of Hong Kong granted ethical approval for this study, as it was requested for gaining access to the schools. However, "(o)btaining access to the research field can vary to a considerable extent, depending on the kind of cases being investigated" (Johl and Renganathan 2010, p.42). Moreover, local authorities or governing bodies of the schools acting as gatekeepers may pose as ethics committees to re-check the ethical aspects of any study and hinder, or on occasions, stop research activities (Aubrey et al. 2000). But, recommendation letters help in gaining access to research sites through the gatekeepers (Brounés 2011).

Gatekeepers are the individuals having power to grant or withhold access in an organisation for research purposes (Burgess 1993).

In other words, they are the "formal or informal watchdogs, who protect the setting, people or situations sought as a target for research" (Berg 2007, p.185). Besides the university's support, NCERT's recommendation was sought to do this study in India, because it was assumed to avert shortcomings due to any red tape and bureaucratic pettifogging, while accessing the schools. In addition, NCERT is the apex body of the Government of India in school curriculum policy, design and implementation (Chhokar and Chandrasekharan 2006). As such, NCERT immediately extended its support and it was obtained in black and white, though most researchers inform the local authorities about their studies just by sending letters as a matter of courtesy (Aubrey et al. 2000). Yet, a hierarchy of consents from the top management position is also needed to gain access in a school (Leonard 2007).

The websites of the schools labeled as 'traditional yet modern' revealed their management hier-archy. An organisation runs the schools all over India. In fact, the school and its various other branches in Delhi were managed by a regional director and the head office, both located in Delhi. When a regional director was looking after the schools in Delhi region, the chairperson in the head office was responsible for the whole organisation, i.e., the management of all the schools in India. Therefore, on the basis of different media

reports, such as, books, journals, newspapers etc. — first, a few reputed schools were selected on the basis of their fames related to educational achievements among all the schools in Delhi; and then, besides the regional director and the chairperson, the principals of these schools were communicated, by sending the study proposal through emails. This is because the principals are the main gatekeepers in the school (Leithwood and McElheron-Hopkins 2004). Yet, contacting the schools over the phone had to be initiated, as none of the emails received any reply, even after a span of three weeks.

Successful completion of a case study research project requires researchers to carefully consider the logistical issues (Luton, 2010). Conducting the above study in more than one school was impossible due to the time and financial constraints. Therefore, after gaining the opportunity of access for the study from one of the school principals, no further efforts were made to contact the rest. Infact, he gave his consent and signed the request letter, when I explained the study and submitted the proposal along with documents like ethical approval, recommendation letters, etc. However, he also inquired, if any concerned authority in the regional or head office had been informed. When no reply to several email correspondences was pointed, he advised to email the academic director

in the head office or meet her directly as she was the concerned authority in this matter. Thus, a hierarchy of consents was needed in gaining access to the school. Of course, the academic director gave her verbal consent after consulting with the principal over the phone. But, I had to meet her personally, due to no reply of the email correspondence.

As such, researchers may gain access to the research sites either formally or informally. Formal access consists of sending a request of communication, along with university recommendation-letter to the gatekeepers. On the other hand, informal access becomes only possible for the researcher's prior familiarity with the gatekeepers or the research sites (Johl and Renganathan 2010). According to Susan et al. (2006), the second strategy is advantageous to establish rapport and credibility with the gatekeepers. However, formal access also helps create researchers' impression essential for his/her rapport and credibility and a critical analysis of informal access shows that it should not be taken for granted (Johl and Renganathan 2010). Further, the research sites and the gatekeepers in the above case were unknown to me, and hence, I was bound to follow the first strategy. Yet, gatekeepers' pre-conception, due to any previous experience of researchers, and research also influences their responses to the requests for access (Foster 2006).

The name of the university perhaps helped in gaining access to the school. During introduction, the principal revealed that he already participated in a research activity of the University of Hong Kong in his previous tenure, which helped him in the capacity building of the school. In this study, teachers teaching language or social science subjects or heading environment clubs were more prospective as participants than other teachers, because NCERT curriculum in secondary level imparts environmental education in an integrated manner (Chhokar and Chandrasekharan 2006) and teaches globalisation as content matter in the social science subject: economics (Bose and Sardana 2008). In addition, initial data gathering took place through informal discussions with the prospective participants, and this was followed by the interviews of the selected potential participants for their ability to add valuable data to the study. However, only two interviews, each followed by a classroom observation were conducted out of fourteen social science and language teachers due to the resource constraints and purpose of the pilot.

ACCESSING THE SCHOOL AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS THROUGH THE GATEKEEPERS DURING THE FINAL STUDY

Contacting the administration through email was not repeated again while re-accessing the school during the final study due to the previous experience

of not getting any reply from anyone. However, it is not just cooperation, that a researcher always can expect in gaining access to the research sites and participants. There may be resistance and hostility. In some cases, entry is simply denied as a matter of “infiltrating the setting” (Susan et al. 2006, p. 76). In fact, an adverse situation was experienced while re-accessing the same school, which extended full cooperation just four months back. The process of gaining access through the gatekeeper at the top management had to be repeated, not just because the previous principal was transferred, but the new principal wanted the written approval from the head office. Yet, the research could not be conducted ultimately, even after, fulfilling the requirement. The principal stopped the study due to severe resistance and hostility from some of the secondary teachers.

RE-ACCESS RESTRICTED DUE TO LACK OF WRITTEN PERMISSION

It was very disappointing when the office of the school was contacted over the phone for the final study. It not only conveyed the transfer of the previous principal, but also informed the loss of all the previously submitted documents. Therefore, while meeting the new principal, I had to re-submit those and explained her briefly about the study, ethical measures, etc., and hoped that the permission would again be given as before. On contrary, after going

through the documents and hearing me as well, she told to wait for another three months, as I did not turn up since the pilot. I reasoned her that the time was required to clarify certain aspects in the methodology of the study, such as, to determine the interview questions in the final study and the analysis of the research data. But, she pointed that I have to wait for another three months because of the teachers' engagement in forthcoming school inspection and term examinations.

As such, school inspection is a matter of a day and term examinations are held all over the years. In addition, teachers usually get more leisure time during the days of term examinations for not having regular teaching. Moreover, the consent forms clearly mentioned no student involvement in the study. Further, the study was running short of time as per the university schedule. Therefore, informing the logistical constraints, I requested her not to delay the study for such a long time. But, in reply, she strictly pointed me, either to show the written permission to start the study from the next week or wait for three months. Although I tried to tell her the benefits of the study for the teachers and curriculum by pointing how the research questions surfaced from the research gaps; she told me not to argue and very rigidly pointed either to choose any of the two options or leave her office. In fact, she told this in such a manner that I

felt as if the study has no importance and I was spoiling her time.

The thought of my research endeavor coming to a sudden stop frightened me. At that juncture I realized my mistake for not procuring the permission from the academic director during the pilot itself. Moreover, I felt confused and helpless, since the study could not be further delayed for another three months. Getting written permission from the head office in just two-three days or a week's time was very important. But, whether permission would be given immediately or be delayed was totally contingent. Hence, being unable to understand what to do, I just emotionally revealed the problem to the errand boy of the principal and he sympathetically listened. However, when I asked particularly about the previous principal, he revealed that he had been promoted as a school inspector in the regional office. I felt the absence of the previous principal, but approaching him was not a solution, since the new principal required written permission particularly from the head office. In addition, whether the previous principal would help in this matter or turn cold shoulder, was again contingent.

Truly speaking, I could not spare my scarce resources during the pilot study in running behind the top management officials to get their written approval. Further, the previous principal approved the study and never demanded such a

thing from anyone at the top. It is particularly worthwhile to mention here, that at that point of time the academic director in the head office told that a written permission was not necessary, since the study had already been informed over the email. But, denoting the official requirements, when I requested, she mentioned that a permission letter would be issued after her coming back from the official tour, and meanwhile, I could continue my work in the school. Yet, she wasn't available in her office after a week and also never intimidated me about her probable transfer. Her secretary only enlightened me about this and that was after few days of her departure from the office.

The new principal's intentions were very clear. In fact, "organisational gatekeepers tend to deny and delay researchers" (Smith 2007, p. 226). This is because they want to protect their organisations, people or situations, by keeping the sensitive things hidden so that the pictures appear in favorable lights (Walsh 2004). Although, this concern is not unreasonable, gaining access for research in organisations is also difficult, due to the deluge of such requests from researchers (Buchanan et al. 1988). Hence, researchers adopt a number of techniques to bargain with the gatekeepers and bring something to offer (Janesick 2004). Sometimes they try to create interests among the gatekeepers by emphasising

potential knowledge gains from their studies and fully explain the nature of their research, methodologies, or stress over the ethical commitments like maintaining confidentiality. In other occasions, they may selectively provide these accounts and use deception (Foster 2006). However, for (Buchanan et al. 1988), "it is helpful to offer a tangible product in return for cooperation".

Janesick (2004) successfully negotiated access by helping the school principals in organising their references, by using a computer program and this was squarely possible, because they were in their doctoral programs. But, negotiating access with the gatekeepers for research in organisations is a 'game of chance, not of skill' (Buchanan et al. 1988, p. 56). In the above case, it was impossible to do something like, what Janesick did due to anonymity with the principal. Hence she was asserted the benefits of the study for the teachers and curriculum. Moreover, deception could not be used, as it was not pre-planned. Denial of access, due to lack of written permission was totally unexpected from the same school that extended full cooperation already. Further, use of deception was also not very necessary as the research questions did not intend to investigate any sensitive issue that would prompt the gatekeepers to take a defensive stand. In fact, none of the negotiation techniques came into work as the principal was completely reluctant to

listen to anything, after keeping her two options on the table.

GAINING ACCESS TO THE TOP MANAGEMENT FOR WRITTEN PERMISSION

I had to run to the head office to get a permission letter, the same day the principal closed the negotiation talks. Else, the study perhaps was vulnerable to bear the consequence of unsuccessful research. The verbal consent of the previous principal or the academic director had no meaning and the new principal was too rigid on her decisions. Obviously, it conveyed a very restricted entry in the research site imposed by a gatekeeper in the middle management position of the organisation. However, entry inside the head office through the security personnel at the gate and accessing the top management, without any appointment was also not very easy. Moreover, there was no time either to call the receptionist for an appointment or wait for a month with a false hope of getting reply from someone in the head office. In fact, while delineating on key ideas in educational research, Scott and Morrison (2006) pointed about 'cold-calling' as a technique to overcome initial rejection as used in sales. Hence, this technique was the only way to gain entry in the head office.

Often I used 'cold calling' in my previous corporate sales career and played tricks to gain entry in organisations, when faced rejection to any sales-related information or appointments with the decision

makers. And, it was no exception when the security personnel in the head office stopped me, at the gate, to inquire the purpose of visit or if I had any appointment. Therefore, instead of answering them, I briefly pointed about the issue and named the previous academic director and the principal of the school, who was promoted as a school inspector, in such a way that they get the impression of no unknown person was going inside and the issue required immediate attention. Indeed, the trick again worked and I could enter the head office. But, from the reception, I learnt that no new academic director joined the office and also the secretary of the previous one was transferred. Hence, I had to find someone in the top management position, who would not react in the first place for not having the particular decision-making power, to approve a study in a school, but would listen to the problem, give suggestion, and perhaps also support, if necessary.

Instead of the chairman's office, I planned to knock on the door of the director of examination and stated the problem of accessing the school to his secretary. Perhaps the name of the university on my card helped to draw her immediate attention. She sent an errand boy to find out about the previously submitted documents as I was claiming the initial access to the school, due to the verbal consent of the previous academic director and showed the NCERT recommendation letter and email correspondences as

evidence. But, when no document was found, she suggested me to meet the deputy director and conveyed him the problem over the phone. She also pointed that a new academic director joined the office, but that was only for a month after the departure of the previous director. Yet, I was completely spellbound, when briefly explained the study and the problem of accessing to the deputy. He stated that any effort in environmental education in a school in India cannot be withheld under the Supreme Court's mandatory. Hence, he not only prepared the permission letter within an hour, but also directed the new principal to allow the study with immediate effect.

GAINING RE-ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS, BUT WITH CONSIDERABLE RESISTANCE

At first, the principal was a bit surprised to see the director's permission, the very next day, when I kept a copy on her desk. Then, she allowed the study from the next week by signing the proposal and mentioning the date of commencement. Handing over the documents, she also introduced me to the vice-principal and told her to help, if anything needed for the study. Therefore, first I chalked out a plan, along with her, and then engaged in some informal talks to build rapport. But, from the first day, I started contacting the teachers for informal discussions and interviews due to the shortage of time. Fixing

up appointments with them was rather easy and no new introduction was needed, since all the prospective participants remembered me. However, neither could I conduct more than two interviews nor any informal discussion with a new participant in three consecutive weeks, despite that they initially conveyed interests for their participation by scheduling interview timings. Indeed, plying between home and the school for interview or informal discussions with the teachers was a complete waste of time, money and energy.

Formal permission for access granted by the gatekeepers does not guarantee cooperation of all participants (Padgett 1998). In the above school, though most of the prospective participants inquired about the written approvals, they were continuously postponing their interviews and requesting to contact someone else. Some even fixed appointments by particularly verifying the approvals. When I asked the reason of postponements, almost all the participants replied unavailability of time, due to their hectic teaching work in the school. Two teachers even asked for questionnaires, so that they could fill in their leisure. Squarely, it indicated their workload and lack in reading the consent forms. But, they also revealed that research means questionnaire-filling, since they have always experienced it in that way only. Hence, it also indicated a perception due to the dominance of quantitative

methods in educational research in India that Baily 2009) witnessed. Yet, continuous postponing of interviews by most participants for the same reason, invoked skepticism whether these were genuine.

The route of access, either to the research sites or participants, never opens unless the consent and support of the gatekeepers are achieved (Riemer 2012). Hence, gatekeepers' authoritative power was apprehended to influence most participants' repeated assertion for participation. Otherwise why were they inquiring or verifying about the written approvals? Further, perhaps the participants were also unwilling to spare time for the research, and hence, postponing their interviews. Again, it could have been also for their apathy towards the research topic. As such, gatekeepers even may find any study on mundane matters as uninteresting and therefore can prevent it (Walsh 2004). Yet, the principal's authoritative power seemed more dominating in the school, because two social science teachers particularly, asked for a photocopy of the principal's approval despite reading it in black and white when they were approached again in the second week. In addition, they again rescheduled interviews for another week by pointing the hectic work in the term examinations.

I, immediately, furnished the concern of these two teachers by providing them the photocopy. However, researchers must also

carefully consider the participants' cost of participation, such as, money, time and conveniences (Wiles 2012). Hence, considering participants' problem, I agreed to postpone the interviews for another time. But, when appeared before one of them in the teachers' room in third week, as per the schedule, she again wanted to postpone it for another week. Therefore, I urged her to clarify her participation by politely reminding her rights. However, annoyingly she replied her inability to spare her little free time from the overloaded classroom teachings and examination paper-checking, even though she was interested. Moreover, she advised me to get a time-slot from the principal or the vice principal for the needed participation. When approached the vice-principal for help, she also pointed to the principal and stated that everyone needs her permission to do anything, as she is the sole authority in the school.

HOSTILITY, REJECTION OF PARTICIPATION AND DENIAL OF ACCESS

I requested the principal to allocate a time-slot for the concerned teacher to ease her participation. I thought that she might have been interested for the study, though genuinely not getting little time to contribute. Allocating the time, the principal also immediately made a note and signed. However, when I showed it to the teacher, surprisingly she became very furious and alleged that the time was allocated because I complained.

Although I tried to clarify, she was completely reluctant to listen to anything and threatened to speak to the principal for nagging. Thus, it became very clear that actually she was not interested in the study though she was repeatedly assuring her willingness for participation and that might be due to the principal's authoritative power. Was she really interested or willed? She could have managed the time, howsoever, she was busy, as did another social science teachers. Yet, just after two days of this incidence, when I went to interview another social science teacher and met the principal on the corridor after the morning assembly, she suddenly told me that the study is no more allowed in her school.

Obviously, the social science teacher, who threatened me, complained to the principal. But, it was totally shocking when she alleged that I was disturbing the teachers by going into their classrooms. I tried to tell her that it was a complete fallacy, but again she was unwilling to listen anything and asked me to leave the premises immediately. Hence, I started pleading to save my study and the career. Yet, I had nothing to do except to walk out of the gate silently and as quickly as possible to save myself when she threatened to call the police. No doubt, the environment of the research site turned totally hostile and it could not be abated. Perhaps, the principal also lacked interest towards the study, like the teachers who were

postponing their participations. She also pointed that she does not bother if I approach another director again for the permission of access. However, I clearly understood what catalysed the problems, when met her errand boy and told the incidence just before leaving the school premises.

What the errand told me was something that I was completely unaware. He revealed that during the principal's previous tenure, someone complained against her for which she received suspension from the head office. But, her job was not at all affected due to her husband's influential position in the government. In fact, not only the school staffs, but many officials in the head office also were not happy with her. Moreover, the previous principal was also not in good terms with her. Therefore, not only my haste that intercepted the new principal's willingness to delay the study, but also the director's overpowering by directing her perhaps catalysed the problem. In addition, another cause of the new principal's apathy towards the study perhaps was the previous principal. Further, constantly pursuing the two social science teachers for their participation, being unable to understand their tacit unwillingness, also aggravated the problem. But, if the director's overpowering or the previous principal's approval caused the new principal's resentment towards the study, then surely the researcher and the research were

the victims of narrow organisational politics.

Obviously, being at the top of management hierarchy, the deputy's power was more than the school-principal's in the middle. But the process of re-accessing in this study was not started at the top, because the consent was already gained from the top during the pilot. In addition, document loss by the school administration which contained the previous principal's approval and the new principal's attitude towards the final study was completely unpredictable. Further, despite having more power being the head of the school, the latter only advised to get written permission from the former. In fact, according to Buchanan and Bryman (2009), gatekeepers can make their consents so contingent that even confuses the researchers. In addition, it is also politically unwise to approach more than one gatekeeper simultaneously for access. However, scholars differ in their opinions, whether permission for the access to research sites and participants should be sought at the top or lower level power position in the management hierarchy (Bryman 2005).

As per Irvine and Gaffikin (2006), it is risky to approach anywhere in the management hierarchy but at the top, because they can even restrict access being most powerful. "If they cooperate, the path of research can be smoothed, and their recommendations might make others

more willing to collaborate" (Holloway and Wheeler 2002, p. 48). On the other hand, for Buchanan et al (in Bryman, 1988), sometimes securing access through a gatekeeper at the lower levels by creating interests for the research and influencing to act like a sponsor is advantageous, though that may be time consuming and rejected by the top. Moreover, entry solely through the top, may have the problem of subsequent identification and resistance by lower power positions. In this regard, Foster (2006) argued that the help from a sponsor is a common strategy for gaining access to the research settings that might remain closed otherwise. Yet, researchers often have choice of which gatekeepers to approach in order to gain access (Buchanan and Bryman 2009).

RE-NEGOTIATION WITH THE TOP MANAGEMENT AND GAINING ACCESS TO A NEW SCHOOL

A 'sponsor' being 'an established and trusted figure' within an organisation not only can vouch for a researcher's intentions and the purpose of the study to any gatekeeper, but may also provide invaluable advice about the most appropriate ways to successfully complete the study (Foster 2006, p. 68). In the above case, the previous principal of the school, who had been promoted in the regional office as a school inspector, was such a figure. He was the last resort to help me conduct the study because of the established

rapport with him due to his positive impression about my university. In fact, though I had no evidence to prove against the false allegation, slammed by the new principal of the previous school, I eagerly wanted someone to understand my situation as well as trust and help me to gain access without any hitch to some research participants, in any of the school in Delhi, run by the organisation. Indeed, hearing my plight in mid of a school inspection, the previous principal promised to help and asked me to meet him in his office the next day.

I could also go to the deputy in the head office for help. Yet, approaching him again for another problem was not a good idea as it could spoil any positive impression created. Moreover, it could even stop any further chance to gain access to any of the schools in Delhi, had he turned skeptical on my truthfulness and asked for evidence. On the other hand, pursuing the school inspector in the regional office to favor me was much easier, due to the already established rapport and cordial, friendly behavior with me. When I met him the next day, he introduced me to the regional director and taking his consent, called up another school principal to brief her about me, the study and the director's permission. Of course, as Padgett (1998) coined, the director was no exception to many of the gatekeepers who remain skeptical about the researchers and the benefits of their studies. Hence,

I had to negotiate with him, by revealing how the research questions surfaced from the research gaps and reassuring the ethical measures as he inquired about the particular information the study needed, despite these were clearly mentioned in the proposal and the consent form.

In the new school, total seven teachers participated and among them were also the principal and vice-principal. They extended full cooperation and were never worried about any kind of permission, because the principal took the effort to call up a formal meeting to introduce me with the vice-principal and head of the environment club. She clearly conveyed the consent from the regional office and instructed them to further introduce me with other teachers, whosoever, was needed. Indeed, this helped me to break the wall of anonymity with the participants, and thus, straightway talking about the study could have been started, avoiding their perceptual engagement with any kind of skepticism. But, squarely, this became possible, due to the school inspector's good terms with the principal and their initiatives in the study. In fact, the regional office extended the opportunity in such a school, where the stuffs were most cooperative. Hence, as Buchanan et al. (1988, p. 55) rightly stated, gaining access to the school and participants necessitated exploiting the 'opportunities offered in the circumstances', and this involved

some combination of possibilities and dumb luck.

DEALING WITH THE ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

Gaining voluntary participation and informed consents from the participants is obligatory as per the university ethical guidelines. However, it not only requires providing information to them about the study, but also let them exercise their choice of participation (Miller and Bell 2002). In addition, researchers should obtain their consents both in written and verbal form (Pitney and Parker 2009). Further, they should also ensure respondents' validity for the trustworthiness of the research data (Barbour 2007). Hence, although the consent forms contained all the needed information for the participants, they were also explained verbally, both, while handing over those and getting signed from them before the interviews. In addition, the participants were contacted for the interviews as per their convenience, after few days of giving the consent forms. Further, they were given back full, verbatim transcriptions after the interviews. Finally, ethical considerations also included thanking the participants and gatekeepers cordially, and gaining passive consents from the students and their guardians for non-participant classroom observations.

Ethical considerations in gaining informed consents from the participants were the same in both

pilot and final study. Yet, ethical issues cannot be forgotten by just getting the consent forms duly filled up from the participants at the beginning of a study (Miller and Bell 2002). This is because the power dynamics between the gatekeepers and the research participants and the roles played by them in the research underpin the co-production of the research data. Although approaching via agencies is a useful way to gain access to vulnerable people, the participants may feel obligation to participate in the research and provide positive views about the agencies since these agencies support them. Moreover, accessing the participants via agencies increases the possibility of losing control over their selections (Henn et al. 2006). Therefore, researchers encounter ethical dilemmas while accessing the participants for their voluntary participation and informed consents (Miller and Bell 2002). Not to mention, ethical dilemmas were not exceptional, and these were faced at several occasions while doing the study.

In order to minimise the possibility of losing control over the selections of participants due to gatekeepers' power influence, the initial data-gathering was conducted through the informal discussions with the participants followed by the selection of the potential ones. In addition, snowball technique was used to identify additional participants by asking already contacted ones to

name others since it is one of the most common forms of purposeful selection of the participants in qualitative case studies (Merriam 2009). As such, in the new school, the references of prospective participants started building up as the principal introduced me with the vice-principal and head of the environment-club and asked them to further introduce me with other teachers. However, first encounter with the ethical dilemma related to participants' voluntary participation in the study occurred when one of the social science teachers in the previous school mentioned her incapacity to spare time and wanted the principal to allocate a time-slot for the interview.

No doubt, the new principal was the main gatekeeper in the previous school. Yet, her high authoritative power to allow or withhold anyone's action within the school premises probably influenced many of the teachers' participation in the study. On the other hand, the social science teachers, who were constantly postponing the interview, might not have been getting little free time to contribute in the study due to their overloaded work. Hence, I was in an ethical dilemma whether to approach the principal to request a time-slot for the concerned teachers or to avoid their participation since the gatekeeper's authoritative influence does not assure participants' voluntary participation in the study. Similar was the case with

the participants in the new school. Unlike the teachers in the previous school, they never inquired of any permission. Instead, they extended full cooperation, and obviously, that is, because the vice-principal conveyed the principal's and regional director's approval while introducing me with them.

Ethical obligation of voluntary participation stipulated by the ethical committees implies the assumption of no physical or psychological coercion (Christians 2005). However, ethical dilemma arises due to the dualistic stances between the gatekeepers' power and the participants' voluntary participation. Gaining access to the teachers and their participation was not possible without the principal's approvals and teachers perhaps expressed willingness or participated in the research, due to the approvals from the authoritative power positions though they might not have been actually interested. In fact, a subtle coercion is involved as employees feel obliged to participate in research, due to their employers or employment expectations, though they may not wish to do so (Hennink et al. 2011). Then, ethical obligation of voluntary participation and informed consents of the participants, through the gatekeepers itself incubates a subtle form of coercion, because the name or any previous experience with a university may positively influence a gatekeeper, which in turn even may influence the participants.

According to Hennink et al (2011), in order to gain participants' trust and ensure their voluntary participation, researchers must inform them about their particular right to refuse participation, without any fear of retribution from their employers or the gatekeepers. In addition, they should also be promised anonymity and confidentiality. In the above study, though the consent-forms included all these information in detail, some of the participants of the previous school perhaps lacked reading those properly. Further, they never disclosed their unwillingness to participate, despite their rights being informed verbally and repeatedly to them. Probably, either the participants didn't pay much attention when those were explained, or the researcher totally failed to build trust and rapport. As such, gaining informed consent from the participants in its true sense is not easy and straightforward (Eynon et al. 2008). Moreover, building trust and rapport requires prolonged engagement with the participants, such as, the residents of care homes to investigate their relationship development (Wilson et al. 2009).

Prolonged engagement with the participants was neither possible nor desirable in this study, since getting their views for the research questions did not require high intimacy with them. In addition, prolonged engagement is 'primarily appropriate for ethnography' (Lichtman 2010, p. 230). Further, the power relation

between the gatekeepers and participants did not invalidate the research findings though the participants gave positive accounts of the environmental education in their respective schools. This is because the research questions had no concern at all, on how the environmental education was imparted in the school. In fact, when researching vulnerable people, one way to eliminate agency influence on the participants is not to include anything into the research objectives that directly deals with the services of the agencies (Henn et al. 2006). Yet, gaining informed consents from the participants involves another serious ethical dilemma due to two contrasting obligations: publishing research findings that may improve the society and protecting the participants from any kind of harm due to the publications (Kelly and Ali 2004).

Actually, the nature of 'consent' only becomes clear at the end of a study because the impact due to presentation of the research findings by the researcher may not resonate with the research aims informed to the participants at the outset (Miller and Bell 2002, p. 54). Hence, for Robert-Holmes (2011), providing feedback to the participants about the learning constituted from the study is ethically important. However, a range of ethical approaches exists upon which ethical decisions in research are made, such as, the consequentialist, non-consequentialist, virtue ethics,

etc. (Wiles 2012). Moreover, ethical guidelines of the IRBs are the universal statutory and ethical praxis in social and educational research is local and specific; cannot be universalised (Simons and Usher 2000). In the above study, research findings were not shared with the participants and gatekeepers, because if it was done, participants would have felt defamed, and consequently hindered the greater interest of contributing for the academic community.

CONCLUSION

The experiences of gaining access and re-access to the research site and the participants for their voluntary participation and informed consents through the gatekeepers, while following the university ethical guidelines were like crossing a barbed gate. Indeed, it was thorny and challenging, but offered a crucial reflection. Although the selection of the school for the study was purposeful and the pilot was conducted successfully, the final study didn't succeed in the

same school, due to the resistance and sabotage of the uncooperative factors despite the formal permission of the gatekeepers. This is perhaps because of the participants' skepticism about the researcher or the topic could not be avoided, since the middle management gatekeepers in that school, didn't do anything, like introducing the researcher formally and freshly with the participants. On the other hand, the participants in the new school became very cooperative only when the middle management gatekeepers helped as a sponsor and offered the opportunity by properly introducing the researcher with the participants. In fact, the organisation ran many schools, and accessing one of these as well as the cooperation from the participants for the study was not possible without the permission of the gatekeepers. Moreover, there was change in the top and middle management gatekeepers. Hence, an opportunistic approach in gaining access was most appropriate for the above study.

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

A Great Educational Pioneer

NAJMAH PEERZADA*

Abstract

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a great intellectual, scholar and philosopher. He was one of the prominent freedom fighters of India, president of Indian National Congress and the first education minister of free India. Maulana Azad erected his educational philosophy on the basis of his vast and thorough knowledge of Islam and the concepts of both the East and the West. He approached education in a manner which was relevant and suitable to man as the supreme creation among all creatures on the earth. He visualised such an educational system which could help in bringing readjustment among different outlooks and ideas. He proposed scientific and technological outlook in educational system, so as to deal with the present situation, not only at the national level, but also to compete at the international level. In his involvement with education as a mission of guiding mankind towards higher goals of life, he provided, over a period of half a century, a kind of educational leadership, which the present study seeks to examine in depth.

INTRODUCTION

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, originally named Muhiyuddin Ahmad, was born on 11th November 1888 in Mecca, Saudi-Arabia. Maulana Azad was a Muslim theologian, philosopher and one of the most learned men of the east. He was the best author of modern commentary on Quran.

In 1923, he was elected as the president of Indian National Congress. In 1947, he became the first education minister of free India and remained at this post till his death in 1958. He was a great scholar of Urdu, Persian and Arabic languages. He wrote a number of articles on education, history and literature. He enlightened new lamps of hope among

*Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian scholars. Maulana Azad was a brilliant debater, as indicated by his name — “Abul Kalam” which literally means “Lord of Dialogues”.

In the field of education, Maulana Azad had been an uncompromising exponent of universalism, that had been distilled into his mind from the Sufistic legacy of his home and from the pantheistic traditions of his country. In order to guide mankind towards the supreme goal, he launched the programme of educating his countrymen and through them, the entire human race. The real objective of education, according to Azad, was to train the children as members of the community and to instill in them the habit of cooperative action for the social good. As the quality of a man in the ultimate analysis depends on the education he receives and the values he was taught to cherish, he felt that the government has a duty to organise a truly liberal and humanitarian educational system, which would set the country on the roads to progress. Azad’s ideal was a fusion of the Eastern and Western concepts of man, to create a fully integrated personality. Whereas the Eastern concept dwelt on spiritual excellence and individual salvation, the Western concept laid stress on worldly achievements and social progress. Azad felt that the two should ideally be integrated into a wider philosophy of education for the world. Maulana Azad was not only enlightened, learned, wise and

humble, he was also a man who often led from the front and set personal examples for others, which could be summed in the following words by Akbar Allahbadi,

*“The sluggards are quite content with
mundane delights;
the wise cannot but strive for the
ultimate.”*

HIS WORKS

Basic Concept of Quran, Ghubar-e-Khatir, Dars-e-Wafa, India Wins Freedom, Tazkirra, Khutabat-e-Azad etc.

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AZAD’S PHILOSOPHY

At the core of Azad’s philosophy was his deep religious temperament. He was a spiritualist and a scholar of Islamic religion and philosophy. He was free from communal feelings and prejudices. He praised Islamic religion but did not criticise any other religion.

There are three basic metaphysical concepts of Azad: God, Universe and Man. The concept of God is the most important of all. The concept includes man’s innate faith in the divine existence on the one hand and his acquired belief in his attributes on the other. While his faith has remained uninfluenced by his intellectual advancement, his belief has made

perceptible progress towards transcendentalism, monotheism and concept of love and beauty. On the scale of evolution, man has reached the stage where he must look to God in his endeavor towards higher levels of creation. God must therefore, bear for him, the attributes within his comprehension, and as a source of inspiration also.

The concept of universe follows from Maulana's concept of God—the universe manifests all his attributes for its operation as the perfect scheme of creation. For example, his attribute of providence, sustains its existence. His benevolence provides for its grace and beauty and His justice brings the scheme to its perfection.

The concept of man evolves from the two preceding concepts. In the gamut of creation, the creative process has finally flowered in the appearance of man, who has by virtue of his inherent qualities, assumed the office of God's vicegerent on this planet and even around it. In his sharing of the infiniteness of the divine attributes, he alone, of all the creatures, has acquired the competence to achieve "mastery over the entire creation". This points to man as a free agent of God and at the same time, offers an optimistic view of his destiny.

Maulana's Tarjuman-e-Quran (1945) depicts well, the concept of his religious faith in Islam as a whole, the concept of "Taqdir" (luck) etc. While, explaining the term Taqdir, Maulana dealt with 'freedom

cum accountability'. Maulana dealt, however, delicately with 'Wahi' (revelation) — the supreme kind of inspiration, learning that man is endowed with. He says the revelation is the supreme faculty guiding man in his/her direction.

In Azad's philosophy there are five universal values which one must try to achieve in order to claim to be a full fledged man. These are— Ma'aruf (Good), Haq (Truth), Jamal (Beauty), Love and Adl (Justice).

AZAD AND EDUCATION

The core of his educational thinking is Islamic, but it is modified in the light of his knowledge of modern educational thought in the West and in India. He gave a scientific basis to the system of Islamic higher education, deriving his inspirations from the European and American experiences and practices of education. The impact of the West on his thinking is seen significantly at work, in his attempt at modeling a new system of child education in India. He was highly impressed by the West in the education of children at the elementary stage. Azad desired a similar move in the Indian educational setup.

Maulana Azad felt that a reorientation and revision in the content of education was necessary in the context of the changed needs of independent India. He held that the education system was little inclined towards academic and literacy studies, in keeping with

the requirements of a colonial administration. In independent India, there was the need to develop the agricultural sciences and to focus on technological and engineering studies. Further, owing to a false sense of values, there was too much importance attached to a university degree and too little to the quality of the education imparted. In an address to UNESCO, Azad emphasised that the future of man was dark unless concepts of international understanding, and world unity were explained to children in schools in realistic terms.

Maulana Azad considered education to be the birthright of all men. He viewed education as a process leading to the growth of the "Complete Man". He explained that literacy would give man the access to knowledge of the wide world, which in turn, would enable him to live in harmony with his environment. He felt that the state had an obligation to ensure education to all, at least upto the secondary education — elementary, middle and higher. Of these, elementary and middle are more important, because the foundation of the entire national education is laid in the early stage. For these two stages, it is accepted that the pattern of basic education is of great importance to the whole structure of our national education.

Experience has shown that education can profoundly affect the development of an individual and through individuals, of societies. If

the individual is not an integrated personality, society cannot be harmonious. The function of education in the modern world is therefore, to build up integrated individuals in an integrated society and the concept of both the East and the West must contribute to such a development.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Our educational programmes will ultimately depend upon the proper education of women. If women are educated, more than half of our problems will be solved. Educated mothers will mean, children who can be easily made literate.

STATUS OF WOMEN

"Providing education to women without giving them freedom and forcing them to conformity to the veil, will not only be useless but injurious and baneful." (Inaugural Address by Azad at the UNESCO Seminar on Rural Adult Education, Mysore, November 02, 1949).

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Azad holds that there is no place for English as the medium of instruction in future in India, but at the same time, there should be no precipitate action that may damage the cause of education. It holds that the replacement of English as a medium of instruction should be gradual and stage-by-stage, so that, there is the least possible interruption or interference with the process of education in the country.

AZAD'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Azad's educational Policy can better be defined by his five point's scheme. It includes:

1. Compulsory education for children of 6–14 year of age;
2. Social education for illiterate adults;
3. Standard higher education;
4. Art education for the development and preservation of National culture; and
5. Education of science and technology for the development of the country.

AZAD AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Azad was the first education minister of independent India. He, in his tenure from 1947 to 1958, did tremendous work for the upliftment of the country. Following are some of them:

1. For the progress and development in science education, following institutions were established:
 - Scientific Research Institute under the chairmanship of Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar;
 - A separate institute for atomic development;
 - Indian Council for Agriculture and Scientific Research
 - Indian Council for Medical Research;
 - Indian Council for Historical Research; and
 - Indian Council for Social Science Research.
2. Indian Council for Cultural

Relations, for introduction of Indian culture to other nations.

3. Institute of international studies was established in *Sapru* House.
4. Following three academics were formed:
 - Sahitya Academy for development of literature;
 - Sangeet Natak Academy for the development of Indian music and dance;
 - Lalit Kala Academy for the development of painting;
5. With the aim of preservation and development of national culture, and also with the aim of study of Sanskrit language and literature, many institutions, especially universities were established.
6. Indira Uloom-e-Shariqa and Indira Uloom-e-Islami institutions or the development of Islamic Education of Osmania University, Hyderabad were promoted by him.
7. Azad was a scholar of History. In his regime, national archive and national museum were looked after properly.

CONCLUSION

Maulana Azad wanted to bridge the gulf between the East and the West, through the system of education. Undoubtedly, the ideology propounded by Maulana can resolve antagonism between materialism and spiritualism, that has prevailed in human world in the past. It can also guide man in his future advancement towards the higher levels of existence.

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