Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators

Volume I Issue 2 May 2012

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About the publication

The launch of the journal 'Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators' is an initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to highlight the vital role of Teacher Education in India, as the country is poised to provide quality education to all its children, irrespective of gender, caste, creed, religion and geographies under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RtE), 2009. The large influx of teachers necessitated under RtE represents the biggest opportunity to bring fresh life into schools for decades to come. The challenge is to enhance the role of teachers in shaping the social transformation India is witnessing, as well as have a long lasting impact on the quality of education, also making it significantly more equitable. Teachers and all those in the system need to recognize that their ownership and voices are important and that they can and do learn not only from their own experiences but also from each other through collective reflection and analysis. The publication attempts to lend voice to teachers, their educators, researchers, administrators and policy makers in the varied institutions: Schools, CRCs, BRCs, DIETs, IASEs, CTEs, SCERTs etc., and make visible their engagement in accomplishing extraordinarily complex and diverse tasks that they are expected to perform. Contributions are welcome both in English and Hindi and there are plans to produce the journal in a multilingual format in the near future.

Call for contributions

This publication is for all of us: teachers, teacher educators, administrators, researchers and policy makers. It is to provide a platform and also to build a network for our voices, ideas and reflections. Since the idea is to make this journal reflect all our voices it would only fulfill its purpose, if we contribute to it in as many ways as we can. We look forward to all of you contributing with your experiences, questions, suggestions, perspectives as well as critical comments on different aspects of teacher education and schooling. This could also be through comments and reflections on the current issue. Your contribution could be in the form of articles, reports documents, pictures, cartoons or any other forms of presentation that can be printed. We look forward to your inputs to make this journal truly reflective of our voices. It is proposed that this be a quarterly publication. We would like to receive contributions for the next issue by 15th August, 2012. We also look forward to comments and suggestions for improvements of the publication to make this a participative endeavor and improve its quality.

Editorial Team

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Editorial

The Right to Education Act (RtE) 2009 focuses on improving the quality of education and making it available to all children. Besides other factors, it lays emphasis on having trained teachers to meet these goals. The assumption is that a trained teacher would be better prepared to understand children, be sensitive to their diverse backgrounds and understand other curricular matters better. She would also appreciate the goals of education for a democratic republic like India that believes in plurality and encourages diversity. Thus, RtE expects that a teacher can through training, be professionally prepared to teach better, keeping in mind the interests of children as well as their experiences and voices such that learning excites and challenges them and assessment is as stress-free as possible. In an attempt to ensure that the training process of teachers is not delayed endlessly, it lays down that all teachers would have been so trained by the year 2014.

With a short time-fuse and a metaphoric gun on the head, states are desperately looking for measures to certify their untrained teachers by enrolling them in courses. Given the weaknesses of the teacher education system like a lack of good teacher educators, lack of mechanisms for preparing such teacher educators etc., it is unrealistic to ensure fast-track, quality training for all untrained teachers.

Over the last two decades, the issue of modifying or changing teacher preparation programs has been extensively debated. Alternative pre-service and in-service teacher education programs have begun to emerge. The battle for change has been tough as neither the institutions delivering teacher training nor the prospective teachers are keen on long duration programs which demand greater commitment. The RtE time-line has been added into this melting pot, rendering sustained reform in quality teacher education even more difficult. The discourse on building capacity in institutions of teacher education and making them more quality conscious is replaced by the need to have a large numbers of teachers go through some certification process and be recognized as trained.

The gaps in the massive training courses/programs necessitated by DPEP/SSA have still not been corrected. A similar and deeper concern that has been looming over pre-service training, has got more intense. The large under-staffing in DIETs and government colleges and their disinclination and under-preparedness to understand NCF 2005, NCFTE 2010 suggest their incapability to bring to the ground the tenets and principles of RtE as well. The implementation of RtE and the time-periods it envisages need close examination. Mechanisms for building institutional capacity for teacher education, including through institutions that are outside the fold of the government but have the capability to lead this transformation for both pre-service and in-service programs, need to be investigated.

A related stipulation of RtE of constituting school management committees, though laudable, merits closer examination. According to the bill 75% of the members of the committee should be the parents and the rest from local bodies. No doubt community ownership of schools can strengthen schools in many ways. It can shake the system out of its complacency by making it more accountable. All the same it puts a greater responsibility on the school for spearheading social change.

In a recent instance, two adolescent children, a girl and a boy, studying in a government-aided school were found consistently talking to each other. The teachers tried to convince the children that this was inappropriate. The boy was scolded and fined where as the girl's parents were summoned to the school. The girls parents immediately withdrew the girl from the school for the fear of 'social shame'. The girl was not even allowed to take her class 10 examinations. The school, thus partnered with the community, in a silent and violent conspiracy to punish the girl for her perceived intransigence of expected gender norms and roles. Such incidents, raise questions on the preparedness of teachers and the school in dealing with matters which require questioning existing social mores and practices. In the above case the teachers could have handled the situation in a much more sensitive manner. They could have engaged with the parents of both children as well as the and the community to bring about a change in the perception that the burden of protecting 'dignity' is to be shouldered by only the girl.

Most of our teacher education programs do not adequately prepare teachers to engage with the school and community to attempt changes in culture and belief systems. The school and the community continue to maintain status quo in important areas particularly, equity and rights of children. Thus, if there are opportunities for including progressive voices from any quarter of society in the committee, then such opportunities must be explored and widened. This would mean making the requirement of community engagement with schools, flexible. The idea of community as assumed in the Right to Education Act needs to be unpacked. The community around the school in all probability would have a common belief system. There is need to add a plural and egalitarian view-point to the committee to engage with such issues and move towards a more equitable and just society.

As this issue goes online, India will be preparing to host an International Conference on Teacher Education in partnership with UNESCO followed by E9 meeting. It is perhaps for the first time that the agenda focuses on issues of one country, India. Over the last two decades we have had a variety of international projects and missions set up to improve elementary education including those for teacher education. These attempts have been full of energy and resources and the zeal accompanying these efforts needs to be complimented. However, as India gears towards concretization of legislative imperatives of quality education, we need to recognize that education is not a 'project' or a short-term mission; it is an effort to continuously engage with generations meaningfully. The process of education needs to be worked on continuously. The drive for energizing and transforming institutions of education has to be continuously maintained. Improvement and transformation cannot be a one-time or time-bound effort. The principles emanating from RtE 2009, NCF 2005, NCFTE 2009 as well as the series of seminars on teacher development, need to be worked upon continuously until a culture of quality, equity and justice becomes embedded in all Indian schools and teacher education institutions.

सुधीर श्रीवास्तव

कैसे पढ़ाएँ गणित?

एक शिक्षक ने लिखा अपने शिक्षक मित्र को ख़त

प्रिय निलेश,

तुम्हारी चिठ्ठी मिली। कल से लेकर अभी तक उसे कई बार पढ़ चुका हूँ। तुम्हारी बातों से बड़ी खीज और निराशा झलक रही है। विशेष रूप से वहाँ, जहाँ तुम लिखते हो ''... या तो ये बच्चे गणित नहीं सीख सकते या मुझे ही पढ़ाना नहीं आता...।'' मुझे चिन्ता भी हुई और ख़ुशी भी। चिन्ता इस बात की कि तुम्हारे जैसा परिश्रमी व्यक्ति भी ऐसा कह सकता है। ख़ुशी इस चीज़ पर कि तुम बच्चों के नहीं सीखने से परेशान होते हो। काश! सभी शिक्षक तुम्हारी तरह, बच्चों की फ़िक्र करने वाले होते।

तुम्हारी यही बात मुझे बाध्य कर रही है कि तुमसे इस पर बातें करूँ। पहले तुमसे बच्चों की कठिनाइयों पर बात करूँगा, फिर शिक्षक के रूप में तुम्हारी मुश्किलों पर। मैं नहीं जानता, मैं जैसा सोचता हूँ या करता हूँ उससे तुम्हें मदद मिलेगी या नहीं। क्योंकि हर बच्चे की अपनी समस्या होती है और कोई एक तरह का हल दूसरी जगह भी कारगर हो ऐसा ज़रूरी नहीं। फिर भी मुझे लगता है, कुछ बातें ऐसी ज़रूर हैं जो सीखने की बेहतर परिस्थितियाँ बनाती हैं।

एक बच्ची गणित सीखते समय कैसी दिक़्क़तें महसूस करती है, कैसे उसे हल करती है? इस पर सोचते हुए मुझे कुछ याद आ रहा है। उसे वैसा ही लिखने की कोशिश करता हूं ताकि तुम अपने ढंग से उसका विश्लेषण कर सको।

एक शाम जब ऑफ़िस से घर लौटा तो देखा मेरी छोटी बेटी सत्या अपनी माँ से उलझ रही थी। गुस्से से लगभग चीख रही थी, ''मैं नहीं पढ़ना चाहती गणित..। सबसे गन्दा विषय। कौन लाया इसको दुनिया में? मिलेगा तो बहुत मारूँगी, बोलूँगी चल मेरी क्लास में बैठ के देख।'' उसकी माँ ने मेरी ओर देखा। उनकी आंखों में एक सवाल था, ''क्या करूँ?'' मैंने इशारे से ही कहा, ''छोड़ दो।''

थोड़ी देर बाद मैं सत्या के पास जाकर बैठा। उसकी पीठ पर हाथ रखकर पूछा, ''क्या बात है बेटा?''

उसने मेरी ओर देखकर कहा, ''पापा, गणित अच्छा विषय नहीं है न?'' मुझे जवाब नहीं सूझा। थोड़ा ठहरकर मैंने कहा, ''हाँ बेटा कभी–कभी मुझे भी ऐसा ही लगता है।'' वह आश्वस्त हुई उसके विचार को स्वीकृति मिल गई थी।

मैंने पूछा, ''आज मम्मी से क्यों झगड़ रही थीं?''

''मम्मी होमवर्क पूरा करने को कह रही थीं।''

''होमवर्क मुश्किल था क्या?''

''मुश्किल नहीं था, मेरे से बन जाता है पर आज स्कूल में डांट पड़ी इसलिए ग़ुस्सा आ रहा था।''

''अच्छा तो ये बात है। क्या हुआ था स्कूल में?''

''पापा, आज दो तरह के सवाल मिले थे। एक, मीटर को सेंटीमीटर में और दूसरा, सेंटीमीटर को मीटर में बदलो। टीचर बोली कि मीटर को सेंटीमीटर में बदलने के लिए सौ का भाग दो।''

''तुम तो गुणा और भाग करना जानती हो इसमें क्या प्राब्लम है?''

''प्राब्लम है पापा। मैं कई बार भूल जाती हूँ, कहाँ गुणा करना है और कहाँ भाग देना? आख़िरी सवाल में तो किलोमीटर भी आ गया है।''

''ओह! . . .तुमने अपनी प्राब्लम टीचर को बताई?''

''हाँ पापा, मैं उनसे पूछा कि मीटर को सेंटीमीटर में बदलते समय सौ का गुणा क्यों करते हैं?''

''वाह! तुम्हारा सवाल तो बढ़िया था। क्या जवाब दिया टीचर ने?''

''टीचर ज़ोर से बोलीं, ''जितना मैं कह रही हूँ उतना करो।''

ओह!...

मुझे कुछ सूझा नहीं क्या बोलूँ। फिर मुझे लगा, इस समय टीचर की इस प्रतिक्रिया पर सोचने से अच्छा है बच्ची के सवाल पर विचार किया जाए।

जब मैंने इस सवाल पर ग़ौर किया तो मुझे लगा कि

और भी कई सवाल होंगे जिन पर सोचना होगा जैसे बच्चे की वास्तविक समस्या क्या है? क्या वह मीटर, सेंटीमीटर के आपसी सम्बन्ध को समझता है? क्या उसे पता है कि इन इकाइयों की मदद से किस चीज़ के नाप को किया जाता है? क्या मीटर और सेंटीमीटर के परिणाम में भेद कर सकता है? क्योंकि मुझे तो अभी भी कठिनाई होती है जब मैं किसी बिल्डिंग की ऊँचाई या ज़मीन की लम्बाई–चौड़ाई का अनुमान लगाता हूँ या फिर मीटर या फुट में दिए गए परिणाम को आपस में बदलता हूँ। ये तो वे समस्याएँ हैं जिनकी मैं कल्पना कर पा रहा हूँ। न जाने ऐसी और कितनी बातें होंगी जो मेरी सोच से परे हैं।

यह सब सोचते हुए मैंने तय किया कि पहले यह पता किया जाए कि बच्ची नाप–जोख के सम्बन्ध में मोटे तौर पर क्या–क्या जानती है। फिर उसे मीटर स्केल या टेप दिखाकर मीटर–सेंटीमीटर के बारे में बात की जाए। इतनी बातचीत से तो समझ बनेगी और उसके आधार पर आगे सोचा जाएगा।

खाना खाते समय मैंने पूछा, ''सत्या मेरे लिए रोटी लाओगी?''

''हाँ पापा।''

''दो किलो ले आओ बेटा।'' मैंने सहज बनते हुए कहा।

''दो किलो''? उसने मेरी ओर आश्चर्य से देखा फिर कहा, ''पापा किलो में तो सब्ज़ी, दाल, शक्कर लाते हैं।''

''अच्छा ऐसा है, तो चलो दो लीटर ले आओ, आज इतना ही खा लूँ।''

''क्या मज़ाक़ है पापा, रोटी पेट्रोल है क्या जो लीटर में नापेंगे?''

''अच्छा तो जितनी तुम्हारी मर्ज़ी उतनी ही ले आओ।''

''बड़ी जल्दी हार मान गए पापा। मैं तो समझी थी कि अभी आप मीटर और घंटे में भी रोटी मँगाएँगे।''

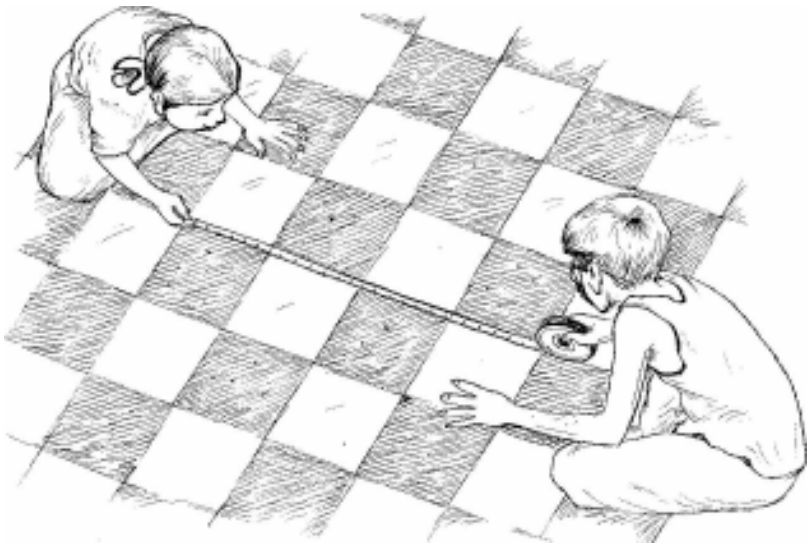
मुझे हँसी आ गई। मैंने कहा ''बेटा, मैं जानना चाहता था नापने की कौन–कौन सी इकाइयों को तुम जानती हो।''

ये तो मैं समझ गई थी आपके सवाल पूछने के ढंग से। पापा मैं जानती हूँ कि मीटर और सेंटीमीटर से लम्बाई, नापते हैं। मैं तो इतना जानना चाहती थी कि यहाँ गुणा–भाग करने के लिए सौ ही क्यों लेते हैं?

खाना खाकर जब उठा तो बात फिर शुरू हुई। मीटर टेप लेकर हम दोनों ने 'एक मीटर' लम्बाई पर ग़ौर किया। फिर यह देखा कि कमरे की कौन–कौन सी चीज़ें एक मीटर से ज़्यादा लम्बी या छोटी हैं। अपने अनुमान को जाँचा भी, अनुमान के सही होने का मज़ा भी लिया। एक और गतिविधि की, दीवार और फ़र्श पर छोटे–छोटे निशान बनाए, फिर अनुमान से दूसरे निशान इस तरह बनाए कि वे पहले से एक मीटर दूरी पर हों। इसे जांचते समय बड़ा रोमांच हुआ। हम एक मीटर के बहुत नज़दीक अनुमान लगा रहे थे।

फ़र्श पर एक मीटर लम्बाई का अनुमान लगाते समय यह पता चला कि फ़र्श पर लगे हुए चार टाइलों की लम्बाई ठीक एक मीटर थी। एक टाइल की लम्बाई कैसे बताई जाए इस पर बात करते हुए सेंटीमीटर की, नाप को पहचाना। हमने यह देखा कि सत्या की तर्जनी का अगला हिस्सा मीटर टेप पर बने किसी भी सेंटीमीटर के हिस्से को ठीक–ठीक ढंक लेता है।

अब यह पता चल गया था कि एक मीटर कहने से चार टाइलों की लम्बाई के बराबर लम्बाई का अनुमान होता है, जबकि एक सेंटीमीटर कहने से ऊँगली की एक पोर के फैलान का पता चलता है। अब हमने फ़र्श पर लगी टाइल को ऊँगलियों से नापना शुरू किया। यह नाप एक जैसी नहीं आ रही थी। हमने तय किया कि इसे टेप से नापा जाए। नापने पर पता चला की एक टाइल का एक किनारा पचीस सेंटीमीटर का है। दूसरी,



तीसरी और चौथी सभी टाइल के किनारे एक बराबर निकले।

मैंने बच्ची से पूछा दो टाइल्स की लम्बाई कितनी होगी? उसने कहा, ''पच्चीस और पच्चीस यानी पचास सेंटीमीटर...।'' फिर उसने कहा, ''पापा मुझे बताने दीजिए. .. चार टाइल्स की लम्बाई माने चार बार पचीस ... याने सौ सेंटीमीटर और चार टाइल्स की लम्बाई एक मीटर भी है।''

बिलकुल सही, चार टाइल्स की लम्बाई को हम दो तरह से बता सकते हैं, ''चार टाइल्स की लम्बाई एक मीटर है या चार टाइल्स की लम्बाई सौ सेंटीमीटर है।''

''अब समझ गई पापा, जितने मीटर उतने सौ सेंटीमीटर। पाँच मीटर याने पाँच बार सौ सेंटीमीटर याने पाँच सौ सेंटीमीटर। थैंक यू पापा।''

''मैंने उसके गालों को थपथपाकर पूछा कैसा लगा?''

''मज़ा आ गया।''

रात के साढ़े ग्यारह बज गए थे। मैंने पूछा, ''अब बस करें?''

बच्ची ने कहा, ''एक बात और बता दीजिए। सेंटीमीटर वाले भाग के अन्दर जो छोटे–छोटे निशान हैं वो क्यों हैं?''

''बेटा अब कल बात करेंगे...।''

''नहीं, अभी बताइए... उसका भी कोई नाम है क्या?''

''बस दो बातें बताऊँगा वे मिलीमीटर के निशान हैं और जो चीज़ें एक सेंटीमीटर से भी कम लम्बाई, चौड़ाई या मोटाई की हों उन्हें नापने में इसकी मदद लेते हैं। जैसे तुमसे कोई पूछे कि पेंसिल या झाड़ू की सींक कितनी मोटी है तो तुम इसे मिलीमीटर में बता सकती हो।''

मैंने देखा उसका ध्यान कहीं और था। मेरी पूरी बात शायद उसने नहीं सुनी। मैंने पूछा, ''क्या सोचने लगी?''

उसने कहा, ''पापा यदि चींटियों के गाँव में सड़क बनानी पड़ेगी तो वो सड़क कम–से–कम तीन मिलीमीटर चौड़ी रखनी पड़ेगी। एक मिलीमीटर जाने वाली चींटियों के लिए एक मिलीमीटर आने वाली चींटियों के लिए और एक मिलीमीटर की खाली जगह जिससे वो टकराएँ नहीं...।''

उसकी इस कल्पना पर मैं चुप हो गया। मैं वहाँ तक नहीं पहुँच सकता था। उस रात मैं यही सोचता रहा कि कैसे दिमाग़ में नए विचार, नई युक्तियाँ आती हैं। जब हम किसी काम में डूब जाते हैं तब शायद ऐसे मौक़े बनते हैं। एक बात और जो मुझे आनंदित कर रही थी वह यह कि बच्चे भी नया सोचने में बड़ों से पीछे नहीं हैं।

दूसरे दिन शाम को जब हम सब साथ बैठे थे तभी वहाँ सत्या आई। उसके एक हाथ में कैंची और दूसरे हाथ में इलास्टिक की दो डोरियाँ थीं– एक बड़ी, एक छोटी। उसे देखते ही उसकी माँ ने पूछा, ''अरे! इसे क्यों काट डाला?''

सत्या ने बड़ी शांति से कहा, ''इस टुकड़े को दुकान वाली आन्टी को वापस करना है। आप एक मीटर लाने को बोली थीं। आन्टी ने चार सेंटीमीटर ज़्यादा दे दिया है।''

नीलेश बातें ख़त्म नहीं हो रही हैं, गोया चिठ्ठी न हुई किताब हो गई। कई बैठकें हो गईं, बातें पूरी नहीं हुईं। टुकड़े–टुकड़े में लिखी ये चिठ्ठी टुकड़ों में ही पढ़ लेना, लेकिन पढ़ ज़रूर लेना। इतनी बातों में कोई एक तुम्हारे काम आ जाए तो मुझे तसल्ली हो जाएगी। मुझे तुम्हारी कोशिशों पर यक़ीन है। यक़ीन है कि तुम्हारे बच्चे तुम्हें प्यार करने लगेंगे। इस यक़ीन को सच में बदलने के लिए थोड़ी–सी बातें और...।

अब तक जो लिखा वह बच्चों से जुड़ा हुआ था। जब हम बच्चों की क्षमताओं और कमज़ोरियों को पहचानने लगते हैं और उन्हें अच्छी लगने और न लगने वाली अनुभूतियों को ख़ुद भी महसूस करने लगते हैं, तो मुझे लगता है कि हम एक अच्छे शिक्षक होने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहे होते हैं। लेकिन इतना ही पर्याप्त नहीं होता। इसके बाद ज़रूरत होती है, अपनी जानकारी और पढ़ाने के तौर–तरीक़ों को बेहतर बनाने की।

अपने ज्ञान को बढ़ाते रहने और जो कुछ हम जानते हैं उसे ताज़ा करते रहने की हमारी आदत बहुत बढ़िया स्तर की नहीं है। पिछले सप्ताह एक शिक्षक साथी से भेंट हुई। चार माह हुए, वे प्राथमिक शाला से उच्च प्राथमिक शाला में पदांकित हुए हैं। यहाँ गणित पढ़ाने के नाम से वे बहुत परेशान दिखे। उनका कहना था, ''मैं किससे सीखूँ?'' जब मैंने उनको पूछा कि आपने गणित की पुस्तकों को पढ़ा क्या? तो उनका जवाब ''नहीं'' था। मैंने उनसे फिर पूछा, ''प्राथमिक शाला में गणित पढ़ाने के लिए गणित की किताब पढ़ते थे?'' तो उन्होंने कहा, ''कभी इसकी ज़रूरत ही नहीं पड़ी।'' इसके पहले भी बहुत से लोगों में ऐसी सोच देखने को मिली।

मुझे लगा किसी स्तर पर हम सोचते हैं कि हमें बहुत आता है। उसमें कुछ जोड़ने के लिए सन्दर्भ ढूँढ़ने, कुछ पढ़ने या कुछ करने की आवश्यकता नही है। वहीं दूसरी तरफ़ थोड़ी–सी परिस्थितियाँ बदल जाने पर हमारे हाथ–पाँव फूल जाते हैं और तुरंत हम यह सोच लेते हैं कि हमसे तो कुछ हो ही नहीं सकता। दोनों ओर चरम पर रहते हैं। बीच में रहने की आदत ही नहीं बनी। किताबों के संसार को कभी देखा ही नहीं और इसीलिए उसकी ताक़त का भी अंदाज़ा भी नहीं लगाया। नीलेश, मैं समझता हूँ कि किताबें हमारी बहुत अच्छी दोस्त हैं और बढ़िया टीचर भी। प्रशिक्षणों, कार्यशालाओं और बैठकों में भी बहुत कुछ सीखने–जानने को मिलता है किन्तु हम अपनी छोटी–छोटी समस्याओं के लिए उसका इन्तज़ार नहीं कर सकते। यदि मेरी बात ठीक लगे तो गणित की किताबों को एक बार पूरा पढ़ लो धीरे–धीरे। यक़ीन मानो इतनी सारी नई बातें मिलेंगी कि तुम्हें आश्चर्य होगा।

और हाँ, यह विश्वास रखना कि तुम एक अच्छे शिक्षक हो। छोटी–छोटी असफलताएँ तुम्हारा रास्ता नहीं रोक सकतीं, इतना संकेत ज़रूर करती हैं कि रास्ता बदलने की ज़रूरत हैं। तो कुछ–कुछ नया करो अच्छा लगेगा।

चिठ्ठी लिखना। तुम्हारी चिठ्ठियाँ मुझे अच्छी लगती हैं।

तुम्हारा ही
सुधीर

Initiating dialogue

This issue of the publication has contributions from student teachers, school teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers from schools, DIETs, CTEs, IASEs, SCERTs and NGOs of experiences they value. We invite you to write about any of your memorable experiences from your professional life that excite, motivate, encourage, initiate reflection or provoke some other form of engagement and send it to us so that we can share it with everyone. You can also send in questions or comments on issues that concern you and you feel need public discussion. Contributions may be sent to: rajan.janaki@gmail.com, and vbsudr@yahoo.com

शहनाज़ डी.के.

कक्षा में डिक्शनरी

हमारा विद्यालय बुनियादी विद्यालय होने के कारण हमारे यहाँ मेहमानों का आना–जाना लगा रहता है क्योंकि ऐसे विद्यालयों की संख्या भारत में कम है। इसलिए लोग इसके बारे में जानने को उत्सुक रहते हैं। पिछले वर्ष (2008) हमारे यहाँ एक अतिथि स्कूल देखने आए जो विदेश में अपना अध्यापन का कार्य कर रहे हैं। उनकी रुचि बच्चों के साथ काम करने में थी और अंग्रेज़ी विषय से संबंधित कुछ गतिविधियाँ बच्चों के साथ करना चाहते थे। जब वे मेरी कक्षा चौथी में आए तो उन्होंने मुझसे पूछा कि क्या बच्चों के पास डिक्शनरी है? मेरे मना करने पर उन्होंने पूछा कि क्या वे कभी डिक्शनरी का उपयोग करते हैं? मैंने कहा, ''हाँ, कभी–कभी लाइब्रेरी से लाकर कुछ नए शब्द ढूँढ़ते हैं। पर ऐसा करने के लिए उन्हें डिक्शनरी बार–बार मिलती नहीं क्योंकि लाइब्रेरी में भी दो ही डिक्शनरी हैं। उन्होंने कहा, ''अच्छा, आप मेरी मदद करें तो हम बच्चों के समूह बना लेते हैं और दो डिक्शनरी से भी काम चला लेंगे।'' उन्होंने बच्चों को अलग–अलग तरह की गतिविधि करने के लिए दी और दो समूहों को कुछ अंग्रेज़ी के शब्द डिक्शनरी से ढूँढ़ने के लिए कहा। बच्चों की हमने मदद की और वे काम आसानी से करने लगे। सभी बच्चों को डिक्शनरी से काम करने में मज़ा आया।

उनके जाने के बाद मैंने सोचा कि बच्चों की डिक्शनरी में जो रुचि जगी है उसे कैसे बनाए रखा जाए कि वे इस कार्य का लाभ उठा सकें और उनकी अंग्रेज़ी में रुचि बढ़े व डर दूर हो। मैंने लाइब्रेरियन से बात की तो उन्होंने मेरी मदद करने के लिए सलाह दी कि मेरे पास दो पुरानी दीमक लगी डिक्शनरी हैं जिसका उपयोग बेझिझक बच्चे कर सकते हैं। फट भी जाएगी तो कोई बात नहीं। मुझे यह मंज़ूर था कि दीमक लगी डिक्शनरी ही बच्चों के लिए ले लूँ। क्योंकि बच्चों के लिए नई डिक्शनरी मँगवाना संभव नहीं था। हमारे विद्यालय में गाँव से आने वाले बच्चों के माता–पिता उनके लिए इतना ख़र्च नहीं करते हैं कि वे उन्हें डिक्शनरी दिला पाएँ। बच्चों ने दीमक लगे पन्नों पर भी कई शब्दों के अर्थ ढूँढ़ लिए और अधिक रुचि से काम करने लगे। परन्तु पुरानी डिक्शनरी ज़्यादा दिन नहीं चली और सारे पन्ने फटने लगे। मैंने एक बार फिर कोशिश की और प्रधानाध्यापिका से निवेदन किया कि मुझे कम–से–कम दो डिक्शनरी नई मंगवा दें। परन्तु फिर एक बार मुझे दो पुरानी डिक्शनरी दे दी गईं कि जब तक नई मँगवाते हैं इससे काम चलाओ। फिर बच्चों ने दो पुरानी डिक्शनरी ले ली और लगातार उनकी रुचि अंग्रेज़ी के नए शब्दों में बढ़ने लगी। इसका प्रभाव क्लास लाइब्रेरी में दिखने लगा बच्चे अंग्रेज़ी की जिन किताबों से डरते थे उन्हें पढ़ने लगे, भले ही उनका उच्चारण ग़लत होता लेकिन वे डरते नहीं थे। नए शब्दों के अर्थ ढूँढ़ने लगे। अब कक्षा डिक्शनरी के लिए लड़ाइयाँ होने लगीं। सभी बच्चे पहले लेना चाहते थे। मैंने उन्हें अपनी बारी का इंतज़ार करना सिखाया जिसमें काफ़ी समय लगा। परन्तु धीरे–धीरे वे सीख गए।

अब वे बच्चे कक्षा पाँचवीं में आ गए हैं। इस वर्ष भी उन्होंने अपना डिक्शनरी देखना जारी रखा है। इससे लगता है कि अब यह उनकी आदत बन गई है। वे अपनी क्लास लाइब्रेरी में और अधिक डिक्शनरी की माँग करने लगे। मैंने उन्हें कहा कि तुम अपने गुल्लक के पैसों से क्या ख़रीदते हो? उन्होंने कहा, ''खिलौने, नए कपड़े, साइकिल आदि।'' क्या कुछ पैसे डिक्शनरी के लिए निकाल सकते हो? कुछ बच्चे एक साथ बोले, ''हम अपने राखी के पैसों से नई डिक्शनरी ले आएँगे।''

Namrita Batra

Children's voices during assembly time

Making school assemblies a space for children's participation in Baran district, Rajasthan

Abstract

The article presents a researcher's perspective of how teachers of some schools in Baran district made morning assembly a more meaningful time for children by giving them space to present poems and stories of their choice.

10:40 पर विद्यालय के प्रांगण में सभी बालक–बालिकाएं पंक्ति में बैठ गए। लड़के व लड़कियां अलग–अलग पंक्तियों में बैठे थे। बच्चों ने बैठे–बैठे शिक्षकों के निर्देश पर सावधान–विश्राम किया। सभी बच्चों के सामने तीन बालिकाएं बैठी थीं जिन्होंने सबसे पहिले वंदेमातरम् गाया जिसका दोहरान बाकी बच्चे कर रहे थे। इसके बाद ''हमें तुम महान बना दो मां'' प्रार्थना हुई फिर 'तमसो मां ज्योर्तिगमय' और फिर ओम शांति ओम और इसके बाद 2 मिनिट का मौन रखा गया। मौन के बाद एक बच्चे ने पुनः सावधान–विश्राम कराया। प्रार्थना सभा में 3 शिक्षक एवं प्रधानाध्यापक उपस्थित थे। इनमें से दो शिक्षक विद्यार्थी मित्र योजना से थे। इसके बाद बारी–बारी से कुछ बच्चों ने संस्कृत के श्लोक बोले और उसका हिन्दी अनुवाद भी किया। बच्चे लोक तो ऊंची आवाज़ में बोल रहे थे और उसका हिन्दी अर्थ बहुत धीरे से बोल देते थे। कुछ श्लोक इस प्रकार थे, 'विनाशकाले विपरीत बुद्धि', 'वीर भोग्या वसुन्धरा' आदि।

राजकीय प्राथमिक विद्यालय बॉसखेड़ा (माल), समरानियाँ, शाहबाद

पहले दिन प्रार्थना 10:35 और दूसरे दिन प्रार्थना 10:40 पर शुरू हुई। पहले दिन 4 शिक्षक आए व दूसरे दिन 3 शिक्षक आए। प्रधानाध्यापक जी लंच बाद आए थे। पहले दिन एक शिक्षक ने बच्चों को प्रार्थना में पंक्तियों में खड़ा किया। तीन लड़कियां 'दया कर दान भक्ति का' प्रार्थना बुला रही थीं। बाकी बच्चे उनके पीछे–पीछे बोल रहे थे। प्रार्थना सभा में जो बच्चे कतारों में इधर–उधर हो रहे थे, शिक्षक उन्हें मार कर सीधा खड़ा होने के लिए कह रहा था। दूसरे दिन प्रार्थना में दूसरे शिक्षक ने बच्चों को पंक्तियों में लगाया तथा जो बच्चे प्रार्थना में इधर–उधर हो रहे थे, उन्हें पीट कर सीधा लाईनों में लगा रहा था। दोनों ही दिन प्रार्थना में बच्चों ने प्रतिज्ञा, राष्ट्र गान व गीत, दोहे, कविताएं बोलीं। बच्चों को शिक्षक ने एक–एक करके खड़ा किया तथा गीत, दोहे व कविताएं बोलने के लिए कहा। ऐसा दोनों दिन ही हुआ। बच्चों ने दोहे जैसे– 'बड़ा भया तो क्या भया जैसे पेड़ खजूर, पंछी को छाया नहीं फल लगे अति दूर' व 'सॉई इतना दीजिए जाने कुटुम्ब समाए, मैं भी भूखा न रहूं साधु न भूखा जायें' आदि सुनाए। बाकी बच्चे इनके पीछे–पीछे बोल रहे थे। इसके अतिरिक्त बच्चों ने कविताएं जैसे– भालू आया भागा–भागा आदि कविताएं सुनाईं।

राजकीय आ. उच्च प्राथमिक विद्यालय, खाण्डा सहरोल, बीची, शाहबाद

The account of morning assembles given above are brief but vivid descriptions from two schools in Baran, one of the most backward districts of Rajasthan. Morning assembly is a time-honoured and integral part of the Indian school time-table. The tenor of assemblies in government schools is remarkably similar all over India. Assembly-time essentially includes recitation of prayer, the national song and national anthem, slogans proffessing national pride and social change and sometimes children are expected to respond to general knowledge questions. Throughout this time children are supposed to maintain silence and recite when teachers instruct them to. Many a time there is not even a change in the order of the pieces being recited. Even a cursory glance at the children during assembly time indicates their listlessness and disengagement with the entire process. This is especially true for the younger ones who have not fully memorized what they are reciting and seem to be simply opening and closing their mouths to avoid being singled out by teachers and reprimanded for indiscipline. The beginning of the school day, a time which should be full of energy and vitality for children, is a time when children are required to be part of an activity of which they understand very little and which gives them little or no space for their own ideas and expression.

Baran is one of Rajasthan's 33 districts. Eighty-three percent of its population lives in rural areas. It has a tribal population (21%) which is higher than the state figure of 13%. The literacy rate as per the 2001 census is 59.5%; there is a significant difference between the male (75.8%) and female (41.5%) literacy rate.

Digantar and Vidya Bhawan in partnership with the Government of Rajasthan and the ICICI Centre for Elementary Education (ICEE) had worked in the district with the Quality Education Program (QEP), an initiative under Sarva Shiksha Abiyaan (SSA). An important area of intervention for the project was impacting the learning environment in the school and the classroom along with enhanced proficiency levels of children and improved attitudes of school staff and functionaries towards their roles and learning. The program was based on the belief that children actively construct their knowledge and also have immense potential to learn from each other. The teacher has a very significant role to play in that she provides space to children to question, comment, explain, reflect, analyze, infer, imagine and critique. She also provides opportunities for cooperative learning.

QEP acknowledged the importance of morning assembly in the daily time-table of the school. It considered assembly-time much more than a morning ritual requiring a monotonous repetition of the same activities each day and attempted to shape this time such that the whole school could come together to go forth in the day with confidence and energy. For the program this morning time was a space for children to express themselves in ways which have meaning for them and with enthusiasm and enjoyment. It also considered it a time for children of different classes to get to know each other and for teachers and students to plan together for the day as well as for upcoming school events. It also believed that if teachers and students jointly prepared for the assembly with activities like sweeping the space where assembly was to be held, spreading mats, organising materials, and so on, it would help develop a sense of joint responsibility towards school material and space.

Giving space to children's voices and making assembly time meaningful for them was important for QEP. Efforts in this direction started in more than one way. The program *samarthaks* (facilitators) who used to visit these schools on weekly basis first became silent spectators to the assemblies. After observing quite a few assemblies, they understood the routine and initiated a dialogue with teachers about the engagement of children in the daily ritual. Did the younger children understand what they were reciting? How did children relate to the *shlokas* and slogans that they chanted? What about *vande matram* and *jan gan man*? Did children of primary classes understand the meaning of words like 'collector', district', 'state', 'country', 'capital' etc., which were recurrently a part of the general knowledge questions? Teacher responses to these questions voiced a fervent need for children to be inculcated with both moral values and national pride. At the same time, they agreed that assembly would

be more meaningful for children if they were given opportunities to express themselves. This gave some space to the *samarthaks* for affecting the tone of the assemblies.

The *samarthaks* started introducing children to various *balgeets* (children's songs) during class-time. It soon became apparent to teachers that children enjoyed these songs immensely. Each time the *samrthak* entered a school children crowded around her asking her to repeat the songs they liked most or asking her to teach them new songs. They were also keen to come up in class and recite these songs individually and in groups. From there onwards, it was not very difficult for the *samarthak* to negotiate with the teachers for time, for children's recitation of poems of their choice during assembly-time. The *samarthaks* also started regularly telling stories to children using both action and expression during language classroom time. Teachers observed how, during these story telling sessions, children would sit at the edge of their seats with bated breath, waiting to hear what would come next or would guess what would come next. This inspired some of them to try the same not only during classroom time but also.

Initially, the *samarthak* had to take initiative in asking children to make a presentation in the assembly. Also, on days that the *samrthak* was not there in the school, children's presentation were not a part of the assembly. However as children learnt more and more *balgeets* and started feeling that the assembly was a space for their expressions they started volunteering during assembly-time to recite poems of their choice. Teachers also started asking children to prepare for the next days assembly-time.

After three years of intervention, our observation of Dhaturia school tell us that most children wanted to present during assembly and substantial time was also devoted to children's creative efforts, by teachers. It was also heartening to see children's intense enjoyment in not only making their own presentations but also in joining in collectively with the child who was presenting. Children's voices and actions while they sing….*Lal tamatar bade mazedar…Aa re badal…. Kya tumne kyaa tumne naii dekha jii…Hara smandar, gopi chandar…* filled the morning air, and at the end of the assembly, children walked into their classes with anticipation of things to come.

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Sukanta Kumar Mahapatra

Reforming Teacher Management System in India: Voices from Within and Outside

Abstract

The paper highlights the recruitment, compensation, incentives, training mechanisms and cadre system of teachers of six countries using comparative literature and reports of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and World Bank. It adds to the evidence that a number of challenges exist in restructuring the teacher management system in India, and also discusses a select number of successful policies and practices for effective retention of quality teachers.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, teacher supply, quality of teaching and teaching work-force have been the focus of research both in developed and developing nations. While many developing nations are grappling with the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, it has been an issue for developed countries to retain better qualified and more experienced teachers both in the profession itself and in the school sector (Furlong, Smith & Brennon, 2009). On the other hand, it has been challenging for every nation to check high rates of staff turnover and uneven distribution of qualified teachers across the school system.

It has been recognized that improving high pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) as well as improving the quality of teaching force in terms of 'qualification, experience and competence' are of high importance for the effective functioning of an educational system (World Bank, 2005).This has resulted in a focus on reforms in terms of qualification, competency, pay and incentive structures to attract the work-force and retain the current-work force in the educational system with its varying qualifications, salaries and incentives and parameters with regard to effectiveness of the teacher management system.

This paper looks into policies and practices of Malaysia, China, Australia, Canada, South Africa and Mexico with a view of drawing lessons for India. These countries, like India, have a federal structure where education is state responsibility and this include regulations for teacher education. They are representative of the African, American, and Asia-Pacific regions and are also rated very high in their respective regions on educational indicators. While Canada and Australia rank 3 and 5 in the PISA# ranking, Mexico, Malaysia and South Africa respectively rank 53, 45 and 83 in the EFA Development Index (EDI)#.

Overview of the education system of the six countries

The socio-economic and political context varies to a large degree from country to country. Larger the size of the population, greater the scope for expansion of its educational system. China has the largest population- 1,315 million, while Malaysia has only 20 million.

The ages for compulsory schooling vary from 6 to 16. In some cases, compulsory schooling starts at 5 or 6 years and goes upto 15 years of age. Only in South Africa is the entry age 7 years.

In Australia, government schools are the direct responsibility of the relevant state or territory minister, while non-government schools are established and operate under conditions determined by government and registration authorities. Many non-government schools have some religious affiliation, most with the Catholic Church.

In China, the government is the principle investor in education, though private educational investment has been increasing rapidly since 1978. Local governments play a key role in compulsory education, while central and provincial governments are dominant in higher education.

In occupational and adult education, non-governmental entities including industrial organizations, businesses and public institutions play an important role. The Ministry of Education is the supreme administrative body for education in the country, with numerous branches at provincial and local levels. Fiscal allocations are made on a region-by-region basis through the Ministry and account for majority of the educational funding. China's education system consists of four basic educational 'components': primary education, secondary education, higher education and adult education.

In Canada, each province and territory has the power to establish it's own autonomous education system and to make decisions regarding schools, teachers and curriculum within its province/territory.

Public expenditure on education is an important indicator of public provisioning. Malaysia invests 8.1% of GDP, Canada 6.3% and Australia invests 4% (UIS, 2006). Malaysia pays its teacher high salaries amounting to 2.7% of GDP.

Teacher recruitment and selection

In most of the countries, tensions exist between issues connected with teacher supply and demand and entry qualification levels to teacher training programs. Minimum tertiary level qualifications are prescribed for appointment of teachers. But some countries appoint teachers, lowering qualifications either due to paucity of a work-force having the required qualifications or the demand from work-force from particular groups and communities.

In Australia, teacher recruitment is a merit selection process and involves assessment of an applicant through a written application, supporting documentation, an interview and referee reports. Following this assessment process, applicants are assigned a recruitment rating with suitably qualified applicants being immediately considered by school principals for teaching vacancies at their schools. Offers of permanent and contract employment are made throughout the year depending on the system's priorities (Australian Capital Territory for Education and Training, 2010).

The Department of Education, South Africa in 2006 reported that there has been a decline in the enrolment of student-teachers over the past decades and also a decline in the number of African student-teachers who have proficiency in indigenous languages. On the other hand, it was found that student-teachers undergoing B.Ed. courses, do not teach for long in the country. South-Africa introduced a scheme of bursaries to benefit about 3500 student-teachers every year. These students sign contracts that they have to teach for a number of years in South Africa.

In Australia, all states prescribe four years of training in accredited university courses in order to be employed on a permanent basis. Teachers who have qualified in the past with either a two-year diploma or three-year degree and have not updated their qualifications are usually ineligible for permanent employment, except in areas where schools are unable to fill vacancies. Since the introduction of longer pre-service programs, including the B.Ed. programs, there has been a massive upgrading of qualifications. Many teachers have been supported by schools and employing authorities to undertake part or full-time studies and universities have introduced flexible schemes to recognize prior learning, experience and competence, with a great variety of study routes and programs. There are also provisions for appointing candidates with three years of experience if required, though they are paid a salary lower than that of new entry teachers with adequate qualifications.

In South Africa, to be recruited as a teacher, the aspirants needs to have a four-year B.Ed. degree and a one-year post-graduate diploma-following an approved first degree-known as the PGCE or higher diploma in education. But practising teachers, both unqualified and under-qualified can top up their performance with the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). These education courses are validated by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The teacher selection is done by school governing bodies (SGBs) although in some cases, the SGBs (including parent representatives) are not well-equipped for this role (OECD,2008).

Mexcio and Ontario, Canada's prospective teachers are required to go through some competitive tests for entry into the teaching profession even after acquiring the requisite qualifications. Tests are conducted to assess the prospective candidates' suitability for a career in teaching- basic skills such as literacy and numeracy; subject matter knowledge in the chosen area of specialization; professional knowledge; teaching skills and on-the-job performance.

Till recently, recruitment procedures in India did not include a competency test at the entry level. State governments recruited teachers with prescribed educational qualifications and pre-service teacher training without testing the knowledge of content and ability to engage in the teaching-learning process. The assumption was that deficiencies can be plugged via in-service training. The situation is very acute in rural and tribal settings in India, where teachers are recruited without meeting minimum qualifications and training due to lack of person-power in those reserved seats. Teachers face numerous challenges due to lack of training to teach in these multicultural settings and so they teach according to their own understanding of the classroom. With the advent of RtE, national and state level teacher eligibility tests have been introduced; no one may be appointed a teacher without qualifying in these, although some states in the north-east may be given some additional time to meet this criteria.

Teacher preparation

There is remarkable variability with regard to teacher preparation in both pre-service and in-service teacher training in many aspects such as institutional contexts, content area, time allocation and forms of practical training both in nature and time period. (Stuart, 2003; OECD, 2005; Reimers, 2003).

Pre-service teacher education programs are termed as Initial Teacher Preparation (ITP) programs and fall into two categories: the consecutive model and the concurrent model (Eurydice,2002).The first involves receiving degree level education before enrolling in a particular program of ITP while the second combines the study of a particular subject with theoretical and practical components of teacher education and training. The selection criteria for pre-service teacher education vary according to the models of ITP practised in the country. While most countries follow the concurrent model, Australia has both consecutive and concurrent models. Consecutive programs allow flexible entry into teacher education. Graduates can enter teacher education even after having completed a first degree in another discipline and by deferring the decision point. (OECD,2005).

In India, there are more than 500 district institutes of education and training (DIETs), 100 colleges for teacher education (CTEs), 30 institutes for advanced studies in education (IASEs), many university departments of education as well as thousands of private teacher training colleges. There are university-based teacher education programs offering B.Ed. of one year at the state level for preparing secondary level teachers; there are very few central institutions who offer a two- year B.Ed. On other hand, DIETs and many other private institutions offer a diploma program for elementary teachers (D.Ed., STC or PTC) of two years. These are much shorter in duration when compared to, teacher education programs for primary education at the international level which are on an average 3.9 years in length. For lower secondary education this duration is 4.4 years and for upper secondary 4.9 years (OECD, 2005). In almost all states and territories of Australia and Canada, a minimum of four years of academic study, including at least one year of pre-service teacher education is the minimum requirement for entry of new teachers and re-entry of previously experienced teachers into permanent positions (UNESCO, 2008). Likewise, Mexico prescribes four years of minimum initial teacher preparation. Malaysia prescribes one year of post-graduate diploma in teaching and a five and half year duration for bachelors in teaching.

In-service education is also very important in shaping the future roles of teachers in educational settings. Therefore, every country has provisions for in-service education and training for their teachers. With regard to the kind of in-service education and training, Greenland (1983) has put forth four classifications: In-service education/training (i) for unqualified teachers; (ii) to upgrade teachers; (iii) to prepare teachers for new roles; such as teacher education or principals and (iv) curriculum related, when there

are curricular changes in the system, or when teachers require some short refresher courses (Reimers, 2003). Malaysia, for example, provides in-service training for practising teachers and also organizes short-term courses, seminars and conferences to enhance their teaching abilities as well as professional and disciplinary knowledge. Some universities which organize off-shore and distance education programs for busy teachers, who are unable to attend campus-based academic programs. Malaysia also has the provision of sponsoring teachers with monthly allowances as well as full-salary leaves for in-service training.

In China, in-service trainings are based on a multiple model. In-service training for teachers include degree and non-degree education. Degree education includes not only make-up education for in-service teachers without qualified certificates but also upgrading education for in-service teachers with qualified certificates. On the other hand, non-degree education is in four modes: University/ college training, school-based training, district or country teacher training and on-line training for rural teachers. There are also provisions for subscribing to newspapers and books along with provision of salary and allowances so that every student can study in his or her own spare time. The government publishes teacher guides and newsletters about the new curriculum to allow teachers to communicate with each other, organizes teachers to accept compulsory or voluntary training and arranges on-the-spot instructional meetings so that teachers can recount their experiences.

In Mexico, there are two national policies concerning initial training of basic teachers: The Program for Academic Transformation and Strengthening of Normal Schools and The National Policy for Training and Professional Development of Basic Education Teachers. As a part of these policies, national, regional and state workshops are held regularly to update teachers about the changing curriculum. Materials are also published and distributed among basic education teachers. There is also provision for production and transmission of television programs related to curricular contents and operation of a webpages in order to update and communicate with teachers about the changing curriculum and options for academic make-up courses for teachers and administrators who do not have bachelor degrees or have not graduated.

On the other hand, in Australia, many in-service development programs are undertaken by teachers largely at their own expense. This takes the form of traditional Ph.Ds and M.Eds. with research base, membership of and attendance at professional associations, professional reading and participation in school-based or program-based professional development, outside teaching hours. In addition, they can also take up post-graduate diplomas and post-graduate certificate courses designed for specific courses such as multi-cultural education, aboriginal studies, civics and citizenship education, language teaching, women's studies etc. Most Australian teachers are found to be motivated to accept this in-service development strategy because it plays a large part in their career development and also in getting salaries and incentives.

Australia also makes special efforts to build research skills during their pre-service education. On the other hand, teachers in Mexico are provided field-work opportunities to acquaint them to school-level activities. School-based experience for students in Mexico consists of placement in a school in the final year of training, and includes the provision of financial support. Student-teachers are guided by a group of teachers at host schools and followed by a tutor at the teacher education institutions.

In India, in-service programs are organized and managed by various providers both at national and state levels. While state governments provide institutional and financial support for in-service programs, support is provided at the national level by institutions like National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and through DIETs, SCERTs, BRCs and CRCs at the local level. Sarva Siksha Abhijan (SSA) has recently provided for an annual 20-day in-service training for trained teachers, a 60-day refresher course for untrained teachers and a 30-day orientation for freshly trained recruits. In spite of provisions for pre-service and in-service training, several studies indicate that pre-service education does not prepare teachers to meet the teaching needs of a multigrade classroom and a high student- teacher ratio (Nilsson,2003). In Tamil Nadu, half of the

grade 4 teachers who participated in a test could not answer 20% of the grade 4 questions in Mathematics (Bashir,1994). A recent study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh shows that only 28% of the surveyed teachers in government schools or private schools in the 10 district sample could solve area-based problems in Mathematics.The findings from language tasks completed by teachers also show that less than 50% teachers could meaningfully summarize a class 5 level language text. Four difficult words from a class 4 level text were selected and teachers were asked to write the meaning of each word in simple language. Less than 50% of the surveyed teachers could correctly perform this task. When asked to write a few sentences, teachers made several spelling mistakes (Kingdon and Bannerjee, 2009).

Teacher appraisal and incentives

It has been widely recognized that salary scales motivate staff to improve performance and that higher salaries need to be paid for better work and for more vital and important jobs in the education service (Thompson,1995).Yet, in most national education systems, career structure, salary scales and post-eligibility requirements are still based on length of service and qualifications, and not on the quality of the job. There are three main models of performance: 'merit pay', which involves providing individual teachers with higher pay based on student performance on standardised tests and classroom observation; 'knowledge and skill-based compensation', which involves higher pay for extra qualification or professional developments, and demonstrated knowledge and skills, which are believed to increase student performance; and 'school-based compensation', which involves group-based financial rewards, typically based on student performance for a grade level or whole school.

In Canada, teacher salary schedules are determined by a combination of years of post-secondary education and years of teaching experience. Additional allowances are also paid to teachers whose positions include additional administrative responsibilities.

In Mexico, a number of indicators are used to reward teachers. For example the creation of the Carrera Magisterial in 1992 was aimed at raising the quality of basic education through professional training of teachers, a new learning presence in schools and by improving working conditions in schools**.** There are five levels of promotion ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E') in the system. This evaluation is based on multiple variables like experience, professional skills, education skill and completion of accredited courses and student achievements (Acevedo, 2002). Apart from Carrera Magisterial (CM), educators in Mexico are evaluated with another program called the Vertical Ladder Program. This program is aimed at allowing educators to move to a higher category or to another level or higher salary. However, evaluation mechanisms only take into account teachers' seniority, academic training, updating but not their performances. Under the policy framework, teachers whose performance is not up to the mark or are under-qualified are given continuous feedback to update their qualifications or improve their performance. In the first instance, teachers are informed verbally by the school principal or supervisor and if there is no improvement, the authority gives written notification to the teacher. In extreme cases, there can be change in the teachers' workplace. Sometimes teachers' unions and parent associations also play a leading role in identifying teachers because they observe the performance of their children and children's relationship with teachers.

There is also provision for certifying professional competencies of teachers in normal schools. This evaluation is done by means of a national certification examination, evaluation of practicum in front of a group and presentation of evidence of systematic improvement of practicum (Guevera and Gonzalenz, 2004).The work culture in Mexico provides a nice opportunity for professional growth of teachers. Since the school runs in a shift arrangement and five hours on an average is fixed for job responsibilities, the teacher gets enough time for continuing their study along with their teaching job.

In Australia, almost all awards have some provision for performance pay. Teachers receive annual increments based on their level of performance and this increment can be withheld. There is a system of career structure that involves a two to four stage range from beginning teachers to experienced teachers, to experienced teacher

with responsibility (leading teachers) or positions or learning area or grade-level co-ordinator, assistant principal, principal and regional/ district office position. As teachers advance from one stage to the next they are expected to have deeper levels of knowledge, demonstrate more sophisticated and effective teaching, take on responsibility for co-curricular aspects of the school, assist colleagues and so on. By the leading teacher stage, they are expected to demonstrate exemplary teaching, educational leadership and ability to initiate and manage change (Australian Government for Education and Training, 2009). In the pyramidal structure, promotional positions are significantly fewer than classroom teaching positions. Unfortunately, in India, salary and incentives/promotion are based on years of experience instead of competency of teachers.

On the other hand, Malaysia has set benchmarks of qualification to provide salaries and incentives. Teachers with higher qualification are better paid than those with lower qualifications. Under the new proposed single-tier scheme, candidates applying for teaching jobs are divided into separate categories– graduates, non-graduates, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, senior assistants and headmasters, each of them compensated with different pay-scale. For example, those who hold a diploma will get a lower salary and start at a lower job rung compared to a teacher with degree in the same tier. Similarly, teachers who seek to further their studies are rewarded with a higher pay scheme once they have completed their education. This is aligned with Ministry of Education's objective to extend appreciation and recognize those with better academic credentials. Teachers, during their teaching career, are observed by a panel of inspectors from time-to-time while headmasters and deputies make annual appraisals of performance for promotion and other corresponding rewards.

The kind of incentives for teachers in South Africa is of a different nature. South Africa pays incentives for better performing teachers on the basis of a within school or district assessment. According to the 2008 salary agreement, all teachers who perform at a 'satisfactory' level as per an estimate made by an assessment panel within the school will receive a 3% pay increase every second year, over and above the regular inflationary increases. Teachers, who are deemed to perform at good or 'outstanding' level, will receive, in addition, an increase of 3% or 6% every second year. The assessment currently focuses on behavioral input factors such as ability to prepare classes and conduct pupil assessments, but the 2008 agreement includes an in-principle acceptance by unions and employers that in future years, pupil performance should be brought to bear upon the assessment of the teacher. There is also provision of another incentive scheme- the annual National Teachers Award. Under this scheme, the nine provincial departments of education nominate a total of 72 teachers, who are given an award at the national level (Government of South Africa, 2009).

In China, schools or other institutions of education conduct assessment of teachers' political awareness and ideological level, professional competence, attitude towards work and performance. On the other hand, administrative departments of education guide and supervise assessment work for teachers. Assessments are made taking opinion from teachers themselves, their colleagues as well as students and these form the basis for teacher appointments, pay rise as well as rewards and punishments. China has made a special provision for those who want to serve in rural areas. These teachers are provided with 10% more salary than their urban counterparts and if they continue their service for 10 years, another 10% is added to their salary and this does not include their routine salary increase (World Bank, 2009).

In Quebec, Canada, experienced teachers coach and guide student-teachers, undertake specific training and receive either additional pay or a reduction in classroom teaching responsibilities. About 12000 teachers participate in the mentor program. Some of these experienced teachers also have an opportunity to become co-researchers with university staff and to participate in collaborative studies on subjects such as teaching, learning, classroom management and student success or failure. In addition, experienced teachers may receive time release from their normal duties to provide support for less experienced colleagues (OECD, 2005).

To conclude, it was found that there were marked changes in teachers with regard to teaching behavior and job satisfaction following appraisal and feedback in most of the countries in the study. These aroused healthy competition among teachers and their capabilities were also built up with training to strengthen. Therefore, better teacher appraisal and feedback should be linked to the career growth of teachers.

Policy implications for India

The wealth of policies that India can benefit from, of the six nations under study are too numerous to be presented here. Some key policies worth emulating are:

- China model of incentives for attracting teachers in remote rural and tribal areas and for those who wish to continue their service in these areas.
- Mexico and Australia policies with regard to salary and incentives so that bright and talented young people are attracted to teaching jobs.
- Mexico's practice of flexible school-timings for teachers to prepare themselves for teaching activity.
- Australia and Canada models for pre-service teacher education.
- Australia model for teacher performance assessment and incentives.
- South Africa's model of bursaries for indigenous language medium teachers.
- Malaysian model of off-shore, in-service programs.
- Mexican model of collective and multi-stakeholder approach for certifying teachers.
- South Africa and Mexico's approach to performance linked teacher incentives.

Finally, more and more research is needed to support professional development of teachers. There are some countries which have an up-to-date database about teachers, teacher management and teacher development, and India needs to set this in place at the earliest.

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Hriday Kant Dewan

Testing as assessment

Abstract

This article attempts to present various issues surrounding large-scale assessment that predominate the present education system while juxtaposing these with principles about education, curriculum, assessment and knowledge emanating from National Curriculum Framework 2005. It attempts to highlight the competing imperatives of large-scale assessments and the very purpose for education.

Assessment has always been central to the process of education. It influences the structure of the curriculum, classroom process and teaching-learning materials. It is seen to serve as an indicator of the health of the system. Assessment outcomes can be carefully examined to improve and modify existing processes. However, the emphasis on assessment has increasingly acquired center stage without sufficient care and time being given to the analysis of performances; there is a propensity to shift strategy and direction without examining the functioning of the processes.

The traditional notion of one-time assessment as indicator of capability and potential has been strongly challenged. There is sufficient evidence that children are able to perform very differently if the contexts and manner of assessment are altered. There is now a greater recognition of the lag between learning and performance in discourses on education. There is also a recognition of the multiple dimensions that are developed through the process of engaging in the classrooms. Emphasis has been placed on differentiating between being educated and becoming literate. Arguments have been made about the unsuitability of one-to-one mapping of what happens in the school to the learning of the child. The incompleteness of school knowledge in relation to knowledge for living in a society and towards wider conceptual understanding is well-known and widely discussed. There is also the recognition that learners coming from diverse backgrounds have different experiences which also constitute learning and this learning is neither acknowledged nor identified.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and the assessment process put forward in the source books suggest the need for multiple ways of assessment. It deemphasizes paper- pencil tests as well as assessment processes that are uni-dimensional in their purpose or in their methodology and those that exist only for the purpose of evaluating children's classroom achievement.

Assessment needs to be a natural part of the teaching-learning process and not a separate endeavour in itself. NCF 2005 also emphasizes thinking about the purpose of assessment and the relationship of the purpose to its nature and structure. The recently promulgated Right to Education Act (RtE) 2009 also emphasizes a stress-free assessment process and the integral relationship between assessment and teaching and learning. It is in this context that we need to consider the assessment of children across borders, both intra and international.

In the last few years, assessment of children and comparison across borders has grown in size as well as in detail. International and national agencies claim to have validated universally applicable assessment tools to test understanding. These tests are considered to be usable across all borders- geographical, economic, sociological or cultural. The idea of comparing children has implications for the purpose of education as well as the system that governs it. It also has important implications for what we consider to be the process of learning and our beliefs about how children learn.

The purpose of these tests, where data is aggregated at macro levels, can only provide general global indicators. The data at present is largely used for the purpose of ranking the performance of systems, irrespective of their

respective initial conditions, opportunities and developmental possibilities. The usual key point of performance comparison is the estimated expenditure by the system. The comparisons are not expected to act as motivators but as gap finders and rankers. There is no analysis done with the team directly engaged with children about the reasons for the performance. Responses are not qualitatively analyzed, and even if they are they cannot help develop an understanding about the learning processes and mechanisms of thinking of children at a specific place unless there is dialog with children and teachers on the nature of the responses. The important point, however, is that such an effort is not even attempted.

Such processes are therefore not able to generate strategies and suggestions to those lagging behind- a basket of suggestions from which they have the right and responsibility to choose and act. The framework for comparison among educational systems is done in terms of cost. The principle underlying this comparison is surprising. It appears to be based on the argument that since developing countries have less to spend and have more children to educate, the education system must be such that with the same amount spent by the government, it should achieve more learning and for more children. The diversity in children and the context of schools and their impact on immediate performance is not considered. Over the last decade or more, there has been acknowledgement that each child has a specific context and that education must be related to and emerge from the context of the child. There is also an emphasis that assessment should be comprehensive continuous and must be part of the teaching-learning process. Paper and pencil tests must not be the only focus; assessments must also be made based on activities and interactions of the teacher with the children. This suggests an awareness of the context of the child and her knowledge, both in teaching-learning and in assessment. This suggests that the testing for each child needs to be according to her ability and contexts. It must take into account the previous level and the kind of exposures the child has had; must give her the opportunity to perform to the best of her ability. It also suggests that assessment should give feedback to the child and to her teacher so that the process of learning improves.

All this is not new. There has always been a recognition that assessment must be based on close and intense interactions between the teacher and the child. The counter argument that these interactions and relationships make assessment subjective, have led to the development of large public examinations that are supposed to be objective.

The urge for objectivity and the need to make minute comparisons between students' performance has lead to the development of systems that claim absolute objectivity at the surface level. While no one is prepared to dismiss the need for judging the ability of the learner to formulate long and medium length answers to questions, they are not a part of these tests. There is also recognition of the need to develop capability of analysis and expression, yet the present system shies away from including such tasks in the assessment and evaluation process. The fact that large number of learners have to be examined and compared in a short time frame also demands that such questions be avoided. They take a lot of the evaluator's time and bringing consistency in such evaluations across the diversity of learners, their contexts and across evaluators requires a mammoth effort. The entire process of education, including the process of assessment, measured in economic costs also discourages such tasks. The assessment systems now in place have not only to be objective but also needs to be such that they require minimal human engagement. Multiple-choice question (MCQ) papers, where assessment is done through OMR sheets have become the sine qua non of testing. Once the paper is designed, the assessment does not require any kind of academic or pedagogic human engagement except in the mechanical sense of printing, distributing, collecting back and placing on the OMR sheet reader. There can be no process of engagement with the learner regarding how she thought about the questions and the reasons she chose a particular answer; no question of any feedback to her or to her teacher.

It is also important to look at the nature of questions required for such assessments and the inherent problems associated with such tasks. Clearly, for the assessment to be considered effective, it has to be a test that is not built from

conventional questions. The present understanding of education such as in NCF 2005 also emphasizes that the assessment tool should require the learner to think and to reason. A lot of effort is required therefore to prepare such test items. Given the intense competition that such testing generates, children and their tutors, in an attempt to succeed, have begun 'teaching to the test' and there are many kinds of coaching centres that have sprung up to render students 'test wise'. This battle between coaching institutes and those creating test items is intense. The nature of questions has to be modified each time in an attempt to enable test items to be challenging. This puts pressure on the people who form the test items. They have to be creative and imaginative. Those who construct these tasks have to each time strive to make them different and new. Test items need to be unusual items that are not obvious. Often, items so created, given the diversity, can lend themselves to multiple interpretations. If the questions have to expect thinking and fresh reasoning, it is difficult to create options that can be properly understood by all learners in the same way. Either they will become trivial or they could become options where many may reason differently and pick up alternative choices. Such a test would, therefore, will not pick up what the child knows and will only pick up the fact that she has answered the question incorrectly. Even if a child picks up the correct choice, we cannot decide if it is because of her understanding or just due to a reasonable guess or practice.

There is also now an increasing recognition that school education must help learners develop the ability to solve different kind of problems and issues. These should also relate to the experience, life and needs of the child and help her deal with issues in a rational and logical manner. There is also an emphasis that children should learn to abstract from logical formulations, be able to link many steps while appreciating the relations between concepts and each of the steps. Large-scale tests seek to avoid descriptive or even such numerical questions that require display of steps followed to arrive at the solution. In such a situation, the task of assessing problem-solving ability is dependent on the ability to construct items that will test this aspect irrespective of context, background and experiences.

An important part of problem-solving is to comprehend it and that needs the ability to understand and relate to the context of the question. Once that is understood, the abstraction of details and identifying the specific steps in the process, the ideas, concepts and quantities to be dealt with becomes possible. The difficulty is that the need to create new problems and not have very long problems forces the contexts to be under-specified, under-defined and sometimes even be almost entirely absent. All the issues viz. need for testing on a large scale, need for so-called 'objectivity' and the analysis of filled scripts and preparing merit lists are in some sense fulfilled by MCQ sheets. Those who create the test items do not have exposure to the learners across the large sample chosen. There is also lack of understanding about problem solving skills and what they include, leading to a situation where the problems set are alien to the experience and understanding of children.

There is no longer any illusion that school teaching and regular interaction with the curriculum will be the basis for preparing for large scale assessments. The questions in present day testing are of a certain kind and need to be unravelled before they can be answered. This unraveling is easier if the context is familiar. The only other enabling possibility is of prior exposure to such problems. The fact is that people who form questions come from a certain background which implies certain experience, and manner of thinking and learning. Children who are from a similar background or are familiar with it, tend to have an edge over the larger number of children who get ignored in formulations of the test items simply because the test formulators are not from their backgrounds or are not aware of.

While there may be justification for an assessment at a large scale and there may be a desire to follow what is happening broadly in each state or country at the macro level, the current mechanism for it, the analysis done on it and the way the results are used leaves a lot to be desired. We need to revisit our understanding of education, its process, quality and its problems if relevant and valid assessments are to emerge.

Farah Farooqi
Gurjeet Kaur

Rethinking elementary teacher preparation

A syllabus revision exercise for the course 'Pedagogy of EVS' in DIET curriculum

Abstract

This article presents an ideational backdrop and rationale for the changes proposed in the existing syllabus for environmental studies education in the DIETs of Delhi with purpose of sharing these reflections with the academic community and initiate debate.

Curriculum updating is an exercise that all teacher preparation agencies periodically engage with, as part of their continued efforts to align teacher preparation processes with the aims of education in a fast changing society and the developments in the field of school education. The Delhi based DIETs began their curriculum revision process in 2008. As members of the group that worked on revision of the course 'Pedagogy of Environmental Sciences (EVS)', we present here the ideational backdrop and rationale for the changes proposed in the existing syllabus. The purpose of writing this paper is two-fold: i) to engage in self reflection and articulate the thoughts that formed the basis of the suggested changes and ii) to share these thoughts with the academic community at large.

Perhaps it would not be a hyperbole to suggest that NCF 2005 provided a fresh vantage point to understand school education. Curricular changes that ensued and textbooks that were written carried forward the vision of the document. The new EVS textbooks blazed a trail by providing exemplars of an integrated perspective in Environmental Studies. Even though the need to take an interdisciplinary view in EVS had been appreciated for quite some time, the implementation of this did not actually came about and EVS continued to be taught disjointedly as EVS (science) and EVS (social science) with little common ground between the two courses except for the title. *Khushi Khushi* a series of textbooks for elementary schools produced by Eklavya Bhopal were an attempt at integration-even here, what was done was put different science and social science topics together under one cover. The integration if at all, therefore, remained superficial and cosmetic. The new NCERT textbooks gave the philosophy of integration a tangible shape by putting knowledge about the world in frameworks that were diverse and drawn from different societal, cultural, historical and natural contexts of society. This further gave us the confidence that EVS curriculum can be organised in a conceptually integrated manner and the same can be proposed as a worthwhile option in teacher preparation programs as well.

For the task assigned to us, we drew extensively upon our teaching experience in the B.El.Ed. program which runs in select colleges of University of Delhi and is a path-breaking in many ways which include: its location in colleges with other higher education programs thus breaking the isolation of teacher preparation; structure in terms of being a four-year integrated programme offering a study of liberal courses along with education and pedagogy; and most importantly in curriculum which includes an extensive theoretical study coupled with practicum that consistently urges students to reflect upon their practical experiences and build linkages with theory thus introducing future teachers quite early to the significance of praxis (reflection in action) in education. As teacher educators in this program we encouraged our students to prepare integrated unit plans which were thematic and included content drawn from diverse areas of society. As we had the opportunity of observing these plans being successfully implemented in schools, we were able to also gauge the comparative advantage of

integration from children's developmental perspective.

We present below the major shifts in the revised syllabus and rationale for the same.

Shift from EVS (science) and EVS(social science) to EVS as an integrated area of learning

Major policy documents in Indian education have always emphasised the need for environment education. The focus has been on preserving and restoring the quality of the physical environment of our planet. Concerns such as deforestation, pollution and wastage form the focus of the deliberations. However, the notion of 'environment studies' extends beyond just 'conservation education'. It has evolved both as a composite discipline that cuts across the traditional boundaries of different subjects and seeks to develop in learners a holistic understanding of the world around them; and also as an approach that propagates learning about the environment through use of the immediate environment itself as a rich resource. The notion of environment is not confined to the physical environment and includes the social aspect of environment as well. A child right from the time she enters this world interacts with her environment holistically. Everything around her including inanimate objects, natural phenomena, people, relationships between them etc., form the subject of her thought and investigations. She does not compartmentalise knowledge into subject areas the way school labels it later. It therefore makes sense to continue this natural course by presenting knowledge in an integrated manner and only gradually weaning children away from a consolidated to a fragmented view, when perhaps they are old enough to appreciate the rationale behind the convenience of it.

However, taking an integrated perspective of environment does bring ambiguities with respect to the scope of EVS. The issue has also perplexed scholars who have deliberated upon the issue. If environment is construed as the entire socio-physical milieu of the child then it effectively encompasses all human knowledge and cannot therefore, be dealt with without categorization of some sort. One way of dealing with this is to take child as the basis for curriculum, begin by talking about things in her most immediate environment and only gradually move outwards and farther in terms of space, time and abstraction (Vidya Bhawan Seminar Proceedings, 1995). Common arguments forwarded against including 'science' and 'social science' under the umbrella of EVS are of two kinds: The first is that the nature of inquiry in science is inherently different from that in social science and it is therefore not feasible to integrate these two different ways of going about investigating the environment. The argument carries merit for it is true that though certain ways to inquire, such as collecting facts, looking for evidences, eliciting patterns and analysing cause-effect relationships may be common to science as well as social science, certain other aspects such as the nature of experiments in the two areas is quite different. For instance, the element of 'control', extremely crucial in various scientific experiments is not extendable to Human sciences. However, the important issue to be considered here is that whether it is desirable, so early in learners' lives, to dichotomise the ways to knowledge. It would perhaps make more psychological sense to let children freely explore their world through questions of varying nature and thus allow them to independently come to appreciate how it is the nature of questions posed and thereby the context that decides the appropriate path to finding the solutions. Our experience with young children both at a personal level as well as through the B.El.Ed. interns who examined children's world views in their projects, informs us that differentiation of knowledge is not a natural phenomenon. For children the question, 'why is water, a freely available resource, unevenly distributed among people?' may be as much a subject of investigation as questions like 'why do rivers flow towards the sea?' or 'how is water able to dissolve only certain substances and not others?' All these questions are equally valid questions that beg for satisfying answers. Our successful experience of the holistic approach in EVS gives us the strength of conviction to posit it as a useful strategy for planning and organising learning experiences for children at primary level.

The second argument against an integrated view of EVS is that clubbing two 'inherently' different areas of study takes away the 'rigour' from either discipline. This is what we may call

the purity vs. dilution dilemma. This dilemma also derives from a dichotomised view of knowledge. The underpinning assumption being that knowledge of the physical and social world exists as two parallel streams and that mixing the two would dilute their qualitative strength. This view that assigns knowledge to separate intellectual planes not only forms questionable categories of knowledge but also creates undesirable hierarchies within knowledge systems and needs to be resisted. In fact, the whole issue of multidisciplinarity vs. interdisciplinarity of EVS is addressed once we transcend the traditional lens of looking at knowledge through 'disciplines'. The revised syllabus has therefore devoted the first unit to perspective building in EVS. It urges students to look at the curricular vision and how it is translated into the syllabus and subsequently into textbooks. It also encourages students to look at different ways of curriculum organisation such as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach etc., and understand for themselves the significance and merits of these different approaches.

Including children's ideas or alternative frameworks into the syllabus

Investigation of learners' preinstructional ideas became an important subject of science education research in the 1980s and continues to generate research interest even to this day. Considerable research evidence generated across varying contexts over the past three decades highlights some very significant aspects about the ways in which children form ideas about the world around them. It was found that students were not 'blank slates' and brought to science classes their own thoughts and explanations about the way the world functions. Many times these ideas, formed on the basis of everyday observations, differ from the accepted ideas and are called 'alternative frameworks' (Driver,1981). Students' preinstructional ideas of various phenomena such as water, air, force, energy, electricity, motion, combustion and many more came to be widely examined and documented. This intuitive knowledge called 'children's science' by Gilbert, Osborne and Fensham (1982) or 'commonsense reasoning' (Bliss, 2008) and 'naive physics'(Reiner, Slotta, Chi & Resnick, 2000) highlights the fact that children begin to develop their personal world views very early. The same is true of ideas in social science and other areas. These personal world views then influence future learning by forming a conceptual backdrop against which future experiences and instruction are interpreted. Further, many of these ideas are tenacious and may continue to exist despite several years of formal science instruction. Instead of discarding children's variant preconceptions as irrelevant, as has been the traditional pedagogic practice, our current understanding of the teaching-learning process informs us of the urgent need to not only examine them but to take them as starting points for planning future teaching- learning situations with children. There has been a radical shift from viewing these ideas as 'obstacles' to treating them as 'springboards' for designing future instruction. A study of children's ideas therefore, merits an important place in syllabus.

Freeing pedagogy from the 'methods of teaching'

It was observed that the existing DIET syllabus manifested a widely prevalent tendency in teacher preparation- that of tying down all understanding of the teaching-learning process to certain 'methods of teaching'. This tendency is indicative of two underlying suppositions- that there exist certain well spelt out 'methods' that are mutually exclusive to a certain degree and that a familiarization with these methods would equip the future teacher to appropriately shoulder the responsibility of charting the educational path of students. Both these suppositions can be convincingly contested. First, because by looking at the teaching-learning process through the lens of certain methods, it robs pedagogic study of its interesting complexity and richness and renders it homogenous, simplistic, dull and unnatural. A project may well involve laboratory work or surveys, which in turn could require problem solving and all these together could be 'discovery' oriented. The teaching-learning process has to be looked at essentially as an inquiry-driven exercise that may take on various forms as per need. The second supposition is also unfounded as it infuses in future teachers a false sense of complacency regarding their own preparedness as they wrongly assume that knowing these methods equips them to take on the challenge of successfully teaching children. It emanates from the

stimulus-response paradigm that 'lecture method' would lead to a different kind of understanding as opposed to a 'better' 'project method'.

Shift from viewing assessment as an independent exercise to viewing it as part of teaching-learning

In the new syllabus, assessment has been consciously put, under the unit titled 'teaching-learning process' to emphasise the philosophical position that assessment has to complement and support the teaching-learning process. Multiple ways of assessing children are listed than given in the current syllabus. Assessment has been rightly considered to be broad based in terms of assessing variety of skills and concepts possessed by different children. This makes it a more inclusive exercise rather than an exclusionary one which gives advantage to only a few children.

Encouraging reflection

A progressive perception of the profession views it not as a mono-directional application of theoretical knowledge but rather as an ongoing engagement with field realities in light of which theoretical understandings are reunderstood, reinterpreted or even revised. This perception resonates with the idea of 'Epistemology of Practice' (Schön, 1983).This form of practice is dynamic because it evolves with time as the practitioners get more opportunities to build fresh understandings of their profession. To prepare such progressive practitioners, it is important that they are initiated into the habit of consistently reflecting upon their field experience. This has been attempted in the current syllabus by way of one of the associated tasks of unit 4 'planning for teaching', in which it is suggested that students maintain their reflection logs by regularly writing reflective journals during the course of their school experience. Experience shows that even though the initial entries in such journals may not extend beyond mere reporting but through consistent interaction with the mentors, they tend to become more intellectually incisive. Providing reflection a legitimate curricular space would be helpful in crystallisation of an intellectual professional disposition among future practitioners. For example students understand children's ideas about different concepts better and are able to use this experience in planning effectively for children.

Including a reading list

A theory course, taken at its face value, may lend itself to different interpretations. Intended interpretation is facilitated by means of suggested readings. These readings are carefully selected to mirror the perspective envisioned in the course. More than the prescribed course content, it is therefore the annexed reading list that shapes the course transaction. The existing syllabus did not carry an appended reading list. The reading list for the revised syllabus, prepared after much consideration and deliberation, was attuned to the reenvisioned syllabus. The readings are also pitched at different levels– some are essential readings which are mandatory to transact the perspective and objectives of the paper; advanced readings which both students and their teachers can access for deeper understanding; discussion readings, which the students are encouraged to do with their peers and teachers in class. Original works of thinkers were included instead of mere interpretations. Such works that allow a direct grasp of the original ideas lead to cultivation of richer insights. For instance, Piaget's work 'The Child's Conception of Physical Causality' would not only apprise the future teachers of children's different understandings of the world but also initiate them into ways through which children's world views were accessed by Piaget. This is expected to cue the future teachers about ways of going about conducting their own studies pertaining to children's ideas. Reading and discussing, P.Sainath's, 'Everybody Loves a Good Drought', will give the students a full picture in terms of understanding the social science concepts and issues such as public distribution system (PDS), migration, displacement, harvesting and also education. Including such readings will also help the students make linkages across the curriculum, for example with the 'Contemporary India' paper 7 in the 1st year and the 'Pedagogy of Social Science' paper in the 2nd year. We also feel that such readings will also help them understand the social reality of children whom they may eventually teach.

Weaving content into the pedagogy

The content has not been given separately like in the current syllabus. We argue that pedagogical issues cannot be discussed in vacuum and that relevant content will have to be necessarily drawn

upon for deliberations upon issues relating to the teaching-learning process. The content in the new syllabus is entwined with the issues and ideas, along the syllabus length. A departure from the current syllabus is that it is anticipated that learners will have a deep engagement with the issues and concepts mentioned in the syllabus. Therefore, the expectation in the new syllabus is much more than mere clarifying of concepts till class 12 level as implied in the present syllabus. We strongly believe that trainee students' indepth understanding will lend itself to enhanced children's learning. It is only when they have a deeper understanding of concepts themselves will they be capable of making the concepts simpler (and not simplistic) for children.

For example, such questions can only be asked by teachers when they have a deep enough understanding of particulate nature of matter, children's development level and pedagogy.

- Could you see the salt after it dissolved in water? If no, why?
- Does that mean that now the water does not have salt? If it has then where is the salt?

Moreover the content appears as integrated themes such as water, food, transport etc. The choice of readings further lends strength to holistic understanding of issues.

Inclusion of tasks

In the new syllabus an attempt has been made to include some tasks or activities for transacting the syllabus. These are only suggestive and supportive for the educators embarking upon the task of transacting the new syllabus. The teachers are of course free to devise new pedagogic ways of dealing with the syllabus. Our B.El.Ed. experience tells us that giving importance to the agency of the learners by giving them spaces to construct their own knowledge is important because of two reasons. One is that it leads to a deeper conceptual understanding. Secondly, it gives confidence to the teachers that activity-based assignments can effectively happen in classroom situations. It is well known that teachers continue to teach the way they are themselves taught. Moreover, it is important especially for teacher educators to remain conscious of not only their pedagogy but also the beliefs and value systems which are inevitably caught by the learners. So, while unit 3 titled 'teaching-learning process' mentions 'ways of conducting inquiry' as a topic of study, the associated task elaborates the idea through helpful triggers by suggesting meaningful activities. The activities based on the prescribed school curriculum will help future teachers in planning their classes.

The above essay gives an account of the perspective with which changes were made in the current syllabus. As mentioned in the beginning of the essay, curriculum revision should be an on-going exercise. The new syllabus therefore is open to critical analysis and further change and enrichment.

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कालू राम शर्मा

डायट में सीखने–सिखाने की जुगत

स्कूली शिक्षा को लेकर अक्सर काफी निराशाजनक बातें होती रहती हैं। किसी भी शिक्षा के संस्थान में चले जाएँ, वहाँ चर्चाओं में एक दूसरे पर आरोपों–प्रत्यारोपों का सिलसिला चलता रहता है। इन सबके चलते स्थानीय स्तर पर किए जाने वाले सीखने–सिखाने के प्रयास दब जाते हैं। ज़िला शिक्षा एवं प्रशिक्षण संस्थानों की कहानी भी यही बताती है। मगर इस पूरे निराशा के माहौल में डायट्स में सीखने–सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं को अंजाम दिया जा सकता है।

विगत सालों में हमने विद्या भवन सोसायटी के माध्यम से राजस्थान की चुनिंदा डायट्स के अकादमिक समूह तथा बी.एस.टी.सी. छात्रों व लैब एरिया स्कूलों के साथ सीखने–सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं पर विमर्ष किया। आगे बढ़ें, इसके पहले यह उल्लेख करना प्रासंगिक होगा कि डायट्स की मुख्य भूमिका अपने ज़िले में स्कूली स्तर पर गुणवत्तापूर्ण सीखने–सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं को स्थापित करना है। डायट का ढाँचा कुछ इस तरह से होता है कि यहाँ अपने ज़िले में स्कूली शिक्षा के क्रियान्वयन को लेकर कई तरह के कार्य होते हैं। मुख्यधारा के प्राथमिक स्कूलों के लिए शिक्षक बनाने का कार्य भी डायट ही करती है। यहां पूर्वसेवाकालीन छात्रों का एक बड़ा समूह होता है जो दो वर्षों तक शिक्षक बनने का प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त करता है। इसके बाद वे प्राथमिक स्कूल में शिक्षक बनते हैं। दूसरा, डायट में सेवाकालीन शिक्षकों की क्षमतावर्धन का कार्य चलता रहता है। शैक्षणिक सत्र में ज़िले के शिक्षक–शिक्षिकाओं के चरणबद्ध प्रशिक्षणों का आयोजन भी डायट में होता है। राज्य स्तरीय एस.सी.ई.आर.टी. से शिक्षकों के प्रशिक्षण के लिए सीखने–सिखाने, टी.एल.एम., विषयगत आदि को लेकर जो योजनाएँ बनती हैं उनका क्रियान्वयन भी डायट के माध्यम से ही होता है। डायट का अपना एक लैब एरिया होता है जहाँ वे किसी शैक्षणिक कार्य, नवाचार या कोई शिक्षा की योजना आती है तो उसको वहाँ लागू करके अनुभव (फीडबैक) प्राप्त करते हैं। प्रमुख बात यह है कि ज़िले के स्कूलों में गुणात्मक शिक्षा के संदर्भ में आयोजित बी.आर.सी. और सी.आर.सी. स्तर पर आयोजित बैठकों, कार्यशालाओं और प्रशिक्षणों में डाईट्स के संकाय सदस्यों की भागीदारी एक शैक्षिक मागदर्शक की हैसियत से होती है।

इस लिहाज़ से हमें महसूस हुआ कि ज़िला शिक्षा एवं प्रशिक्षण संस्थान ज़िले की एक अहम इकाई है। इसी नज़रिए के साथ हमने राजस्थान की कुछ डायट्स के साथ जुड़ने की कोशिश की।

इस दौरान हम विद्या भवन में बुनियादी शिक्षा को समझने की दिशा में भी कार्य कर रहे थे। हम यह भी समझना चाह रहे थे कि आख़िर बुनियादी शिक्षा की कौनसी बातें हैं जो आज के संदर्भ में प्रासंगिक हैं जिन्हें डायट्स के साथ विमर्ष का हिस्सा बनाया जाए। हमें अहसास हुआ कि बेहतर शिक्षा या गुणवत्तापूर्ण षिक्षा की जड़ें बुनियादी शिक्षा में समाई हुई हैं।

यहाँ मैं राजस्थान की दो डायट्स– राजसंमद ज़िले में नाथद्वारा तथा बाँसवाड़ा ज़िले में गढ़ी डायट के साथ विद्या भवन के जुड़ाव और वहाँ सीखने–सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं को लेकर किए गए कार्य को संक्षिप्त रूप से रखने का प्रयास करूँगा।

हमने डायट के लैब एरिया के स्कूलों में इस समझ के साथ संवाद किया कि प्राथमिक शाला में शिक्षक की भूमिका काफ़ी महत्त्वपूर्ण है। इसे एक दृढ़ विश्वास के रूप में माना गया है कि शिक्षक की भूमिका असाधारण है। दूसरा, सामग्री व गतिविधियों की जानकारी देने से ज़्यादा उन वाजिब गतिविधियों को बच्चों के साथ करना अहम है। साथ ही यह और भी अहम है कि आख़िर सामग्री और गतिविधियों से कौनसे कौषल और क्षमताओं को हासिल करना चाहते हैं, इस बारे में शिक्षक को सजग बनाने की ज़रूरत है।

नाथद्वारा डायट की लैब एरिया स्कूल प्राथमिक शाला उपली ओडण के साथ कार्य

शिक्षा में अर्थपूर्ण शिक्षा के मंत्रों की बयानबाज़ी तो खूब होती है मगर उसका व्यावहारिक पक्ष प्रशिक्षणों में भी प्रतिबिंबित नहीं होता। इस संपूर्ण कार्य को इस समझ के साथ किया गया कि जब हम अर्थपूर्ण शिक्षा की बात करते हैं तो इसके मायने ये हैं कि सबसे आख़री पायदान पर विराजमान स्कूल में आ रहे बच्चे तक पहुँच बने। कक्षा पुस्तकालय ऐसा ही एक विचार है। खासकर हाशियाकृत परिवार की वह बच्ची या बच्चा जिसके घर

में लिखित सामग्री का पूरे तौर पर अभाव होता है। इस वजह से उसको पाठ्यपुस्तक के अलावा और कोई लिखित सामग्री के साथ अपने को जोड़ने के अवसर नहीं मिलते हैं। हम मानते हैं कि कक्षा पुस्तकालय, अर्थपूर्ण शिक्षा को व्यवहार में लाने का एक सार्थक क़दम है।

नाथद्वारा डायट की लैब एरिया स्कूल प्राथमिक शाला उपली ओडण में कक्षा पुस्तकालय की कहानी, शिक्षिका की जुबानी यहाँ प्रस्तुत है। डायट के द्वारा लैब एरिया के तहत चुनी गई राजकीय प्राथमिक विद्यालय उपली ओडण में सीखने–सिखाने का वातावरण बनाने के लिए कक्षा पुस्तकालय खोला गया। कक्षा पुस्तकालय के लिए बच्चों की दिलचस्प किताबें विद्या भवन सोसायटी की ओर से दी गई। कुछ पुस्तकें स्थानीय स्तर पर खरीदी गईं। स्कूल के शिक्षक के साथ डायट और विद्या भवन के साथियों ने चर्चा की। बच्चों के लिए किताबों के चयन के आधार क्या हो? कक्षा में किताबों का इस्तेमाल कैसे करें? जैसे मसलों पर समझ को साझा किया। इस समझ के साथ उपली ओडण स्कूल में कक्षा में बच्चों को पुस्तक उपलब्ध कराई गई।

स्कूल की शिक्षिका पार्वती भगोरा के शब्दों में आगे की कहानी कुछ यों है–"कुछ किताबों पर मेरे द्वारा बच्चों के साथ कार्य किया गया। नाव चली, छुटकी गिलहरी, आदर्श कहानियों आदि में से रोचक कहानियाँ व कविताएँ मेरे द्वारा बच्चों को सुनाई गईं। कक्षा में दीगर किताबों की बदौलत एक अलग ही माहौल बनता जा रहा था। बच्चे जहाँ कक्षा में वर्णमाला के हिज्जों में उलझे रहते थे वहीं अब कक्षा का माहौल जीवंत हो उठा था। बच्चे अब किताबों को उलटते–पलटते। किताबों को खोल–खोलकर चित्रों और लिखित सामग्री में संबंध बिठाकर अनुमान के साथ पढ़ना सीख रहे थे। दरअसल बच्चों पर यह लादा हुआ बोझ नहीं था बल्कि बच्चे खुद–ब–खूद पढ़ना सीखना चाह रहे थे।

अब बच्चे खाली कालांश में इन किताबों को पढ़ते। मैंने सर्वप्रथम 'नाव चली' पुस्तक में दी गई कहानी पर एक कविता का निर्माण किया व बच्चों को सुनाई जो उन्हें पसंद आई। बच्चों ने एक और किताब 'हलीम चला चांद पर' बड़े चाव से पढ़ी। जब मैंने पर्यावरण अध्ययन में सौर परिवार वाला पाठ पढ़ाया और चाँद के बारे में बता रही थी तो कुछ बच्चे बीच में ही बोल पड़े, ''हाँ, मैडम, हमने हलीम चला चाँद पर किताब में पढ़ा है कि चाँद पर पेड़ और लोग–बाग नहीं है।'' इससे मुझे यह अनुभव होने लगा कि बच्चे पढ़ना और पढ़कर समझना सीख रहे हैं।

एक दिन मैंने छुटकी गिलहरी वाली कविता सुनाई जिसमें एक छोटी–सी, भोली गिलहरी द्वारा पर्यावरण की रक्षा का संदेश दिया गया है। इसी संदर्भ में मैंने गिलहरी की एक और कहानी सुनाई जिसमें श्रीराम की लंका पर चढ़ाई के समय गिलहरी ने अपना सहयोग प्रदान किया था। इससे गिलहरी और अन्य जीवों के अवलोकन की भावना जागृत हुई। इसी प्रकार से उक्त पुस्तकों में अंकित हस्तनिर्मित प्यारे–प्यारे व सुंदर चित्रों को देखकर बच्चों में चित्र बनाने की भावना जागृत हुई और बच्चों ने चित्र बनाना शुरू किया जिससे चित्रकला के कौशलों का विकास हुआ।"

गढ़ी डायट के पूर्व सेवाकालीन छात्रों के साथ प्रशिक्षण के दौरान अनुभव

गढ़ी डायट के छात्रों के साथ मातृभाषा शिक्षण पर भी समझ बनाने की कोशिश की गई। एक महत्त्वपूर्ण समझ यह बनी कि मातृभाषा की जब बात कर रहे हैं तो इसका अर्थ यह नहीं कि हम अंग्रेज़ी का विरोध कर रहे हैं। कहा यह जा रहा है कि जो बच्चा अपने घर–परिवेश में भाषा बोलता है उसे नज़रंदाज़ करना बच्चे के वजूद को कुचलना है। इसलिए स्कूल के शुरुआती सालों में बच्चों को मातृभाषा में शिक्षा देने की ज़रूरत को महसूस किया गया। बच्चा जिन शब्दों और अनुभवों को लेकर

आता है उसे स्कूल नकार देता है। एक तरह से हम बच्चे की अभिव्यक्ति के औज़ार को ही खारिज कर देते हैं। बच्चे के पास जो भाषायी क्षमता है उसी में वह संवाद करें तो सीखने–सिखाने के रास्ते भी खुल सकते हैं। इसलिए यह ज़रूरी है कि मातृभाषा में शिक्षा दी जाए।

इस सत्र में पर्यावरण अध्ययन की कुछ अवधारणाओं पर चर्चा की गई कि कैसे इन्हें मातृभाषा में पढ़ाया जाए। अपने आसपास के पेड़ों पर चर्चा और छानबीन में बच्चे तभी सक्रिय रूप से भागीदारी कर सकते हैं जब भाषा उनकी अपनी हो। अगर भाषा उनकी अपनी नहीं होगी तो वे उसमें भाग लेने के बजाय दूर भागने की कोशिश करेंगे।

दरअसल, इस पूरी प्रक्रिया में डायट के अकादमिक सदस्य भी मौजूद थे। इन सत्रों की संरचना कुछ इस प्रकार से बनाई थी कि छात्र स्वयं ही समूह में पढ़ने का कार्य करें और फिर सामूहिक सत्र में अपनी समझ को प्रस्तुत करें। इस तरह से हमने कक्षा शिक्षण की पूरी प्रक्रिया को जीवंत बनाने की कोशिश की। इन सत्रों में छात्रों को सामूहिक कार्य करने की एक दृष्टि मिली। शिक्षा में सामूहिकता की दुहाई तो काफ़ी दी जाती है मगर उसे गढ़ी डायट के छात्र व्यवहार में भी लाते हुए दिख रहे थे।

गढ़ी डायट के पूर्व सेवाकालीन छात्रों के साथ हमने करके सीखने के कुछ सत्र भी आयोजित किए। इन सत्रों में विज्ञान विषय में प्रयोग करने के अवसर उपलब्ध कराए। प्रयोग ऐसे जिनमें सामग्री ऐसी हो जो अपने ही परिवेश से आसानी से मिल जाए। कुछ इसी प्रकार के प्रयोग एक क्रमबद्ध ढंग से करवाए गए।

दरअसल, विज्ञान शिक्षण में प्रयोग करके तुरंत ही उसके निष्कर्शों को बताने का प्रचलन रहा है जो विज्ञान की प्रकृति के सख़्त ख़िलाफ है। हमने इन सत्रों में कुछ प्रयोग कराए और फिर निष्कर्ष निकालने के लिए छात्रों को बाध्य किया। इस पूरी प्रक्रिया में जहाँ विज्ञान की प्रकृति से छात्र अवगत हुए वहीं उनमें प्रयोगों को करने और निष्कर्ष निकालने का आत्मविश्वास भी पैदा हुआ।

इन्हीं सत्रों में टी.एल.एम. पर संवाद किया गया। डायट स्तर पर ज़िले के शिक्षकों की टी.एल.एम. निर्माण के लिए कुछ राशि का प्रावधान है। इसको लेकर डायट में काफ़ी चहल–पहल होती है मगर यह प्रक्रिया कक्षाओं के स्तर पर प्रतिबिंबित नहीं हो पाती। बुनियादी शिक्षा में टी.एल.एम. की अवधारणा पर छपे एक लेख को पूर्व सेवाकालीन छात्रों को दिया गया तथा उस पर चर्चा की गई। टी.एल.एम. की अवधारणा यह है कि कोई ऐसी मूर्त सामग्री हो जिसके माध्यम से बच्चों में सीखने–सिखाने को लेकर समझ बने। इस तरह की सामग्री बच्चों की पुस्तक भी हो सकती है जिसके माध्यम से बच्चे पढ़ना, और पढ़कर सीखते हैं। इसलिए बच्चों की बढ़िया पुस्तकों को टी.एल.एम. का हिस्सा बनाया जाने पर ज़ोर दिया। आगे के सत्रों में बच्चों की किताबों की समीक्षा इस समझ के साथ की गई कि छोटी कक्षाओं के लिए वे कितनी सार्थक हैं।

कुल मिलाकर यह कहा जा सकता है कि प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम में पूर्व सेवाकालीन छात्रों को रचनात्मक ढंग से सीखने–सिखाने के लिए नई–नई सामग्री को आज़माने के अवसर उपलब्ध कराए। इस पूरी प्रक्रिया का एक सार्थक असर यह हुआ कि डायट के अकादमिक समूह चाहे पूर्व सेवाकालीन प्रशिक्षण हो या सेवाकालीन प्रशिक्षण हो, वे महज़ शिक्षा के सिद्धांतों की चर्चा करने के बजाय सीखने–सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं को शामिल करने की ओर अग्रसर हो रहे थे। इस उदाहरण से यह भी साबित होता है कि डायट्स में सीखने–सिखाने की गुंजाइश दिखाई देती है। बस, अवसर पैदा करने की ज़रूरत है।

Richa Goswami

In search of good resource persons: What interactions with DIET faculty shows

Abstract

Over the last decade, there has been a gathering sense of disappointment about the ways in which DIETs, which were envisaged by policy to be key strategic resources at district levels, operate. This article is a thoughtful account of the realities faced by DIET faculty as they struggle to contemporize teacher training at the district level.

During a teacher training in Delhi, I had the opportunity to meet a DIET faculty member who was responsible for the in-service trainings in his district. We started talking about teachers' participation and how, after a break in a training session it is difficult to ensure that teachers return and to sustain their interest in the training. In this training, a teacher had sought permission to leave and it was clear others felt the same way. After persuading the teacher to attend for some more time, the faculty member asked for feedback on the session. The resource person for the session had emphasized that teachers need to feel confident enough to stand in front of an audience. He asked each teacher to come one-by-one and present something, a song, a joke, or share their experiences. This was a big group of teachers, almost a hundred. The activity sustained their interest for a very short period and then turned monotonous. After a point, the resource person himself could not listen attentively to what the participants were saying.

As I narrated this, the faculty looked disappointed and asked me what could be done in this situation. His earlier energy to welcome teachers and ensure their participation was lost. He was now on unsure ground. He pointed out that even though we were placed in Delhi it was not possible to get persons who had the capability and experience required for these trainings. He referred to Moloyshree and Ashish Ghosh, two renowned theater educators who had the capability of doing good theater, talking to others about it, who had a vision not only about theatre, its relevance for society and education but also an understanding of society, diversity, inequity and the role of education. They had the ability to engage teachers and enthuse them with their ideas. But such people were so few, and DIETs, in order to fulfil the expectations of providing pre-service and in-service trainings had to organize a large number of trainings. So, where were they supposed to get good resource persons from?

While expectations from DIET faculty are pitched at a high level, there is dearth of training and education that would enable them to handle all this. They are expected to that have linkages with other resource agencies at district, state or national levels and NGOs. Unfortunately, even when DIET faculty were willing to go out of the way to organize effective training, getting appropriate resource persons proved to be extraordinarily difficult. The rules and procedures of DIETs are also complex and make it difficult for the DIETs to involve NGOs.

Most DIETs are understaffed and most of their time is taken up with conducting classes for trainee-teachers. Thus, they do not have any time to engage with the schools or other organizations in the district from where they can identify good resources. Other than the academic inputs in terms of teaching (with scant resources), many DIET faculties are also expected to be a part of day-to-day, non-academic, administrative matters like admissions, accounts, etc.

This is not to say that the idea behind setting up of the DIETs has failed. There is one instance where I happened to experience something very positive which made me understand the potential of DIETs and school engagement. It was at a school level meeting where a DIET faculty came to introduce us, members of an intervention project, to the school teachers. She knew most of

the teachers by name and knew how long they had been in the school. She had met most of the teachers in the in-service programs which had been organized at the district level. The respect and appreciation that this DIET faculty enjoyed with the teachers and her rapport with them was remarkable. She seemed to have genuine respect for the teachers and what they were trying to do in the schools, which was in turn reciprocated by the school teachers.

It may be concluded that since DIETs were established with the understanding of being able to provide support to school teachers and be an academic linkage in the entire process of schooling, they need to be given opportunities and capacity building to work at both the levels. There needs to be systemic interventions to make them confident about interacting with schools in more meaningful ways.

Kalyani Krishnan

A report of the
National Seminar on Teacher Education– Pedagogic Trajectories

23-24th September, 2011, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University

'Learning to teach' and 'teaching to learn' are complex and multidimensional processes which encompass synthesis, interaction and application of knowledge from multiple sources and dynamic contexts. Teacher education discourses draw from these experiences and engagements and create multiple patterns. However, research, policy, theory and practice have not quite managed to make these patterns apparent across different contexts and curricula. This is where the shared experience and praxis amongst the community of teachers, teacher educators and researchers assumes importance in evolving a kaleidoscopic vision for a teacher education program. With this as the objective, the Department of Elementary Education, Lady Shri Ram College for Women with support from the University Grants Commission organized the National Seminar on Teacher Education 'Pedagogic Trajectories' from 23-24 September 2011 at the college premises. The broad aim of the seminar was to arrive at a shared understanding of the changing nature of pedagogies and to initiate and sustain dialog and reflection.

After an initial selection, 35 papers were presented in four thematic areas by teacher educators, school teachers, administrators and educationists. These were:

- Teacher education programs- looking through a kaleidoscope;
- Engaging with practitioners;
- Teacher education and schools: A dialog;
- Insights from the field: Experiential narratives

The seminar began with a panel discussion on 'Teacher education programs– Policy, perspective and praxis.' Issues dealt therein included the state of teacher education in the current socio-political context; the emerging polices for promoting public-private partnerships in education, the role of teacher education programs in context of the Right to Education Act, policy level initiatives at the national level, the need for strong linkages between schools and teacher education programs so as to evolve a meaningful praxis, and the role of teacher education in catering to the needs of contemporary society.

The two sessions on 'Teacher education programs- looking through a kaleidoscope' had research scholars and educationists presenting papers ranging from the dilemma of content strengthening to looking at pedagogical aspects in teacher education programs, taking stock of DIETs as a preparation for teachers- number of pre-service teacher education institutes in each state, number of unqualified teachers and the administrative structures, professional development of teachers, physical education and teaching of Science to the issues of assessment in teacher education.

In the session on 'Engaging with practitioners' papers presented ranged from looking at a conceptual framework to prepare teachers as reflective practitioners, mentoring as a successful model for continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers, looking at collaborative action research for CPD and using ICT for continuous professional development of educators.

'Teacher education and schools– A dialog', brought together school teachers and teacher educators, both advocating for strong partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools. Presenters talked of reimagining teaching practice, building sustained dialogs and institutional linkages as means of achieving the same.

The last theme of the seminar 'Insights from the field: Experiential narratives' focused on teacher educators and research scholars bringing in their experiences and reflections on both 'theory' and 'praxis' in education. Researchers shared the educational aspirations of children of inter-state migrant families and their implications for a teacher training program,

while teacher educators looking critically at the content and curriculum of pre-service teacher education programs.

The seminar acquires importance in that it brought together schools teachers, researchers and teacher educators together to bring to the surface the pedagogic practice of the teacher education programs in India. A monograph of the selected papers was published in 2010, documenting the collective wisdom of teacher educators as reflective practitioners and researchers.

Table 1
Papers presented at the seminar

Pre-service teacher education: The neglected agenda	Smriti Sharma	Assistant Professor, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi
Discontents of 'teacher training': A critical discourse on teacher education in the neo-liberal context	Dev Pathak	Assistant Professor in Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi
Expectations of schools from teacher education programs	Agnes Joseph and Nisha Sharma	Curriculum Developer, Currimakers Education Pvt. Ltd.
Science and ethics: A confluence of disciplines and implications for teacher education	Aastha Saxena	Research Scholar, Central Institute of Education (CIE), Delhi University
Education for sustainable development and the teacher education program	Anamika Srivastava	Research Scholar, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU
Inclusive classrooms: Issues and challenges in pre-service teacher training programs	Sheela Rajeshwari and Vandana Saxena	Ph.D. Scholar, CIE, Delhi University
Physical education in the making of the teacher	Meenakshi Pahuja	Assistant Professor, Lady Shri Ram College for Women
Reimagining teaching practice by building strong partnerships with schools and teachers	Indira Vijaysimha	Azim Premji University
Bridging the gap between teacher education and school: Dimensions, possible solutions and personal experiences	Suneeta Mishra	Member, NCTE
Schools and teacher education programs	Kanwaljeet Khungar, Megha Sehgal, Deepti Goel and Harpreet Kaur	Teacher, Bharat National Public School
Pedagogy in teacher education programs	Vishnukant and Asmita Bhutani	Teacher Educator, Presidium
Preparing teachers for reflective pedagogic practices: Digantar's intervention	Huma Ansari and Manoj Kumar	Asistant Fellow, Digantar, Jaipur
Conceptual change: Research trends and implications for science teacher preparation	Gurjeet Kaur	Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia
Addressing nature of science in elementary teacher education using controversial issues	Manisha Dabas	Wadhwanee Associate Professor, Aditi Mahvidyalaya, Delhi

Opting out of fixed moulds	Maya Joshi	Associate Professor, Department of English, Lady Shri Ram College for Women
Assessment as opportunity for growth: Formative assessment and teacher education program	Nupur Samuel	Academic Fellow, General English, Ambedkar University, New Delhi
Reflections on the B.El.Ed. program	Suvasini	Assistant Professor, Education, Miranda House, Delhi University
A short-term project of Karnataka DIET in pre-service teacher education	T. K. Raghavendra	Lecturer, DIET, Karnataka
Kitaabon ke roshni mein hum: A project approach to learning	Sharada Kumari Mythili R. and Sunil Kumar A.	Senior Lecturer, DIET, New Delhi Research scholar, University of Madras
The Nagaland Board of Secondary Education: A story	Jayshri Kannan	Director, ELT Curriculum Reforms, Nagaland Board of Secondary Education
Emancipatory pedagogy for a complex classroom transformation	Heemal Handoo Bhat	DAV Public School, New Delhi
Educational aspirations of children of construction workers	Priyanka Varshney and Vandana Saxena	Research Scholar, Department of Edcuation, Delhi University
Continuing support for CPD	Vishnu Kant and Sarita Sharma	Director, Currimakers Education Pvt. Ltd.
Conceptual framework for mentoring as CPD	Charu Sharma	University Teaching Assistant, CIE, Delhi University
Digital media: A way to professional development	Roopak Chauhan	Program Manager, American India Foundation

Preeti Misra

A report of the

National Consultation on Special Training under RtE : Trends, challenges and priorities

12-13 April, 2012, Jaipur

A two-day national consultation on Special Training under RtE, 2009 took place in Jaipur on 12-13 April 2012. The consultation had been organized, at the behest of Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), by *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), Rajasthan in partnership with UNICEF. It was attended by members from UNICEF offices of different states, state representatives from SSA and representatives from government and non-government organizations. The focus was on mainstreaming of the out-of-school (OoS) children and the possible strategies for same were discussed in great detail. Several concerns were also raised during the consultation as were observations and recommendations. The ultimate aim of the consultation was to arrive at a set of guidelines that could serve as the rough framework for drafting policy recommendations.

RtE 2009 Act came into effect on 1st April 2010. These two years have highlighted the need to act with speed if we wish to fulfill the provisions of the Act within the stipulated timeframe. One of the biggest challenges faced is in the implementation of Section 4 of the Act: The provision that stipulates age appropriate admission into school.

The consultation highlighted the fact that challenges in mainstreaming of OoS children are multi-pronged starting with identification of such children and ending with ensuring that they reach age appropriate levels and do not drop out. The definition of OoS children varies across states, organizations and individuals and hence the reported number of such children depends on who is reporting. A key issue that is often ignored while identifying such children is determining the reasons as to why the child has either not been to school or dropped out. This needs to become a vital step covered as part of child identification.

While there are several steps in the process of mainstreaming OoS children, and all of these were covered, the focus of the consultation was on processes that ensure accelerated learning more commonly called 'Special Training under RtE'. There were several presentations that dealt with the different aspects of mainstreaming and showcased innovative ideas which can serve as models.

Child Tracking and Identification

Several presentations focused on the issue of identification of OoS children. It became very clear that there are several facets to this problem and covering them during the identification process will serve to streamline the mainstreaming process. For example, the issue of who should be considered as out-of school: Children who have never been to school or those with poor or low attendance etc. It is important to have clear-cut guidelines regarding age of children, definition of school and definition of attendance to ensure reliable data of OoS children. The presentation by CORD, defined a child between 6 to 14 years age as on 30th September and not attending a formal school at the primary or higher level, as 'out-of-school'. It further stipulated that a child in this age group and studying in pre-primary classes is also out-of-school as is a child who is absent continuously for 30 days, from school.

There are several factors that influence children being out-of-school such as poverty, gender, social groups (SC, ST, Minority) and location of the child and hence it is important to record these while preparing the profile of OoS children. There was discussion regarding issues that arise during child tracking as anticipating potential problems can ensure a smoother survey and more reliable data.

The consultation presented some examples of what has been done by states. The monitoring

system developed by Gujarat was presented as was the method adopted by SSA Rajasthan during child identification. One possible system of child-tracking involves making the existing system of data collection through the district information system for education(DISE), and child tracking surveys as the backbone of education statistics. Overall, it was suggested that information on age, class and school participation of the child cannot be based only on parents' reporting but needs to be verified with local schools registers, attendance data should be collected, so that children who are enrolled but not attending can be easily identified and most importantly a*nganwadis* can play a major role in identifying OoS children and bringing them to school at an appropriate age. The issues of tracking children with disabilities, migrant children, street children, children in areas disturbed by civil strife was discussed.

Enrollment and Mainstreaming

Subsequently, the consultation discussed the question of accelerated learning as it is demanded by age appropriate admissions. There were concerns voiced that there is a danger of setting up a parallel system and that this system of learning needs to be integrated with mainstream schools.

While enrolment drives prove effective for younger children, bringing an older child upto age appropriate levels involves not just imparting language and math skills but as importantly social-motivational skills, awareness of rights, confidence building etc., as well. The content and curriculum of the learning program needs to be carefully designed to reflect this. The knowledge and skills of the child need to be considered during training design. Depending on the number of OoS children, there can be different models of accelerated learning: non- and residential bridge courses (RBCs), courses run by the teacher or courses run by educational volunteers that are placed within a school.

In the case of RBCs, a short period induction camp or a readiness program prior to the actual RBC increase retention. This observation was shared by the representative from Odisha, who described the model being followed in their state. The chief characteristic of this model was categorization of children into never enrolled, drop-outs and frequent absentees. The strategy has three major steps: School readiness programs, bridging and eventually mainstreaming. The special training material follows the class specific model where the essential concepts from each class are identified and existing material on selected topics is used. Several other examples of alternative learning environments were presented such as those by CARE, Uttar Pradesh and MV Foundation.

Group Work

The consultation consisted of presentations as well as tasks on which discussions took place in smaller groups. The questions posed to the groups focused on content and curriculum of special trainings, programs of teacher development required for teachers of such programs and the role played by the community in special trainings.

While RtE recommends a strong school management committee (SMC) and has defined several responsibilities for the latter, the reality is most SMCs are defunct either due to lack of awareness (mostly in rural areas) or disinterest (in urban areas). They can be made functional through special orientation and capacity enhancement programs, such that for SMC members become aware of their roles and responsibilities. This can be done in partnership between the government and non-government agencies. The capacity enhancement exercise would be in the following areas: Child mapping, maintaining records of all school age children, mobilization and preparation of OoS children, and most importantly generating awareness of RtE and its various provisions.

The groups also came up with some questions that were relevant to the current context of education (and not just special training) such as what should be the profile of a child who is said to be elementary level educated? If only two years are given to bridge the gap, what do you do if the child has not reached the appropriate level at the end of the period? Should the provision of special training be dropped in 5-6 years as we will not have 'never enrolled' or 'drop-out children' by then? What should be the basis of teacher selection- professional qualification or aptitude/ attitude of a person?

Conclusion

There is now only one year left to meet the provision of RtE that stipulates the enrollment of all children in the age group 6-14, in age appropriate classes in mainstream schools. The challenges in reaching this stage are vast, ranging from identification of all such children to ensuring that they remain in school and achieve the desired level. Several stakeholders are involved in the process (government, community, NGOs etc.) and the role that each can play in the process needs to be mapped. The Government can provide a platform for dialog and provide financial support but also needs to build mechanisms to make the system and officials (not just teachers but head teachers, BEOs, CRCs, DEOs etc) accountable. Perhaps, most important will be the role of community, as represented by the SMC, in deciding how successful we are in achieving this goal.

Teacher Challenges for Education for All in India
Conference on Teachers for Education for All

29-30 May, 2012, New Delhi

Teachers for Education for All: Background and Rationale

At the World Education Forum in 2000, the international community defined the global Education for All (EFA) agenda as relating to six areas: early childhood care and education, primary education, youth and adult learning needs, literacy, gender equality and quality in education. Three quantifiable goals were set for 2015: halving the number of illiterates, universal primary education and gender equality, the latter two being reiterated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Teachers are a precondition to the achievement of all EFA goals and the key to bridging both the qualitative and quantitative targets. At the Oslo meeting in December 2008, the Education for All High Level Group (HLG) made recommendations to all EFA partners and national governments to identify their short and medium-term needs for recruitment, deployment, training and retention of teachers. The recommendations also called upon development partners to support national efforts in this area, to identify and meet the needs specified, and to provide predictable support to cover the associated costs.

Following the recommendations of the High Level Group Meeting to address the teacher challenge the International Task Force for Teachers for EFA was established in early 2009. Within the purview of its mandate outlined in the Action Plan, the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA supports an accelerated effort to bridge the teacher gap by addressing three principal areas- policy, funding and capacity-building, through a range of activities and mechanisms.

To this end, the Secretariat for the Task Force on Teachers for EFA housed at UNESCO has organized, among other activities, a series of conferences and policy dialog forums focusing on a wide range of teacher-related issues. A good case in point is the International Conference on Teachers for EFA in Africa in January 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya. This regional conference brought together education specialists from over 20 countries and 30 institutions in the field of education to deliberate over the necessity of qualified and committed teachers for education quality.

Following the success of this international conference, the Secretariat in conjunction with the Government of India is organizing a two-day long conference which will focus on a range of issues related to teacher challenges in India. These issues have been identified through deliberations between the Government of India and the Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA.

In its record of numerous activities, the Secretariat, will, for the first time co-organise a conference concentrating on the teacher challenges of one country alone. The timing of the conference is propitious as India will assume the chair of the E-9 Secretariat and will host the 9th E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on the agreed theme of 'Inclusive Quality Education' in mid-2012.

Teachers for Education for All in India: Overview and context

India is one of the major emerging economies of Asia and the world. Ensuring sustainability of the expanding economic success of the country puts much emphasis on the need for well-balanced development. With the recognition that education is the cornerstone for all development, this vast country which is divided into 28 states and 7 union territories, with over 600 districts and 0.6 million villages, has taken major strides in making education available to its diverse population.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship program for the achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time-bound manner. The 86th amendment to the Constitution of India declared making education to children between the age group of 6-14 years a fundamental right. SSA is being implemented in partnership with state governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. The program seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. In addition, SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills and all round development of children. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs and seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

SSA recognizes the importance of teachers as a key element in achieving Universalization of Primary Education (UPE). To this end, SSA aims to provide additional teachers to existing schools with inadequate teacher strength and reinforce the capacity of existing teachers by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening the academic support structure at cluster, block and district levels. Despite considerable progress achieved with regard to SSA, challenges still remain. The shortage of teachers has been identified as a crucial factor in the success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. With the growing emphasis on quality education and the Universalisation of Secondary Education (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan-RMSA) foreseen as a priority after 2015, the need to address a wide range of teacher-related issues is a pressing priority. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 and the Right to Education Act (RtE) that came into force in April 2010, has furthermore emphasized the need to address both the qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of the teacher deficit.

In keeping with this background, the Teacher Challenges for Education for All in India conference will focus on six areas identified during discussions between the Task Force Secretariat and the Government of India.

The conference will bring together members of the Central and State governments as well as a wide range of stakeholders from non-governmental and civil society organisations at the national level as well as international organizations to deliberate over the following six areas:

- continuing professional development for teachers in India;
- decentralization: challenges and steps forward;
- gender issues in teacher force;
- public-private partnerships to address the teacher gap;
- inclusive education for children with special needs;
- monitoring and evaluation

Objectives

The objective of the conference is to deliberate over the six aforementioned areas and the issues that fall under their premise with a view to generate recommendations that could inform future policy decisions at the central and state level.

The conference also allows for an opportunity for sharing of policy-related experiences with other member countries of the International Teachers Task Force.

Format

Panel discussions with three/four invited speakers and time for questions and answers followed by working groups, plenary session and a session dedicated to recommendations and wrap-up.

Sessions proposed

- Professional development for teachers

In the contemporary socio-economic context of India, learners, on the one hand, have a wide range of demands and expectations from teachers. On the other, the teacher's professional success and capacity to serve the system and its policy goals also depend on his/her awareness of challenges that India and its society are facing in terms of gender disparity, cultural diversity, inequity and inequality. The two aspects together reinforce the need for a state-of-the-art continuing professional development for teachers in India. In addition, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education that was published in 2009/

2010 has emphasized the importance of in-service programs that could sustain continuing professional development. The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues, which come under this section, are as follows:

- redesigning and upgrading current teacher education programmes: What are the challenges and opportunities?
- harmonisation and revitalisation of teacher education infrastructural provision across the country: What necessary measures?
- use of open and distance learning (ODL) for continuous professional development: Possibilities for the future?

- Decentralization: Challenges and steps forward

The Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) emphasized the significance and need for a decentralized system for the professional preparation of teachers. This policy was put in place proactively by the Central Government in the 8th Plan with the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education. Of the 599 districts in the country, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) were set up in 571 districts, of which only 529 are functional to date. The DIETs are envisioned as 'academic lead institutions' to provide guidance to all academic functionaries in the district. There is need to strengthen ways in which teachers themselves directly shape and contribute to their own professional development through decentralized structures that have been established, and an increased role in pre-service teacher education as well. There is also an increasing need to link schools to communities.

The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- revitalizing existing structures (DIETs and other sub-district structures): What are the challenges and opportunities?
- strengthening decentralized management and participation of teachers in teacher education.
- developing strategies for mobilizing community participation: What are the challenges and opportunities?
- developing strategies for a collaborative relationship between teachers and community: what are the challenges and opportunities?

- Gender issues in teacher force

Women and the teaching profession is an area that is particularly pertinent to the education MDGs and EFA goals. Developing countries are currently working towards overcoming the dual challenges of education expansion and universal provision while ensuring quality and equity. In the context of countries that have achieved the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender parity in education, historical analysis indicates that an influx of women into the teaching profession has been central to these successes. In countries where girl child education remains a challenge, a dearth in female teachers within the system has been identified as one of the core barriers to gender parity and equality in education. The role of women in the teaching profession in India as in other developing countries is not without challenges. Under SSA, several initiatives were put in place to address the gender issue particularly in rural areas. The situation is reversed in urban areas with fewer men in the teaching force leading to an absence of male teacher role models for boys. The other side of the issue are the consequences of a 'feminized profession' leading to a diminishing value of professional status and identity, and a gendering across teaching and education management, with more men occupying high school and managerial positions as compared to women.

The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- challenges of developing gender sensitive practices in school and sensitising teachers to issues.
- best practices of women participation in the teaching profession: An opportunity to scale up
- incentives to promote female participation in the teaching profession- strengthening opportunities for women's participation in education administration and management.

- Public-private partnerships: Innovative approaches to address the teacher gap

The rapid entry of non-state organizations, some of which are set up by professionals and others drawing on corporate profits in the business world could be regarded as a sign of greater engagement between the state and non-state sector. In recent years there have been radical initiatives of multi-partner engagements in education to bring about improvements in the quality of schooling by drawing on the different core competencies of various providers to work towards programs that emphasise for example the importance of innovative textbooks and teaching tools to create and support an environment of in-service training. The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- innovative approaches of NGOs to address teacher gaps: Learning from experiences
- role of corporate foundations in addressing the teacher challenge: What are the challenges and opportunities?
- exploring new partnerships for advocacy of the teacher cause: Possibilities of media engagement

- Inclusive education for children with special needs

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, once said that "things that are alike should be treated as alike, whereas things that are unalike should be treated unalike in proportion to their unalikeness". The policy of inclusion in our system underscores the importance of participation of all children in the learning processes and activities in school and even outside school. It is important to recognize talent and abilities in children but at the same time opportunities need to be given to all children and their strengths need to be identified and appreciated. Thus, both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs must respond to the special needs of children and take into consideration the individual needs of all children including children with disabilities and learning difficulties. Teachers need to be encouraging, supportive and act as humane facilitators in teaching-learning situations to enable learners to discover their talents, realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, and to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens. The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- the changes in the teacher education curriculum from the perspective of inclusion of children with special needs (CWSN) in education
- identifying practices of effective and meaningful collaboration amongst staff members and between teachers and parents, with NGOs to promote inclusive education through collaborative efforts.
- changing role of special educators/resource teachers in facilitating inclusion of CWSN in education

The focus will be on international best practices in teacher development for working with children with single/multiple disabilities; sensitising teachers towards child protection issues as well as developing strategies for involving the community.

- Monitoring and Evaluation of Teacher Policy Reforms

A glaring weakness of existing teacher education practices is the restricted scope of evaluation of student teachers and its excessively quantitative nature. The qualitative angle that takes into account other professional capacities and competences like attitudes and values are missing from evaluation exercises. Furthermore, there is a lack of sustained evaluation interventions thus making informed policy decisions difficult. The main areas/questions for discussions that fall under this session are as follows:

- designing instruments for assessment and evaluation: Capturing progress
- developing a scheme for comprehensive and continuous monitoring and evaluation: Sustaining momentum
- innovations in monitoring and evaluation: Strategies to reach the unreached

Draft list of participants

- representatives from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

- representatives of state governments
- representatives from national NGOs
- representatives of the national civil society organizations
- representatives of members countries of the International Task Force for Teachers for EFA
- members of the Steering Committee of the International Task Force for Teachers for EFA
- representatives of Secretariat of the International Teacher Task Force for Teachers for EFA
- representatives of UNESCO (Headquarters, Delhi Country office)

Sunita Singh

The Standards Initiative

Abstract

This article describes the Common Core Initiative in the United States towards development of standards in language and mathematics. The idea behind development of these standards is to help teachers enhance students' learning

The recent Common Core initiative in the United States in 2010 has led to the development of standards that provide a 'consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, of knowledge'. These standards also present a global outlook to prepare students at a level that is analogous to international standards and incorporates new technologies. According to Hill (2011), 'Core curriculum standards staircase growing text complexity, an increased use of technology for sharing information and concepts, and a content-rich curriculum which assures smoother grade-to-grade progression (p. 43).' An overview of the Common Core for English Language, Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (K-12) indicates that they reflect cross-disciplinary literacy perspective and integration of the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening with a focus on information texts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010b). Each of the foundational skills is linked with a description of how it is relevant for higher academic purposes. Table 1 provides a snapshot of comprehension and collaboration skills that a third grade student is expected to know.

Table 1

Comprehension and collaboration for grade 3

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led), with diverse partners, on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own, clearly.
• Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion. • Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). • Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others. • Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

Source: Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010b, p. 24.

The standards for mathematics reflect more focus and coherence- required especially because standards for mathematics in the United States were not as rigorous or even comparable to standards in other high performing countries. These firstly reflect the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards for 'problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections' (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010c p. 6). Secondly, they reflect the levels of proficiency spelled out in the National Research Council's report *Adding It Up* and these include: Adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately), and productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy).

A snapshot from the third grade geometry section is provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Reason with shapes and their attributes, geometry, grade 3

- Understand that shapes in different categories (e.g., rhombuses, rectangles, and others) may share attributes (e.g., having four sides), and that the shared attributes can define a larger category (e.g., quadrilaterals). Recognize rhombuses, rectangles, and squares as examples of quadrilaterals, and draw examples of quadrilaterals that do not belong to any of these subcategories.
- Partition shapes into parts with equal areas. Express the area of each part as a unit fraction of the whole. For example, partition a shape into 4 parts with equal area, and describe the area of each part as 1/4 of the area of the shape.

Source: Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010c, p. 26

Although the initiative of the common core standards is well received, they are not without issues. For example, while the standards are set, it is not clear to what extent materials used are consistent with these and how would they align with the state standards (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). Further, the fact that the standards focus on student learning and not on strategies for teaching, leaves room for grade level proficiency in inclusive classrooms for all.

Early childhood

The conceptualization of the fundamental concepts that teachers can use for systematic instruction in the early childhood grades is necessary. Bracken and Crawford (2010) present a sample for the teaching and learning of such concepts by categorization into conceptual categories, subdomains, and provide conceptual examples of each. An example from one such category is provided in Table 3.

While content area standards provide guidelines for content area learning, in early childhood classrooms, a lot more has to be considered. Quality early childhood education can promote the growth of cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, and emotional development in children (National Association for Education of Young Children, 2009). These are crucial for building a foundation for later academic and social competence. A clear layout of standards in terms of their content and the relationship to future outcomes can lead to greater opportunities for well rounded development in the early years. It is critical that the early learning standards emphasize significant, age appropriate content and outcomes, are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes, and use implementation and assessment that are ethical and appropriate for young children. These should be accompanied by strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families (National Association for Education of Young Children, 2002).

Table 3

Conceptual categories	Sub-domains	Conceptual examples
Time/sequence	Mathematical seriation	Once, twice
	Frequency	First, second, third
	Natural occurring events	Morning, daytime, evening
	Temporal order of event	Before, after, finished
	Temporal absolutes	Never, always
	Scheduling	Early, late, next, arriving
	Relative age	Fast, slow
	Temporal nuances	New, old, young, old
	Speed	Nearly, just, waiting
	Larger temporal periods	Days, weeks, months, seasons, years

Source: Bracken and Crawford, 2010, p. 424

Teachers, especially in the early grades, are faced with challenges daily as they strive to make appropriate decisions to select the most effective strategies that will enhance their students' learning. These challenges also include addressing needs of students who do not speak the language of instruction as their first language and students with disabilities.

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Jessy Abraham

The Draft National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

Abstract

This article outlines the provisions of the recently created draft policy on Early Childhood Care and Education, explores possible linkages and mechanisms for quality in-service delivery, research and capacity building for ECCE and for integration of ECCE with the school system

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has put forward the draft National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy 2012 which 'reaffirms the commitment of the Government of India to provide integrated services for holistic development of all children, along the continuum, from the prenatal period to six years of age.' The Policy lays down the way forward for a comprehensive approach towards ensuring a sound foundation, with focus on early learning, for every Indian child. This is one of the most crucial policies for our country, especially when we have 158.7 million children in the 0-6 years age group (Census 2011) and there are less than 12 ECCE centres for every 1000 population (Kaul and Sankar, 2009).

India has made several commitments towards ECCE on global platforms and is signatory to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) wherein five of the eight goals pertain to health, nutrition, and education of the young child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) views ECCE as the first goal to be achieved, since 'learning begins at birth' and to provide assistance to parents and legal guardians in their child rearing responsibilities. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and Moscow Framework for Action (2010) reaffirmed India's commitment to ECCE. As ECCE is outside the purview of the Right to Education (RtE 2009), it is appropriate to formulate a policy on ECCE. Similar to the national policy on education which resulted in programs and allocation of funds for education, this policy on ECCE is to provide guidelines and future directions to all developments in the area of ECCE. The Policy has five sections namely:

- ECCE : The context including the preamble, social policy and program;
- ECCE: The definition;
- Policy vision and objectives;
- Policy focus area;
- Implementation.

According to the preamble, the first six years of life, referred to as early childhood, are acknowledged as the most crucial period, when the rate of development is very high and foundations are laid for cumulative, lifelong learning and human development. Therefore, it becomes imperative to accord priority attention to ECCE and invest adequately in it by providing commensurate resources. This understanding of ECCE may guide us in our efforts to achieve MDG goals. The Policy rightly recognizes the traditional practices of child rearing, which stimulated development and were shared and passed on from one generation to another. The changes in the family as well as social context and the globally emerging realization of the importance of the early years is all given its due importance. In India, we have diverse cultural and language contexts and the Policy should recognise that as well. India has a wealth of traditional practices in ECCE that date back almost 5000 years but these initiatives started being documented formally only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The early pioneers of the movement were Gijubhai Badheka, Tarabai Modak, Maria Montessori,and several others. The writings of great Indian educational thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Zakir Hussain have also drawn attention to this important aspect of education in the formative years of a child's life.

At the time of independence, the need for preschool education was primarily fulfilled by voluntary organisations and/or private institutions. The recognition of ECCE as a sector, which is represented by people having wide range of qualifications including no qualification, matric, diploma in nursery teacher training, B.Ed. nursery and child development professionals, is also a context of this policy. ECCE services, delivered through public, private and non-governmental channels, are taken into the program context. There is a need for better coordination within government departments, within government management teams, state and local level partners and private initiatives for ECCE. The Policy rightly emphasizes the need for a database covering facilities available, the actual number of children attending, ECCE provisions and their breakup as per delivery of services, type of services, including those covered by the private sector etc. Another important aspect of the Policy is that need for standards of quality for non-formal pre-school, education and inadequate understanding of the concept of ECCE, philosophy and importance of ECCE among all stakeholders were also taken into account.

The Policy has been put forward to initiate reforms, measures and corrective actions. ECCE refers to programs and provisions for children from prenatal to six years of age and caters to needs of a child in all domains of development i.e. physical, motor, language, cognitive, socio- emotional, and creative and aesthetic appreciation; and ensures synergy with health and nutrition aspects. This would cover developmental priorities for each sub stage within the continuum, i.e. care, early stimulation/interaction needs for children below 3 years, developmentally appropriate preschool education for 3 to 6 year olds, and a more structured and planned school readiness component for 5 to 6 year olds. The definition could include the term 'center based' and thus limit the coverage of the program, otherwise even households will need to be covered. In the present economic scenario of our country, even if we are able to cover center based ECCE programs of *anganwadis* , crèches, play groups/schools, preschools, nursery schools, kindergartens, preparatory schools, balwadis, it should satisfy our goals. There could be a possibility of dividing the group of prenatal to 6 year old into two groups, one below 3 years, who need more caring and related services, and the second consisting of 3 to 5 year olds as pre-primary level group with the focus on not only all round development but also readiness for the primary education.

The vision of the Policy is to promote inclusive, equitable and contextualised opportunities for promoting optimal development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age. It envisages pathways for a successful and smooth transition from care and education provided at home to centre based ECCE and thereafter to school-age provision, by facilitating an enabling environment through appropriate systems, processes and provisions across the country. Vision for under 3 year olds and 3 to 5 year olds could give more clarity. The principles informing this policy are universal access, equity and quality in ECCE and strengthening capacity. Though the decision to universalize the provision of ECCE for all children, mainly through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in public sector and other service provisions across systems, will definitely help the ECCE sector, it will be better to include elementary schools too wherever possible. Many people have pointed out that education component has been left out in the Policy and *anganwadi* centres (AWCs) or crèches when attached to primary schools will perform better. Community based and NGO based models should be experimented and promoted. The ECCE sector should be given due emphasis by providing health services to schools, and counselling services for parents. This linkage when built up, will ensure school retention. If different efforts are taken up in isolation, the child will not get maximum benefit.

Developmentally appropriate practices in alignment with basic quality standards and specifications and regulatory framework for ECCE could offer equity by ensuring basic quality inputs and outcomes, across all service providers and sectors undertaking such services. The goal is to implement all this within a period of five years.

Quality of ICDS and other related training institutes including child development resource centres in National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), regional

centres with mandates for operating helplines, counselling centres, capacity development centres, assessment centres and advocacy hubs will also be upgraded. While it is good to involve NIPCCD and also ICDS centres, at the same time involvement of the Home Science colleges and human development professionals could also be explored. There are many universities with child development centres and they should be tapped as resources for strengthening and capacity building programs of ECCE workers at different levels. A sound system for data collection/ generation and information management needs to be established across the country with the use of information technology which will allow for regular compilation and analysis of the data on ECCE. Though ICDS has its own monitoring mechanisms, involving the community and parents of children, after giving them training, is needed. Research, evaluation and innovation are not possible without funding; if more funds are made available and if higher education institutions get involved it could lead to better quality research, evaluation and documentation. If pre-primary is made a compulsory part of primary schools, both the monitoring and the research will be taken care of by the primary schools and education departments provided they are given orientation and training for the same.

A major deterrent to ensuring the right kind of ECCE is the lack of understanding of developmentally appropriate ECCE among the parents and other stakeholders. In order to address this deficit, the Policy suggests extensive use of media, including folk, print and electronic media, to reach out to parents, caregivers, professionals and the larger community to create awareness. Parent and community outreach programs will be strengthened to establish collaborative, care providing relationships. The institutional mechanism to ensure coordination is through National and State ECCE Councils. At present more funds are spent by the states and very less amount is being spent by the center on ECCE. If the government really wants to reaffirm its commitment, the central funding for ECCE should increase further and give space to children below 5 also in the elementary school. The implementation of the new policy will be reviewed every five years. Periodic appraisals will also be made to assess progress of implementation and make mid-course corrections, if and when required.

Conclusion

The policy and its implementation is a much needed initiative and the Ministry of Women and Child Development needs to be appreciated. The policy focuses on making ICDS universal. The Ministry of MHRD should also be involved in this policy and be given the opportunity to integrate school education with ECCE. The RtE Act could be amended to include the 0-6 age group, thus completing our commitment to children.

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Abbreviations

AWC	:	Anganwadi Centre
B.Ed.	:	Bachelor of Education
B.El.Ed.	:	Bachelor of Elementary Education
BA	:	Bachelor of Arts
BEO	:	Block Education Officer
BRC	:	Block Resource Centre
CHE	:	Council on Higher Education
CM	:	Carrera Magisterial
CPD	:	Continuous Professional Development
CRC	:	Cluster Resource Centre
CRC	:	Convetion on the Rights of the Child
CTE	:	College of Teacher Education
CWSN	:	Children with Special Needs
D.Ed.	:	Diploma in Education
DEO	:	District Education Officer
DIET	:	District Institute of Education and Training
DISE	:	District Information System for Education
DPEP	:	District Primary Education Program
ECCE	:	Early Childhood Care and Education
EDI	:	EFA Development Index
EFA	:	Education for All
EVS	:	Environmental Studies
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
HLG	:	High Level Group
IASE	:	Institute of Advanced Studies in Education
ICDS	:	Integrated Child Development Services
ICEE	:	ICICI Centre for Elementary Education
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
ITP	:	Initial Teacher Preparation
M.Ed.	:	Master of Education
MCQ	:	Multiple Choice Question
MDG	:	Millennium Development Goals
MHRD	:	Ministry of Human Resource Development
NCERT	:	National Council for Educational Research and Training
NCF	:	National Curriculum Framework
NCFTE	:	National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education
NGO	:	Non Government Organization
NIPCCD	:	National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development

NPDE	:	National Professional Diploma in Education
NUEPA	:	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
ODL	:	Open and Distance Learning
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMR	:	Optical Mark Recognition
OoS	:	Out-of-School
PDS	:	Public Distribution System
Ph.D.	:	Doctor of Philosophy
PISA	:	Program for International Student Assessment
PTC	:	Primary Teaching Certificate
PTR	:	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
QEP	:	Quality Education Program
RBC	:	Residential Bridge Course
RMSA	:	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abiyan
RtE	:	Right to Education
SC	:	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	:	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SGB	:	School Governing Body
SMC	:	School Management Committee
SSA	:	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	:	Scheduled Tribe
STC	:	School Teaching Certificate
UEE	:	Universalization of Elementary Education
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	:	Universalization of Primary Education

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